Debating, discussing, deciding

- **Student voice starts with a whisper**
  Kingscliff HS, NSW
- **Student voice in an ethnically diverse community**
  Catholic Regional College St Albans, Vic
- **Democracy in action: by students, for students**
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- **When 'marginalisation melts away'**
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- **Dr Tony Knight Remembered**
- **VicSRC:** *School Strike 4 Climate Action*
  Student Voice Awards - finalists
  Student Voice Hub; Congress Report

Resources:

- **International Conference on Student Voice, Agency and Partnerships**
  Melbourne: 9-11 December 2019
- **Victorian Schools' Parliamentary Conventions**
- **Festival of Ideas - Brisbane, Qld**
- **Climate crisis -** *educators' support*
- **School Circles -** *video*
- *International Journal of Student Voice* **Vol 5**
- *Student Voice Research and Practice* facebook group
- ***Connect*** ... available on-line ... on *facebook* ... archived ... access to other on-line resources

Connect

Number 239: October 2019

Cover:

Students at Parliamentary Conventions
Photos pp 1, 32-33 by Sarah Lynch and Elliot Taylor

Why does *Connect* exist?

Connect **is an independent practice journal, published bimonthly since 1979!**

It aims to:
• **document student participation approaches and initiatives;**
• **support reflective practices;**
• **develop and share resources.**

This Issue:

We are currently very focused on the organisation of the **Student Voice, Agency and Partnerships International Conference**, being held in Melbourne on 9th-11th December this year. **Will you be there?**

This will be an extremely important and informative event, with over 40 presentations being locked in - from researchers, teachers, school students, policy makers and others. As well as this information provision, the prime focus of the Conference will be on deep discussions of *what is currently happening*, and about *fruitful future directions*. People are coming from local schools, from across Australia, and internationally: USA, Greenland, Ireland, Malaysia, New Zealand and elsewhere.

If you are new to the area and these ideas, come to the **opening session** on the Monday evening, where you'll hear from **Professor Dana Mitra** (from Penn State University in the USA) and from a local panel, about the challenges facing us. And if you're already active and involved, make sure you're also registered for the following two days: **we need your input and participation.** *More detail is in this issue - on pages 3-4, and on pages 42-43.* The Early Bird registration rate closes soon!

The first local conference/workshop around student participation that *Connect* was involved with, was held here in Melbourne in 1980. The keynote speaker at that Conference was **Dr Tony Knight**. Tony sadly passed away recently after a long illness. He (and the late **Professor Art Pearl**) were the key inspirations for *Connect* - and for my own classroom, school and networking practices. Tony was a huge inspiration to both theory and practice and he's already enormously missed. Some articles in this issue remember his contributions in 1980-81 and then reflecting on *Connect*'s 30th anniversary in 2009. Jim Williamson's article in this issue also pays tribute to Tony's work.

Talking of anniversaries: next issue (#240) marks *Connect*'s 40th! I find that both pleasing and a little daunting. *(I've been thinking for some time about the future - will there be a 50th? When I started a small sharing publication late in 1979, while teaching at Lynall Hall in Brunswick, I didn't think about '40 years on'!)* I'll try to summarise *'Four decades in four pages'* in the next issue, but really need **you** to contribute as well:

Have you been with us on the whole journey? Have you just joined us? **What do you think have been the major advances in the areas of student voice, agency and participation over the past 40 years?** Have there been particularly useful or favourite contributions in *Connect* over that time? **What do you hope the next 40 years will bring?** *See more detail on page 34.* Contributions welcome!

Next Issue ...

As we turn 40, we'll look back and look forward. As well as your contributions to the achievements of the last 40 years, we're hoping to include new articles about a Children's Council in an Early Learning Centre, and plans for the development of student-led *Civics and Citizenship Education* approaches and resources in *Politics 101*. **Make sure you contribute by the end of November!**

Roger Holdsworth

Next Issue: #240: December 2019
Deadline for material: end of November, 2019

STUDENT VOICE, AGENCY AND PARTNERSHIPS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA
9-11 DECEMBER 2019

Register now: www.svcmelbourne.com
Limited places available

CONTRIBUTE TO FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND DEVELOPMENTS

A conference for school students, researchers and academics, teachers and school leaders, policy workers and support organisations.
Learn about national and international best practice in student voice, agency and partnerships.

Two days of practical and productive discussions for those active and interested in student voice, agency and partnerships.

Register NOW at
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Student voice starts with a whisper

Picture the school hall buzzing with music.

The energy builds as students curiously enter and move to various spaces to explore the different activities that await them. How will they choose to have their say on what is important to them? As the number of students increases from 10 to 20, to 50, to 100, rising every minute, students from all walks of life, from different year groups begin to connect with one another and share their ideas and opinions. There is a feeling of safety; students aren't afraid to have their voice heard.

Across the room, the School Principal sits at a table with students queued up, waiting to talk with him about issues they have chosen to discuss.

There's a sudden flash of light. On stage. students hold whiteboard messages of what they care about and have their photo taken.

Across the room, other students have their heads down. They are focused, completing an online survey about their wellbeing at school.

To the side of the hall, another group of students stand in a circle and pass a ball of string to one another; each connection of the string binds them together as they communicate respectfully on who and what makes them feel connected at school.

A **Graffiti Runner** is rolled out along the floor in the middle of the hall. It started as a blank canvas and is now filled with numerous comments from students. Teachers and students walk along the edges and read the ideas of others or simply add their own thoughts on topics they find important.

In the background a large 2.5 metre painted **Wishing Tree** comes to life as students write their future hopes on coloured leaves and stick them to the tree.

The smell of hot chocolate wafts through the air as students leave the hall with smiles on their faces and choc chip cookies in their hands. Anticipation and wonder sparks as students drop their **Voice Café** card into the lucky door prize box. Who will win the lucky door prize and what will it be? ...

Have your say your way – The Voice Café

In recognition of the New South Wales 2019 Education week, secondary students from **Kingscliff High School** were invited to the school's inaugural **Voice Café**. The café was created and organised by a small team of teachers and students who worked collaboratively together to raise awareness and encourage more student voice in their school. These are the steps in our journey.

EVERY STUDENT, EVERY VOICE

HAVE YOUR SAY YOUR WAY

"EVERY STUDENT EVERY VOICE"

WALK THIS WAY TO HAVE YOUR SAY...
WITH FUN ACTIVITIES, GAMES AND PHOTO BOOTH

WEDNESDAY 7TH AND THURSDAY 8TH AUGUST
RECESS
@ THE MPU

Ed. week Aug 5th - 9th 2019

KINGSCLIFF HIGH SCHOOL
ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH ENDEAVOUR

WALK THIS WAY TO HAVE YOUR SAY

Student Voice and Leadership Strategic Team

At our school, **Kingscliff High School,** we have teams of staff who work towards achieving the directions of our school's strategic plan. One team is the *Student Voice and Leadership Strategic Team*. We meet twice a term to discuss strategies to achieve our milestones. For 2019, one milestone was to increase opportunities for student voice and leadership in the school. As part of our discussions, we looked at the NSW Education Week as a platform to encourage more student voice in the school. The theme for Education Week 2019 was *'Every Student, Every Voice',* so we felt it was a great opportunity to shine a light on the importance for all students to voice their views and opinions on school issues. We also wanted to make sure we offered a variety of platforms that would be accessible to every student.

To increase student voice and participation in school decision making, earlier in the year, we had invited student leaders to be involved in this team. One of our milestones was to have students on our team so that we could model to other strategic teams how students could be involved at a decision making level, without it being tokenistic. As a result, we had two Year 8 students and one Year 12 student come on board the team. They had attended our meetings since the start of the year. The contributions made by these students inspired

our ideas for Education Week, in particular the *Principal's Talking Table*.

Planning Day

We knew we wanted to hold an event or activity in Education Week. As a team, we organised a planning day. This involved six staff members and two of our student leaders coming together to collaborate on various ideas. As team leader, I made sure we had a set agenda for the day that was flexible enough to allow us to explore ideas but also give everyone some time to start working on our ideas. As any teacher would appreciate, there isn't a lot of time to get things done after a planning day, so I wanted to make sure we had time on the day to action our ideas.

Every team member was asked to come to the meeting with two ideas. We started with what I call a *pair-square-share* activity. To start we separated into pairs. Each person explained their two ideas to their partner and were asked to come to an agreement on their top two ideas. Then each pair split up and went on to form a square (a group of four) with other team members. Each group of four had to discuss their ideas and then collaborate to determine which two ideas they felt were the most achievable and realistic in the two week time frame we had. This was a very valuable activity because when we all came together as a team of eight, we were all in agreeance on what should happen. From this one activity we had made so many decisions. We had a name for the event, we had a concept to draw students in, and we had numerous activities where students could share their voice in so many ways on so many topics.

Our event was to be called: **Have Your Say, Your Way.** The concept was: a Voice Café, where you could share your voice over a hot chocolate and cookies. The activities included: *A Wishing Tree*, a *Graffiti Runner*, a *Principal's Talking Table*, a *Ball of String Connections* activity, an online *Wellbeing Survey*, and a *Photo Booth*.

We knew we couldn't run the **Voice Café** for the whole week due to restrictions in staff availability and time. So in addition to the **Voice Café,** we planned for a *Polling Booth* to be set up in the library for the week. The *Polling Booth* asked students to rank six main issues in order of importance. Issues included *anti-bullying, school spirit, PBL lessons, student wellbeing, classroom behaviour,* and *student-teacher relationships.*

Student Leaders

The significant contributions made by the student leaders was a highlight of the planning day. One student revisited an idea that she had shared with us earlier in the year, called the *Principal's Talking Point*. She had found the idea in a book on student voice I had given her to read: *Student Voice: The Instrument of Change* (by Russell J. Quaglia, 2014). The *Principal's Talking Point,* as she described it, is a talking point/theme/quote for a day or a week that the School Principal comes up with and engages in conversation with students in the corridors, classrooms and/or on assemblies from time to time. She felt it was an activity that would be good at our school. During our planning day, this became an idea we modified to be part of the event. We called it the *Principal's Talking Table*. The end result was a deck of cards with different questions on each card. Students could choose a card to start a discussion with the School Principal. This allowed students a choice on what to talk about and meant that it was the students who determined the discussion.

Another one of our student leaders had an activity idea to use a ball of string as a stimulus. Students would stand in a circle and pass a ball of string to one another. As they held a piece of the string, students would share what made them feel connected at school. Every student

would be able to share their voice and be heard by their peers. The ball of string also acted as a physical metaphor for connection. This was an activity that could be led by the student leaders.

Another idea that came from one of the student leaders was the online *Wellbeing Survey*. The student leader felt that a number of students were experiencing stress due to exams and assessments, and they wanted to find out how prevalent this was across the whole school.

Lastly, the student leaders wanted to encourage their peers to set goals and revisit their goals, by setting up a *Wishing Tree*. The *Wishing Tree* would ask students to state what they wanted for their future. This evolved into asking students what they wanted for their future and what opportunities they would like at school in the future.

Putting it all into Action

Once we knew what we wanted to do and we had an event designed, we went to work. We split into four action teams and worked on specific tasks according to our strengths. One team, made up of a staff member and a student leader, worked on communication and promotion materials. They came up with a timeline for promoting the event and designed posters, social media posts, school notices and assembly announcements. They focused their promotions on both staff and students and wrote their materials to fit the target audience.

Another team, also made up of a staff member and student leader, was responsible for creating the online *Wellbeing Survey* and data collation.

As a whole team we had decided that some of the data needed to be shared immediately post event. Our schools *Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL)* lessons that happen once per week offered an opportunity for us to report back on some of the data. So this team designed the wellbeing questions, created the online survey and drafted a template for the PBL lesson.

The third team of two staff members worked on creating resources for the other **Voice Café** activities, as well as an equipment list. They came up with topics for the *Graffiti Runner*, sentence starters for the *Photo Booth* and designed the hall layout for all of the activities.
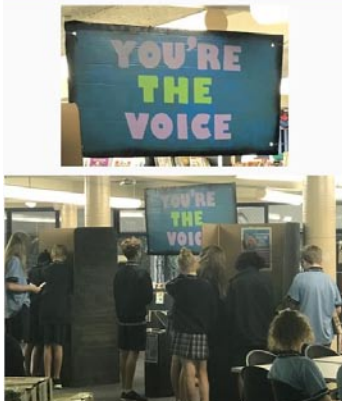
The last two staff members worked on the library *Polling Booth* as well as logistical elements of booking the hall, organising music, purchasing consumables and determining rosters for the two days of the **Voice Café**.

With one week to go, we were full steam ahead in organising the finer details, ready to launch the **Voice Café** in Education Week. The concept of the **Voice Café** stood out because it allowed students and staff to come together to talk about different topics and important issues. The *Graffiti Runner* activity involved a length of paper rolled out along the floor of the hall, which students could walk along and write comments on a variety of topics or simply read the comments of others. We observed that, as they walked along, students and teachers would chat about the various topics. Topics included: *support for LGBTIQAP+ students; action on racism at school; the environment; classroom behaviour* and *student/teacher relationships.*

We had estimated about 10 percent of the school (110 students) would come to the event, because it was our first student voice event on a whole school level. We were amazed that approximately 280 students got involved in our **Voice Café** and more than 100 students visited the library *Polling Booth* in their own time during the week to vote on issues important to them.

Results from the Library Poll

Most important

1. Anti-bullying
2. Student wellbeing
3. Student/Teacher relationships
4. Classroom behaviour
5. School spirit
6. PBL lessons

Where to from here?

As a team we knew that it was important to report back to the whole school on the data collected from our *Have Your Say, Your Way* activities so that student voice wasn't seen as tokenistic. We knew this couldn't all happen at once but we planned to report back as soon as possible. The week following our *Have Your Say, Your Way* event, students across the whole school were provided with a PBL lesson on the theme of Education Week and the **Voice Café** activities. The lesson reported back to all students on the data that was collected from the library *Polling Booth*. In the PBL lesson, students were asked to discuss the ranking of the issues from the *Polling Booth* and then the collated results were shared. Students were also informed that the School Captains would discuss the feedback with the School Principal in the next week.

The School Captains met with the School Principal two weeks after Education Week and handed him two reports, one showed the data collected from the library *Polling Booth* and the other provided data collected from the *Wishing Tree*. The information highlighted things the school could work towards for the future and the School Principal was interested to examine the reports.

The **Student Representative Council (SRC)** was also provided with a copy of the data to inform some of their decision making and they have already acted on some of the student comments. The *Wishing Tree* also provided specific data on student goals for the future, which was passed on to the Careers Adviser to highlight certain careers that students wanted to pursue in the future.

Data from the remaining activities is still being collated but we have a planned approach to distributing all the data so that we do not overwhelm students or staff with too much information at once.

We also have plans for an *iPad Station* to be set up in the library to act as a student voice/feedback station in the future. Students will have the opportunity to contribute to school decision making via the *iPad Station*. Different teams, student groups and teachers can collect ideas, opinions and feedback from students using the *iPad Station* as a tool for collecting student voices. We aim to launch this early in 2020. The aim is that teachers and students across the whole school will utilise the *iPad Station* as a strategy for collecting student voice anonymously, to encourage more students to feel safe to share their voice.

The **Voice Café** created a great platform for student voices to be heard and, because of its success, we aim to hold another **Voice Café** in the New Year. This is one step in our student voice journey, and we will keep working to support our students to share their voice in respectful and safe ways. We understand that student voice is not just about giving students the opportunity to communicate ideas and opinions, and we want to build opportunities for students to influence change and collaborate with teachers around all aspects of school life, from the classroom to whole school decisions. This is the beginning of our journey to empower student voice, agency and leadership in our school.

*...The sound of a drum roll echoes across the sea of students as the announcement of the lucky door prize winner is about to be made on assembly. The **SRC Student Voice and Wellbeing Team** present their donation of a $50 voucher to one lucky student who visited the **Voice Café**. Students applaud, followed by whispers by students who did not visit the **Voice Café:** "I am definitely going to go to that next time!!!"*
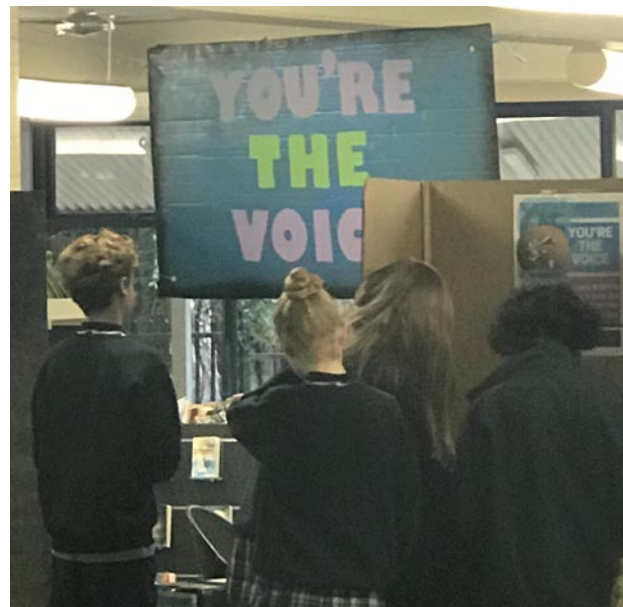
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*Acknowledgements to **Nellie Hejduk** and **Kylie Bassingthwaighte** for their contributions to this article.*

Student voice in an ethnically diverse student community

Throughout 2018, we developed a student voice initiative in Year 9 at our Catholic Secondary College in north-western metropolitan Melbourne. We wanted to change the culture of the school, and explore ways of improving relationships between students and teachers, as well as increasing understanding and skills about presenting and listening to student voices.

School context

Catholic Regional College St Albans is a multicultural school with 500 boys and girls from Year 7 to 10. The majority of the students are from the bottom quarter of the socio-economic scale, mainly from South East Asian countries, with the remaining students from African, Pasifika or European descent. Approximately 10% of the students are seeking refuge from conflict areas such as Iraq and Syria and have only arrived at the school in the past two years. These students have spent a large proportion of class time in intensive English language classes; 89% of the student body speaks a language other than English at home.

School attendance and family perceptions of school were high, and many of the behaviour incidents reported by teachers were caused by inadequate teacher communication skills with students. Consequently, students did not often self-report issues, and most critical incidents occurred as a result of unresolved issues and student to student conflict.

Project background

My position at the school is that of the Year 9 level leader, responsible for overseeing the wellbeing of that cohort and leading the teachers in the year level team. I also plan, enact, observe and evaluate wellbeing programs at the college, including overseeing and promoting student leadership at the College.

In late 2017, while promoting the various leadership roles students can undertake, a student interrupted me with the following statement:

> **"Sir, with all respect, student leadership does nothing. Students have no power and even when we do speak, you guys couldn't care less anyway."** *(Daniel)*

His statement was met with thunderous applause from the class. For myself, in my first year at the college, it was a light-bulb moment. Although I had been verbally attacked and felt disheartened by his comment, I had this feeling that he was right. Students at the school had limited choice on elective subjects, and few of these subjects met the needs of the demographic. Furthermore, students had no say on core subjects, the content of which was mandated by the school. During discussions, many students reported that several subjects lacked purpose, and were not relevant to their lives. Teachers also reported that many students seemed to be disengaged from the content of the class, and that boredom, time wasting, and a lack of academic achievement had become the school norm. The student body saw the Student Representative Council as inactive.

As a response, I took my concerns to our Wellbeing Team of the four year-level leaders, the deputy principal and the college counsellor. It was thought that this was a school wide issue. As a result, one of the goals for the school Annual Action Plan (AAP) became to increase student voice in the school.

Student voice in education involves teachers listening to student opinions and perspectives about their school environment. The literature and research about voice in educational settings concludes that the implementation of student voice programs improves both academic outcomes and relationships between teachers and students, regardless of the setting or student age.

We decided to start with a pilot program that focused on Year 9 students in 2018; students in this year level were seen to be more mature that those of previous year levels; and the pilot could be driven by myself as the program leader.

We identified three issues relevant to program success:

- *Teacher buy-in and teacher know-how:* adequate training needed to be provided to ensure that the teachers facilitating the program were able to understand its purpose and to display the requisite communication skills. If a significant shift in school culture was to be accomplished, teacher training was a necessary first step.

- *The program needed to work with the school context, particularly the ethnicity of the students:* when ethnic students were studied in previous student voice programs, it was recognised that the facilitator needed to be conscious of the speaker's ethnicity. This needed to be included in the teacher training, so they could respond to challenging responses.

- *Poor literacy and communication levels of the students, particularly those of the recent arrival students,*

needed to be addressed: some students needed time to develop the verbal communication skills that were necessary for successful participation in the program. Providing the students with an inclusive environment was also essential: this allowed the students to express their thoughts in healthy ways and created an atmosphere of trust and understanding.

Research question

We also decided that this program would be a reflective, learning experience for us. So we started with a research question: ***to what extent can improved student voice influence social relationships between teachers and students in an ethnically diverse school community.***

We started with a target group of 102 Year 9 students, and a program and research team of myself, several teachers, the deputy principal of pastoral care, subject leading teachers and a university postgraduate student. These teachers elected to be a part of the program.

Goals

In the short term, the program aimed to give the Year 9 students a chance to provide feedback on how the school was performing, as well as providing academic direction on what students would like to learn about. It would allow students to voice their opinions to teachers without fear of judgment or ridicule, so that the student and teacher relationships that had developed throughout the school year could be strengthened. The project would also provide direction for school leaders and student leadership and possibly encourage the future leaders of the school to complete small-scale projects based on student recommendations.

Long-term objectives included the possibility of student voice becoming part of the culture of the wider school, not just for the current Year 9 students. It was hoped that this will allow students to voice their opinions in constructive and respectful ways, and to provide feedback to teachers without fear of repercussions. Current norms within the school lead teachers to feel alienated and disrespected when students provide feedback, even when that feedback is constructively formulated. It is important that student feedback is normalised, and that the giving of feedback is not seen as discourteous or disrespectful.

Literature review

We began with a review of literature in the area of student voice: students' ability to speak out about topics that concern them, and to have these concerns heard by educators and policy makers in a respectful and nonjudgmental fashion. We particularly considered voice in the area of students from ethnically diverse backgrounds, and the power balance between students and teachers.

Student voice is, at a basic level, about students having input in shared decisions. At its highest level, it is about informing teaching and learning practices at school and teachers and students working together. Evidence suggests that student voice can promote positive relationships, enhance interpersonal skills, and provide teachers with important insights on their students. It can be used regardless of gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status, and provides students with better academic outcomes as a result of participation. While there is vast history of educational policy on student voice, teacher attitudes towards voice suggest a large degree of silencing rather than raising opinion.

The balance of power must be mastered by students and facilitators, and this is something that takes both time and skill. Teachers need to be provided with thorough training to prepare for using student voice, and must be genuine and respectful in the process. In addition, they must be equipped with frameworks that allow them to identify the various factors that both facilitate and frustrate the expression of student voice in their own school.

While student voice is about dialogue and opinion, **student agency** requires students to action their voices so as to create positive change. **Student participation** is not just about being present while information is presented, but rather being active and engaged in the task at hand.

While ideas about student voice have existed in Victoria for many years, the term expanded in scope and in influence through discussions of children's rights following recognition under the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) and its ratification in Australia the early 1990s. By the late 2000s, knowledge about the academic benefits of emphasising and encouraging student voice became more widespread among teachers.

The benefits of student voice in schools have been seen as increasing the strength and the density of the relationships that students have with their peers, with staff, and with the wider school community. Dialogue can produce engagement and openness. Although on-line tick-box style questionnaires can create large pools of data, relationships are not formed; such approaches can even undermine staff confidence and create program disengagement. Student voice can also have a large impact on student retention and engage the previously disengaged student population: attachment, school ownership and community connection are all increased when students have a voice … and therefore their relationship to school is enhanced.

Students also gain interpersonal skills for future career prospects including increases in students' capacity to engage in reflection and critical thinking. Student voice can break down stereotypes of both students and teachers, allowing them to take ownership of their actions and create respect for themselves, mainly due to students feeling equal in the process. When listened to, students reported that they were more likely to have an increased ability to collaborate with others, display empathy and critically engage in real world issues.

As well as these gains for students, teachers who use student voice in their classrooms are able to gain greater insight into the way that their students learn, their perspective of the world, and the challenges that they face. Student voice can transcend traditional frameworks of education and ultimately produce a more positive school climate.

On the other hand, silencing of students has been found to reduce acceptable behaviours and increase dissent among students. Silenced students show lower social and emotional skills than those who have been provided with a voice.

Ethnic Student Voice

There were also studies of student voice for students from ethnically diverse backgrounds. Students from various nationalities in the same classroom can flourish when student voice is prioritised: it helps them connect to one another

and form relationships. But there is a need to recognise differences of language expression between ethnic groups, particularly around what is seen as disrespectful in challenging authority and in communication styles. Diversity and inclusion are central to ideas of voice; facilitators in workshops need to be aware of multiculturalism to create a harmonious classroom environment.

Power

The concept of power is an integral part of the student voice concept: the teacher's view of power is crucial. Pilot programs surrounding student voice can create large issues with power imbalance between students and teachers. Many teachers feel underprepared for this power shift, believing they could lose control of the class if they gave away power to the students. Students also need time to familiarise themselves with having more power; the more that students are familiar with having voice in classrooms, the more adapted they will become.

Project action

There were two broad cycles of action within our project. All teachers in the Year 9 team were approached to take part in the program, and presented with program aims and intentions as well as some possible negative consequences (such as a reduction in preparation time for regular scheduled classes). Of the ten members of the team, nine elected to be a part of the group. Some other members of staff outside of the Year 9 team were also approached to be a part of the program, and this team of teachers analysed the current state of student voice at the school, concluding that it was very low.

First cycle

The first step was to develop a pre-program survey to assess students' thoughts before we started. This was voluntary for the 102 students, who completed it in silence during their morning homeroom. It was short and took 5-8 minutes to complete, and had nine questions based around the concept of student voice, the relationship between themselves and their subject teachers, as well as with teachers in leadership positions at the school.

The team of teachers considered that they themselves needed further training on both the concept of student voice and the determinants of program success. Two 30-minute training sessions were provided over a two week period. These occurred during mandated meetings, and so did not result in more meetings or an increased workload.

Teachers discussed the nature and benefits of student voice as well as the negative impact of silencing voice in educational settings. They were then given guidelines of how to present and communicate during the program: the use of body language, active listening and summarising techniques, and use of probing questions. Role-play scenarios challenged teacher opinions, and teachers were asked to reflect on these and on possible teacher emotions and the outcomes of the program.

The students were given a small summary of the program at a year level assembly: its outline, benefits of participating, projected aims and goals and some of the rules and ethics behind its completion.

Workshop 1

One class period was used for the first workshop. A small summary of the workshop was read out; students could choose to opt in or out of the class, were asked to be respectful but honest during the workshop and told that their opinions would not be held against them. Each student was given an A3 sheet of paper as well as ample colouring materials. Students were asked to draw their perspective of the school community in its current state. We hoped that, by using drawings rather than speech, individual feelings about their environment could come to the surface without fear or judgement. This would begin the process and start to build an inclusive environment. To ensure privacy and anonymity, a statement asking students not to write their names was printed on the page.

An example of student work is given in Figure 1 (below).

This student explained:

"School is a balance between heaven and hell. Some people in our school drag it. Some teachers yell a lot and it's hard to concentrate sometimes. But other times school is the best. You see your friends, and some of the excursions are cool too!" *(John)*

Figure 1

Students were then given a hypothetical 'magic wand', and instructed that they could make one change in their school community. We thought this strategy would allow students to think more positively about their school environment, thus increasing enthusiasm and engagement. Students were asked to write down this change and then asked to draw what their change would look like. Participants were asked to present their drawing to their table group to explain the picture they had drawn. All materials were then collected and given to me for analysing.

The overwhelming feelings represented in the drawings were that school was a mix of boring and fun. Several drawings included fire and prisons. Many students drew pictures of themselves sitting behind desks with multiple books looking sad or angry, giving a poor impression of the current school environment. Students reacted to the magic wand activity with mixed emotions. Most wrote one or two words that were about trivial issues that could be fixed quickly. Subject learning was not a theme in any of the pictures.

Workshop 2

During one week in August, students were timetabled into focus groups of between 8 and 12 students. There were eight focus groups, drawn from that specific class, each timetabled into class time. The class was then divided by gender to ensure that girls had an equal opportunity to have their voice heard. Each focus group
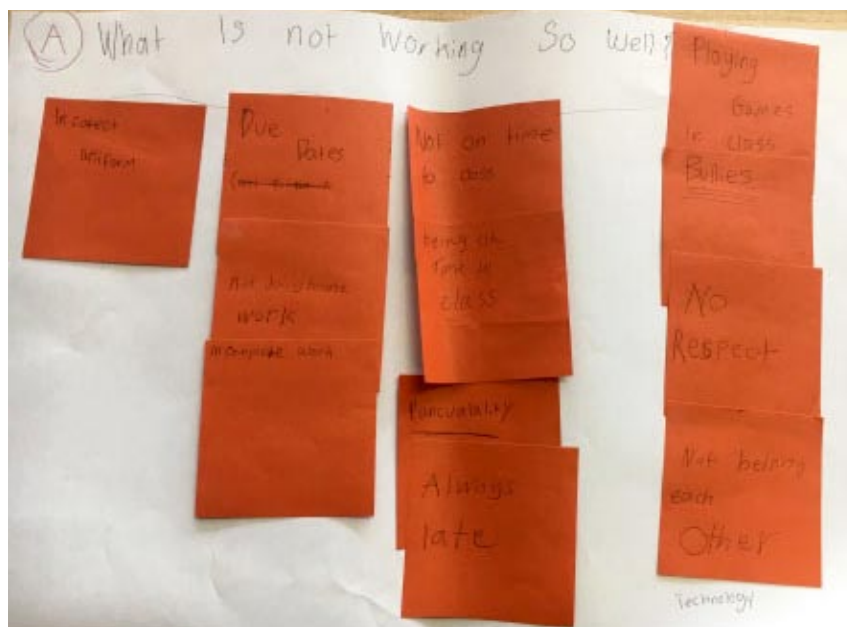

Figure 2

took 50 minutes to complete, and each was run concurrently with another. Each focus group was run by two teachers, one being a member of the planning team, and the other having completed the training in full. At least one of the teachers held a leadership position at the school (deputy principal, year level leader, or a subject leader).

Students had been previously given the focus group questions during homeroom time on that day. This provided them time to formulate ideas about what they would say, but not so much time that they could talk to other classes and students and influence each other on what they would say. They were asked:

1. *What is working well in the Year 9 school community?*

2. *What is not working well in the Year 9 community?*

3. *It would be even better if Year 9s could....*

Students were given time to individually answer the questions, and to place each different idea onto a sticky note. They then worked in groups of twos or threes to group like-terms. They placed their thoughts on the paper provided, which was labeled with the questions. An example of one of the focus group's initial thoughts is provided in Figure 2 (above).

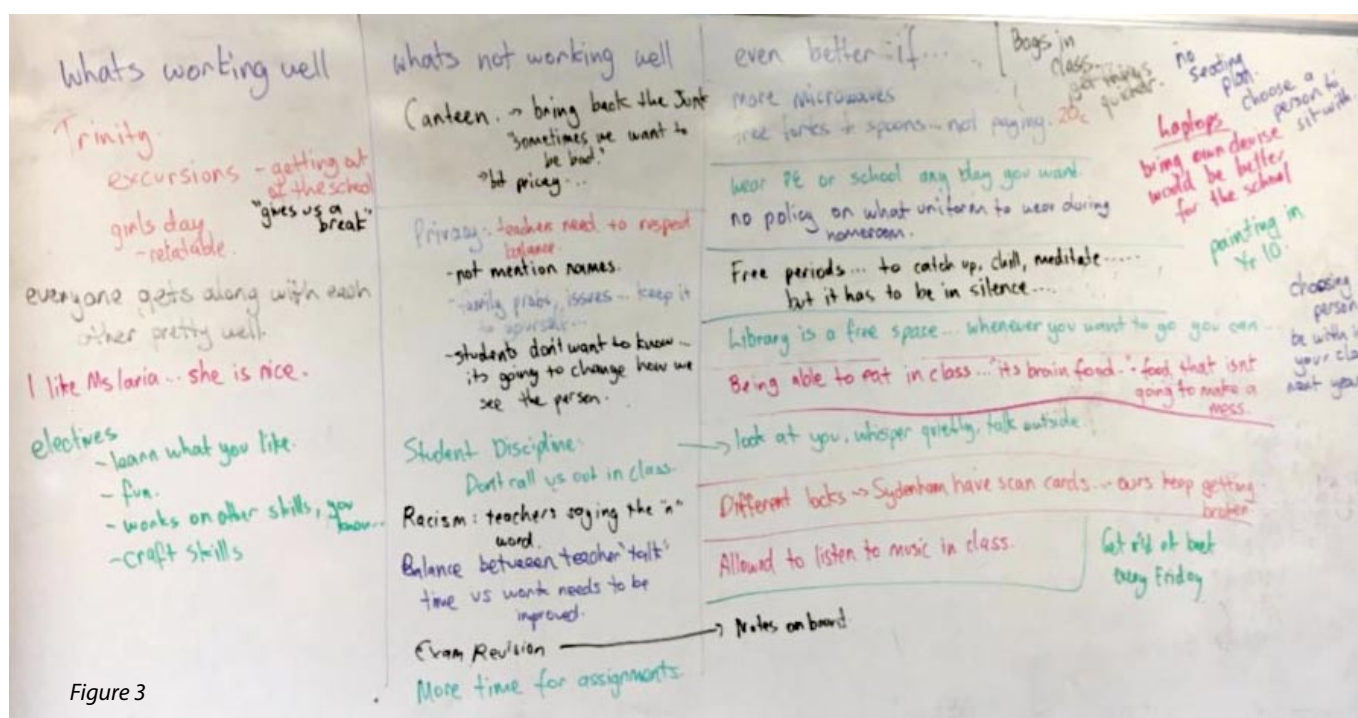Finally, students voiced their opinions to the focus group as well as

Figure 3

to the facilitating teachers. One teacher wrote down the students' views on the whiteboard, while the other teacher actively listened and summarised what the students said, ensuring that the students' opinions were properly understood. Teachers also used open-ended probing questions to draw more information out of each student. The teachers swapped over tasks to ensure that they both had equal opportunity to listen to students' voices and to develop relationships. The materials were collected at the end of each session and a photo was taken of the whiteboard so that it could be analysed. An example of the facilitator response from the second workshop is provided in Figure 3 (bottom of previous page).

During this second session, students spoke largely about educational policy and rules that applied to them: uniform, technology issues, school excursions, and the school culture. While some issues were trivial and could be easily addressed, most issues needed educational leadership or administration involvement. An example of this was the *"bring your own laptop device to the school"* comment – this would need the approval of the information technology staff. The school canteen was often mentioned due to healthy option changes at the beginning of the year. Most focus group facilitators observed that the students spent most of the time focusing on questions 2 and 3 and spent little time providing voice on question 1.

The project group met after the final focus groups had been completed, and noted that students did not speak about their learning. Core subjects were not mentioned by many focus groups, and only one focus group mentioned elective subjects. The group discussed how best to address this, and it was decided to organise another round of focus groups with all Year 9 students. The questions were changed to specifically ask the students about their learning in core and electives classes.

Second Cycle

Workshop 3

In the third workshop, the teachers facilitating the workshops changed groups to ensure that students developed relationships with all of the teachers and school leaders in the program. Eight focus groups occurred, with an identical structure to that of workshop two. The 83 students who participated were asked three questions relating to teaching and learning. The questions for workshop three were:

1. *What do you enjoy learning about in Year 9?*
2. *What do you not enjoy learning about in Year 9?*
3. *It would be even better if Year 9s could learn about…*

An example of the facilitator response from the third workshop is provided in Figure 4 (below).

After the three workshops were complete, a post program survey was sent out to all Year 9 students, and time was given during morning homeroom to complete this.

The participating teachers met and were asked to reflect on their thoughts of the program based around the following questions:

1. *What did you enjoy about the program?*
2. *What did you not enjoy about the program?*
3. *What did you think the limitations of the program were?*
4. *Where would you have liked more support or guidance?*
5. *Where to from here?*

The Year 9 students were finally gathered for a formal assembly during class time, and I gave an overview of the project results from each of the workshops.

Findings

We recognised that actually completing a pilot program on student voice was significant. The school context added many challenges, and no voice programs had been successful completed prior to this.

Some students made comments about the Student Representative Council and its lack of activity, and this was contrasted to the student voice program. Students appreciated that it involved all members of the Year 9 cohort, not just the few selected to represent them. It was encouraging for myself as project leader to see that, during workshop two when students were asked what is working well in the community, several made mention of the student voice program:
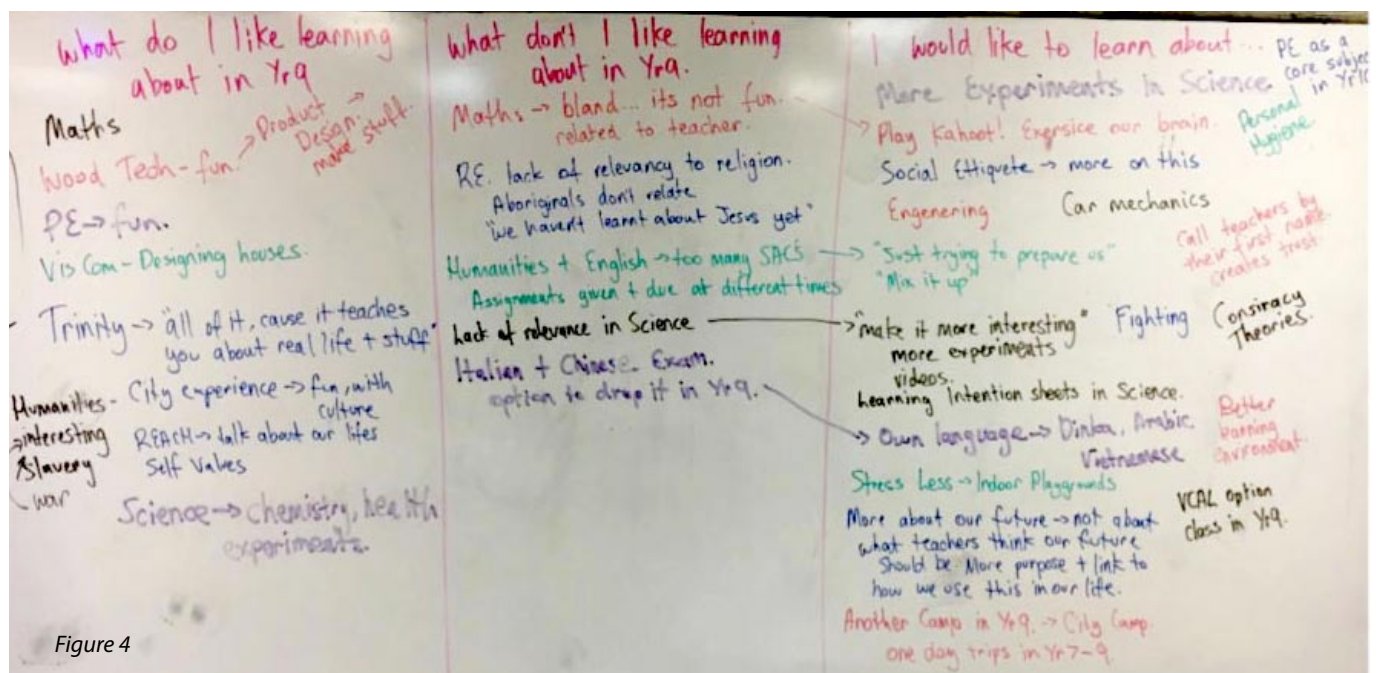

Figure 4

"This. What we are doing right now. It feels nice to be provided with a chance to give input into what my school is about." *(Tony)*

This comment was sufficient to make the program worthwhile. It felt great to achieve something inside the school environment, especially considering the difficulties faced by previous voice projects.

Teacher training

The project also aimed to provide students with an inclusive and supportive environment in which to participate. Several teachers mentioned how the teacher training had helped their presence in the workshops. In particular, they appreciated working with a structured format for summarising techniques and probing questions. Teacher training two was seen to be particularly useful, and had provided them with a different view of how to express student feelings in the classroom. One teacher mentioned that she had completed numerous amounts of studying in this field (primarily as a mediator), but had never thought to transfer her skills over to a classroom environment. Furthermore, teachers could use the increased relationship in the student voice program in regular scheduled classes. This may have led to a further developing of relationships after the conclusion of the program.

Student attitudes

We knew that students, particularly those from ethnic backgrounds, would not consider voice programs successful unless the program results in action. Some comments from students mirror this feeling. After a focus group had concluded, on her way to the door, a student said in passing:

"You better do something with this. It's going to be a waste of time if you don't." *(Abby)*

Another student, approximately two weeks after the final presentation of results had been delivered to the entire student cohort, approached me and said:

"When are we going to get cracking with the next part of the voice project? We said all this stuff about our English classes, but has anyone told Mr Bond (her English teacher) our feedback? ... We are still sitting in classes doing the same old stuff ... you guys said you were going to listen to us!" *(Kim)*

Teachers reported that classroom behaviour was not always perfect during the focus groups. Some students expressed their disagreements with classmates in a disrespectful

manner. Furthermore, teachers reported that some students felt forced or intimidated to support other students in their focus group. This may have led to 'group-think', a situation in which a person goes along with other group members to prevent disharmony and a loss of relationships. Although all students were given a chance to speak, most focus groups were dominated by one or two members who already had the communication skills to do so. In some respect, the barriers were not overcome. This may have led to a breaking of formed relationships between students, which would naturally hinder the final result. It has been observed that more students have self-reported with wellbeing issues to members of staff since the program completion. This may be an unintended outcome of the project.

Teacher attitudes

Teachers reflected that the program's structure and planning was positive. They felt actively supported, and asserted that it was interesting to see the view of the students and hear their concerns without judgement. They observed that

- not one student held back in their opinion of the school,
- students took it seriously and left the room feeling like an important member of the school community,
- it was interesting to see what they liked and disliked about learning,
- some students who often do not speak, did so and gained confidence when they did,
- students came to the workshop with ideas already in mind and felt prepared to have a say, and
- it was nice to hear the voices of students rather than the teachers during the workshop.

There were some challenges for some teachers in implementing the program: it was hard for some to hold their tongue when students went against something they felt strongly about. Although teachers were prepared for this through the training, it was said that nothing could prepare them for the moment in which this occurred.

"It can be hard to not reply back when a part of you feels like they are disrespecting your values and part of the reason you became a teacher." *(Mary, teacher)*

Teachers might also use student voice to advance their own agendas. Of the workshops facilitated by subject leading teachers, the subject specific content, excursions around the subject, or school policy involving their subject was always noted. I also found myself pushing my own agenda subconsciously – especially in regards to the engagement program taught by our school and the excursions that I had designed in the hope that school leadership would see the relevance for the engagement program and therefore refrain from cutting time from the subject.

Teachers mentioned that the workshop time frame was too short, and that the workshop content felt crammed into the short time periods provided by the school. They felt rushed,

particularly in workshop one, and this may have impacted on meaningful drawings from the students because they were not given ample time to achieve the objective. It was suggested that student voice becomes part of the engagement Year 9 program, a core subject at the school, in which each student participates. It was suggested that the voice project could be moved to earlier in the year, to allow for more time for the project to be completed. This would also allow for the addition of the next step: teachers and students working together to complete small-scale projects based on student voice. Unfortunately, the short time frame of the project prevented this from occurring. The teacher to student relationships may have been hampered by the limited time for the project and could have been further improved if these changes could be made.

The survey

The student survey that was completed before and after the program showed improvements on all items across the project. The short duration for survey completion could have led to more data being obtained. In hindsight, it would have been beneficial to measure the survey data of participants directly after they had participated in the various workshops that the program offered. This would have allowed me to see which workshops had the most impact on student to teacher relationships, and to consider if the conclusions of the scholarly literature were relevant within my own school context.

The surveys were written in plain English, and it was thought that they were easy for the students to understand. However, the poor literacy levels of the students may have contributed to results, and the students needed further preparation to process the survey vocabulary, particularly considering the high English as a Second Language student percentage, as well as the new arrivals from various overseas nations. In the future, teachers need to explore this with the class before the survey to ensure that students have the language skills necessary to understand the question content.

The ethnic backgrounds of the students should have been a more pressing concern, especially considering that it was identified as a point of consideration within the literature. We didn't adequately consider how the voice of ethnic minority students would differ from those of others. Perhaps this should have been included in some of the role-play scenarios, or the teachers provided with some of the research about what might occur during the workshops.

Reflection

I now understand how important planning is for future implementation. For the project to have as much success as possible, many facilitating factors and barriers have to be identified and increased or decreased respectively. In teaching, time is always a factor, and the planning before the project ensured that the context was recognised.

Similarly, I now have an appreciation for how vital the celebration of success is in projects of this scale. Action research can be mentally exhausting for the participants. Celebrating success, even when relatively minor, creates enthusiasm and drive for the team. This enhances motivation, and a desire to see the action research through to the reflective stage.

Conclusions

Students need action to occur to be able to gain the full benefits from their student voices. While the school context did not allow this to occur, we hope that future planning around student voice will lead to the concept of **student agency**, where teachers and students work collaboratively to achieve a project based on student choice.

Students need to be able to see the purpose of the program in its entirety. If they view the program as tokenistic, they will let future year levels know this, and this will influence their behaviour and attitude towards participation.

We recognise that some students, who did not attend the workshops, had no opportunity to take part in the program. Of the target group of 102 Year 9 students, only 84 students finally participated in all three workshops. The 18 students who did not attend one of the workshops may have influenced the final results of the survey because they missed the chance to develop relationships with their teachers as the other students did.

Future directions

Several questions have been raised about directions for student voice at our school, and its impact on student to teacher relationships in an ethnically diverse community: *How can we further train staff with the communication skills that they need to be a teacher in our school? How can we make our ethnically diverse school into a more inclusive environment?*

The student voice project will look to add more workshops, allowing all students to have a voice in a safe and secure environment. Drawing is most effective for the students; we can see the higher quality of qualitative data that was presented during the first workshop compared to the other two workshops.

In a wider context, and for educators using student voice in their own programs, it is clear that teachers need certain communication skills to be able to facilitate such programs successfully. Likewise, the literacy levels of the students need to be addressed to enhance the validity of the survey data and to ensure that they have sufficient vocabulary to articulate their understanding of the situation.

The program may have been too large in scope to fit into the time frame allotted for the project. More time was needed for the workshops, and moving the program to earlier in the year, as well as including the program into our engagement wellbeing subject during curriculum time, will no doubt be beneficial. Teachers also needed more resources, including training on the way in which ethnicity could impact on participation. Specifically, it has been recognised that it is important to focus on the relationship between ethnicity and language, and on how meanings and values are shaped by ethnic status. This is not just important for the present program, but for the overall quality of teaching in the school. It will allow for a better understanding of student experience, a better relationship between teachers and students, and, ultimately, better outcomes for both groups.

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Democracy in action: by students, for students

A group of Year 11 and Year 12 Student Leaders from **Point Cook Senior Secondary College** conducted a review into the way in which we elect our School Captains. Follow us on our journey from review, to research, to consultation all the way through to implementation!

Our Group and Focus Area

At the beginning of this year, Student Leadership outlined its key concerns and priority areas for 2019 and we decided to review our election processes for positions of leadership in our school. As a group, we felt that our current processes were not as democratic as we would like, nor were they reflective of our perception of the role of elected student representatives and who they were accountable to.

We felt that this needed review (as there were aspects of this system that we disagreed with), but also that we were unsure about our options when it came to alternatives, so we spent a lot of Term 1 and 2 conducting research into different models.

Research

We began our research by asking ourselves questions around representation. We are a Senior School that only has students from Year 10 to 12, and we felt that, in order for a School Captain to truly represent all students, they needed to be answerable to as many students as possible. So, we made the decision to double the electorate by also allowing Year 10s to vote in the election. We felt that this would also reposition the role of School Captains to no longer prioritise their own year level, but to desire to represent all students.

The next issue we considered was eligibility. We met several times, discussing the quotas that we had in place, but we rested on removing the boy-girl quota. We wanted to make sure that the best candidates were elected and gender was not necessarily a determining factor in a student's ability to represent the voice of students. This was quite a contentious point amongst the group because we were worried whether this choice was too radical and when we brought this back to our Student Leadership meeting or to our Principal's Meeting, that this

change would spell the end for any of our reforms. But, in the end, we resolved to push through with this change and seek outside consultation and take that feedback under advisement.

The most complex area of research was amongst voting. We had decided to allow more people to vote, but how would we organise it? How would we count the vote? What would the election process *look like*? One of our group members had just come back from the VicSRC Congress where he was on the winning team. He stressed the need for more political education in schools. He suggested that we should try and make this experience as 'real' as possible to what our students would have to do in the real world. So, we decided to make some changes, which you can read below

Summary of changes

After a term and a half of debate, research and discussion within our team, whilst also regularly updating Student Leadership in our meetings, we felt that we were ready to take our final proposal to Student Leadership to be voted on.

Consultation

We knew that we had the Mayor, Mia Shaw, of Wyndham City Council coming to view our meeting, so we thought that this would be the perfect time to put this to the larger team for debate and a vote. The way our system works is that we need to submit items for the agenda to our central email for the School Captains to read. Then they determine what will be on the Agenda for the next meeting in order of priority. Our submission was then put as the main agenda item for the meeting and our proposal was sent to all Student Leaders to read so we could have informed debates about our proposal.

This initial consultation with Student Leadership resulted in some debates around the gender quota, with a leader suggesting an amendment to keep the quota. This motion was not seconded and the full proposal was voted on and approved, with one leader dissenting.

Aspect	What we had	Our changes
Eligibility	Only next year's Year 12s	Any student who will be attending in 2020 (ie Year 10s and 11s)
Voting System	Two boys and two girls with the highest amount of votes	Proportional Representation
Speeches	Held on the day	Held on the week before
Nomination	Nominated by a teacher	Completion of a 200 word manifesto outlining what you wanted to achieve and how you will achieve it
How students voted	While listening to speeches	Cast like a real election being marked off an electoral roll, voting at a booth and casting your vote. Early voting was also held for students away on excursion that day.
Removing Quotas	Top two boys and top two girls became School Captain and Vice School Captain	Nominated to stand for School Captain and/or Vice School Captain. The first two students to reach the quota for each ballot became School Captain and Vice School Captain

Even though this decision gave us the authority to set this as an item for a meeting with our principals, we decided to widen our consultation with an open forum, open to all members of our school community (staff and students). We did not see a great level of interest or dissent in this forum so we took it to our Principal's Meeting where it was agreed upon.

Implementation

We gave ourselves a three-week period of Term Three to run our elections. Nominations closed and those students who completed their manifestos were eligible to stand, with ten students (including two Year 10s) standing for School Captain and three students standing for Vice School Captain. Their manifestos were put on the Student Leadership noticeboard for staff and students to read, as well as to ask further questions of the candidates.

We then held speeches for each candidate in front of all Year 10s and Year 11s a week before the election day, so that students would have time to reflect on what the candidates had to say and really consider their vote. An expressed desire of the group was to minimise the popularity vote as much as possible and to engage students with politics and the political process.

Finally, election day came around. This event was organised by students, with Year 12s assisting as electoral officers and ballot counters. We were able to organise 505 students to cast their votes in 30 minutes, which was a great achievement.

Next, came the most difficult part: the vote counting process. We wrote up an easy to understand explanation of how to count the votes for the Year 12 volunteers (as we felt that they were the most impartial) and, once we eliminated all of the informal votes, calculated the quota and counted primary votes, we had three of the four positions accounted for. The position of second School Captain took several redistributions and calculations but we eventually found all our leaders.

The Year 12 volunteers then informed the School Captains who announced the Captains for 2020 in front of a whole school assembly. We thought it was important to put up the primary votes for the whole school to see, so that there was accountability and the integrity of the election could be maintained. Further, we thought that this was a good way to educate about how preferential voting works and how preferences moved around. We decided however, to not publish how the votes moved between recounts, only moving the names of students from top to bottom after each count.

Review

Our first thought was that this took a lot of effort! We volunteered a lot of time to conduct research, sit in meetings, debate ideas and the direction of our Working Group, plan the election, liaise with staff and convince others in the school to believe in our changes.

We felt really empowered by this process. These changes were initiated by us, we were supported by our leadership team and principal class to pursue these changes, and they supported our changes wholeheartedly. This tells us that Student Leadership can create real change in the culture of a school. Even though, from the perspective of our political power, we can only suggest and advise, our commitment to research and accountable processes left no choice but to accept our plans. Moreover, we had over 30 Year 12s donate their time to helping with the system, further highlighting the power of students to create change.

We also saw a lot of engagement in the process. Many of the candidates told us that they were approached by students asking them questions about how they wanted to represent them and why they were standing. On reflection, we thought that this was a good thing but we also remembered that this did not happen for our student representatives on School Council and it is those positions that have a lot more power than School Captain. In future, we think we really need to promote those positions and the important power and responsibility of that position to students to have a more powerful say in the running of our school.

We feel that we have been able to educate other young people on the processes of one of their most important civil responsibilities: to make an informed vote. Over the two ballots, we averaged only 12% informal votes, with the majority incorrectly filled out rather than left blank. While this tells us we needed to explain the process a little better, we still see this as a good result.

We know that this was something small, in the relatively small context of a single school. But small changes accumulate into paradigm shifts. We think our little project shows the capacity of young people to take ownership in a school setting and create meaningful change. We hear a lot about student voice and we wanted to do something for ourselves. We worry that sometimes student voice can be done to us, or it is positioned as something that can be 'given' to us and taken away. But we disagree. Trust us, we know what we are doing.

Electoral Reform Working Group

*Riley Burns (Year 12), Kirsten Canares (Year 11),
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When 'marginalisation melts away': The impact of a flexible 'catch-up' education on slum children's agency

When most children of a school joyfully report that they spend the 'best' time of the day in their school, then an obvious question arises: what can be the reasons behind such 'happiness.' Our curiosity increases if these children come from a marginalised and poor background and live in a less fortunate place, such as a slum.

Poor children, particularly those who live in slum settings, face multiple disadvantages. Generally, these children are viewed through a deficit lens of vulnerabilities where their contribution and participation is not valued; they suffer from socio-economic discrimination and exclusions more than their rich counterparts; and, according to the traditional notion of childhood, their voices are seldom heard due to the cultural construction of age in which they are considered as passive and immature. However, despite these disadvantages, when these children are empowered to voice for what matters about their school life, they confidently describe that their school as the place where they can mostly do and be what they 'like to/wish for/aspire to'.

I interviewed 27 10-14 year old children (19 girls and 8 boys) from a flexible primary school in an urban slum in Dhaka, Bangladesh. **BRAC (Building Resources Across Communities)** is an indigenous Non-Government Organisation (NGO) that offers catch-up education or a second chance to children from a disadvantaged background. The goal of the school is to provide them with a basic primary education and life skills.

In my study, I argue that, by listening to these children's voices, valuable insights can be gained about what they value about their school and how their school influences their agency.

Child poverty and agency

Child poverty has a detrimental effect on children's well-being and development. Children are disproportionately repre-sented among the poor, and often suffer from the irreversible impacts of poverty that affect their mental, physical and emotional development. However, the recognition of children as active agents and the creation of enabling social space for their active participation can enhance their development.

Agency can be broadly defined as the capacity to act freely. The Nobel Laureate **Amartya Sen**, in his **Capability Approach** (CA hereafter) (1985, 1999, 2009), provides an important notion of agency: an agent is *'someone who acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her own values and objectives'* (Sen, 1999: 19). Sen's agency addresses two types of agency: one on an individual level and another for collective action. A person uses individual agency for his or her own personal well-being; but people also use their collective force to bring change in a bigger scale—often as a political change.

The active participation of children is key to their practice of agency and well-being. Sen's **Capability Approach** makes explicit the active and conscious participation of individuals. This participation can enhance children's sense of responsibility for themselves, their peers, teachers, family members and community, and thus they can gain the skills and knowledge necessary in planning, designing, monitoring and managing social contexts such as schools.

Children's active participation can be ensured when they are recognised as social actors: contextualised as active agents and active participants instead of passive and dependent beings. Such recognition replaces the notion of *'children as future adults'* with children as *'much more than future adults'* and *'social actors before they become adults'.* This notion is helpful in advancing children's participation in their social worlds in their own rights, instead of thinking of them as separate entities that only can be active in the future. Recognition of children as social actors is important because children may provide different views regarding them being active actors than those of adult-imposed views. Autonomous voices and activities regarding their well-being are, therefore, significant to ensure children's active participation in social spaces.

Context of the study

Bangladesh is a small, lower middle-income country in South Asia, with a large population of 161 million. It still has a 27% illiterate population aged 15 or above, and over 24% of the population are poor, based on the national poverty line, with over 12% of people extremely poor and living on just US$1.90 a day. However, the country is performing well in various aspects including poverty reduction, gender equality, provision of electricity and sanitation, and annual GDP growth (7.2% in 2017). The status of child poverty remains a critical issue for Bangladesh, as in other developing nations.

To address the dreadful situation of child poverty and its intergenerational effect, concerted efforts to educate children are taken seriously by both government and NGOs in Bangladesh.

The state of Bangladesh primary education is complex and dramatic. Bangladesh has one of the largest primary education systems in the world, with more than 17 million children. Since 1990, primary education, consisting of five years (grades 1-5), has been made free and compulsory for 6-10 year-old children. The primary school enrolment

rate is now over 90%. In the last two decades, Bangladesh has achieved gender parity in primary education. Despite this impressive progress in primary education, the country is still far from successful in terms of access, participation and quality. For example, a third of the primary school students are first generation learners, meaning that their parents are illiterate. Two major problems in Bangladesh primary education are the high rate of student dropout, and the poor quality of education: one in five children in Bangladesh drops out before completing primary education and this rate is double (24%) for the poorest quantile.

Children in Bangladesh attend a total of 12 types of primary schools. While the majority (50% of primary school children) enrol in government schools, the remaining children go to other types of schools, including BRAC's flexible primary schools. BRAC education aims to put poor children, particularly girls, at the centre of its education system. They provide 'catch-up' education or a second chance to achieve basic primary education and life skills, particularly for children who drop out from or who never enrol in mainstream primary schools. BRAC schools are attended by 1.3 million children, and therefore have a significant effect not only on the education of children living in poverty, such as in slums in Bangladesh, but also in the overall provision of primary education.

BRAC primary schools are one-teacher and one-room bamboo- or tin-made rented buildings that have 33 children, where 65% of children are girls. These schools do not have chairs and tables as in mainstream primary schools: the children sit on the floor mats. A cohort of children aged from 7 to 9 years enrols during the same school year and moves together through four years of schooling, which covers five years of the primary curriculum. Schools run 4 to 4.5 hours a day, six days a week. Schools' locations, opening times, and yearly plans are decided in consultation with parents and communities. Amongst the teachers, 97% are female, and are usually Grade 10 completers and paraprofessionals. Child-centred, participatory and gender sensitive methods are used in class. The schools emphasise children's learning in confidence building, rights, nutrition, financial abilities and hygiene. There is no formal summative assessment except the Grade 5 completion public test.

Methodology

I investigated one such BRAC school, situated in an urban slum in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, in order to see how the slum children of the school perceive the impact of their school on their well-being and agency.

In my study, I used a range of participatory ethnographic methods for children, including *photovoice*, drawing and storytelling, and individual semi-structured interviews. I also observed the classroom and kept a reflexive journal.

The 27 participating students were invited to draw four pictures about what they liked most to do, what they wanted to do or be in the future, what they liked most about their school, and what they wanted to change in their school. Then each of the participants took three pictures of their school, and these were used as prompts for discussions. Finally, each participant took part in storytelling sessions regarding their drawings, followed by in-depth semi-structured interviews. Children's narratives and interpretations of their drawings provided insights into their experiences in the school and family environments and their future aspirations. In the final phase, I cross-checked the validity of findings with the children, in which they could formally confirm, raise or reject their views.

Findings

Children as educational and social agents

Students identified the most effective factors of these schools as their child-friendly classrooms, interactive pedagogy, and caring relationships between teachers, students and parents. The caring relationships and the interactive teaching and learning practices of the school are reflected in Dola's drawing about what she liked most in her school (Fig. 1).

Children's agentic roles and participation can be reflected in how they freely and reasonably take actions for the well-being of themselves, peers, teacher and families, and the betterment of their school. The positive relationship between the teacher and peers, which all the 27 children highly valued, had a significant impact on children's sense of belonging to their school as an agency-enabling space. 'Family' is the analogy most of the children used to describe their close relationship and connection with each other. Koli (10, a girl) articulated her reason to help her peers by stating: *'in this school, we usually take care of each other. We're not only good friends, we're also like siblings for each other.'*

This simple but powerful statement grasps the depth in their peer relationship. Dola (11, a girl) also shows how, with due care, she took valued initiatives to help her least performing peer, Lina (12, a girl):

Fig. 1: Dola's drawing on the interactive pedagogy and a positive and caring relationship between the children and the teacher of the school.

I always help Lina in learning as she is the weakest girl in the class and most importantly, she has no one at home to assist her... I help her in all subjects... I know that both of her parents are illiterate, and she has no brother or sister at home to help her in learning... others also help her.

Implicit in the above reflection is how the school created an environment in which children could participate and build on their strengths, through which children such as Dola could utilise her agency to help her peer and solve her peer's learning difficulties. The ethical and relational ties and the caring practices among the children were so crucial that the children not only considered their peer's weak educational performance but also prioritised support to those children who were the most deprived among the deprived—whose parents had been illiterate or where there was no support at home. Helping others can be seen as a valued agency, especially among people in contexts of poverty, who are often positioned as recipients of others' help and incapable of making contributions. This repositioning of the children from marginal, poor and incapable, to solution makers, was perceived by the children as a significant contribution the school has on their practices of agency and well-being.

School arrangements of skills development were highly valued by all children. The school emphasised knowledge and skills in health and hygiene, teamwork, creativity and aesthetics. Children valued these skills because these were the skills that they did not have enough chances to learn from home.

Most of the children used simple measures to keep their classroom presentable. A photo of the school's bulletin board (Fig. 2) taken by Milon (13, a boy) provides an excellent example of this. For girls, the school mirror and comb (Fig. 3) were important symbols of aesthetics and hygiene. Koli (10, a girl), for example, explained that combing her hair was *'about discipline, looking good and feeling good.'* Similarly, Sagor (11, a boy) explained that being orderly and disciplined is their way of maintaining the school's reputation as a good school.

In each of my 12 days of classroom observation, I found that most of the children attended the school as early as 7:20 am: 40 minutes earlier than the school started. During this time, the children actively participated as a team in setting up and cleaning their school: sweeping the classroom, cleaning the floor mats, wiping the dust away from school resources and refilling the water dispenser. Children used the Bangla phrase *'shahajjo kori'* (to help others) to talk about the depth of their peer relationships and helping attitude for each other in skills development.

Fig. 2: The school bulletin board; Milon took the photo.

Fig. 3: The mirror and a comb of the school; Koli took the photo.

It was interesting that the classroom setting-up activity had been a voluntary, collaborative, and adult presence-free activity. It seemed to me that, 'by default,' children formed a team in which the members utilised their conscious agentic roles to make their classroom organised and presentable. Irrespective of their ages, children spontaneously engaged in this team effort and performed their share. Koli, for instance, stated:

> Setting-up the school in the morning is not a big thing to do. We try to make and keep our school beautiful, tidy and presentable with whatever resources we have. We are happy to work for our school... Our teacher taught us from Grade 1 how to always keep the school clean. Now, we know very well what to do for our school.

On the other hand, the majority of the children disliked the school's old ripped-off and dirty mats, which they identified as being a source of 'unhealthy things' of their 'beautiful' school. The children reported that, due to resource limitations, the school could not change those. Together with 18 other children of the school, Imon (13, a boy) drew the picture of these ripped-off mats. In response to the question: if they would have been given a magic wand what they would change, each of these children reported replacing the dirty mats with new ones, which according to Sohag (11, a boy): *'the key lacking the school ever had.'*

Fig. 5: School's poster related to financial education: 'We shall use the savings responsively.' Kajol took the photo.

The children's conscious and active participation and valued decision-making in school activities implies how the school empowered children to develop their educational, health and social skills. The children in my study were found not only to use their individual agency for their own personal well-being, they also used their collective force to bring positive changes in the lives of their peers and their school.

Children as economic agents

The school also trained the children in basic financial and savings capabilities. Nearly half of the children valued their school opportunities to freely participate in co-curricular activities, including savings activities.

Children were trained to save money—whatever the small amount it was—given by their parents and relatives. Every week on Thursdays, children calculated how much money they collected, how much they used to buy anything, and what their net savings were for the week. This activity enabled them to practise their agency with effective power as well as direct control over their savings. During this activity, the children helped each other to calculate their savings and inspired each other in saving. These savings activities also empowered the children to use their autonomy or freely act on their choices without the control and influence of the adult such as the teacher. Most of the children reported that they use their savings to buy educational goods such as pens or notebooks, or to help their parents to buy groceries or other necessary things for their family.

During the photography session, Kajol (12, a girl) took a photo of a wall-poster (Fig. 5) that once inspired her savings habit. It was one of her favourite posters in the school. Since then she started to save the money she received

Fig. 4: Imon's drawing on the dirty- ripped off school mats.

Fig 6: Children's money-saving bag. Nahar (13, a girl) took the photo

from parents or relatives. This poster was instrumental to her economic well-being related to saving money responsively. For her, she took pride in her savings as she found the best use of her savings by occasionally buying basic groceries to make dinner for her family. With a happy gesture, she stated that she *'barely could do anything for her family; however, doing this for her family made her to grow as a responsible person and to take care of her parents.'*

The school's savings education was an enabling and substantial transformative factor for children to use their agency freedom to make a positive impact on their family's well-being. Children felt proud, empowered and happy about these caring efforts for their parents. Further, slum children's valuing of their participation in the savings activity demonstrated that children are not merely the passive recipients of skills; rather they can be active contributors to their own development as well as to that of others such as parents.

Concluding discussion: the learning

The 27 children of the flexible primary school valued the contribution of the school to their well-being and agency. Their voices and insights demonstrate that an enabling environment, close bonds, and a caring and positive relationship between the teacher and peers and among peers is integral in children's agency practices and social participation. The school's training in socio-economic and educational skills, not only impacts on children's individual agency, but also influences their collective agency. Children learnt to value responsible actions for their own well-being and the well-being of their peers and family. The school enables slum children to be social actors and agents

who could bring about positive changes, and this could be a tool to combat the negative impact of poverty and break the deficit notion of 'less capable and marginalised' individuals. In return, as a way of giving back, the betterment of the school was one of the main goals of the children's agentic roles.

We can gain deep insights from listening to the voices of children in poverty. One of the central features of Sen's **Capability Approach** is to evaluate individuals' reasoned agency. Child development aims to enable them to become agents of their own lives and for others in communities. As Sen argues, in development activities: *'the people have to be seen … as being actively involved—given the opportunity—in shaping their own destiny, and not just as passive recipients of … development programs'* (Sen, 1999: 53). A school's role is to assist in children's development of their freedom to make decisions and advance the key goals of their lives.

The conditions of a safe, supportive, and quality educational environment foster possibilities for children's learning, empowerment, and well-being. For BRAC students, their school is a socialising institution as well as an educational one. Slum children utilised their school space not only as a learning and skill-building space but as a socialising place. By capitalising on the school space, and contrary to the wider discourses around children in poverty that portray them as largely vulnerable and 'less capable', these children demonstrated that they could take actions that have value in their own as well as their peers' lives, interests and aspirations.

Finally, as the children aptly helped highlight, child-friendly classrooms, an active pedagogy, and a positive, respectful and caring relationship between the teacher and peers were integral to children's agency and well-being. Children used the analogies of 'family' and 'home' to describe their close bonding with each other. Children attributed their school as a space in the slum that fosters a range of valuable skills. A strong sense of ownership of their school often acted as a source of support and care for their peers and the teacher.

That was why 24 out of 27 children identified their school-time as the 'best part' of their day. Despite some barriers and limitations, this is how a meaningful, participatory and flexible catch-up education can have a positive impact on slum children's agency and well-being.

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We were enormously saddened to hear of the death, at the end of August, of **Dr Tony Knight**. Tony was, in many ways, the inspiration for much local thinking and practice in this field of work; in particular, his work with us in Brunswick inspired the initiation of this *Connect* journal.

In his teaching and research at LaTrobe University, in his collaborations with the late **Professor Art Pearl**, and in his associations with several of the Educational Task Forces around Melbourne in the 1970s, he laid the ground in theory and practice for many initiatives that have become more commonplace now.

Tony always maintained a critical and challenging point of view about this work, drawing attention to the broader political, social and economic context for initiatives, while applauding the competence and leadership of both students and teachers.

In this issue of *Connect*, we revisit three examples of Tony's writing and talks, from 1980 to 2009 - and recognise them for the visionary and challenging perspectives they provide.

The first comes from *Connect* 3, in April 1980; the second is part of his opening address at the **First National Youth Participation in Education Workshop**, held at The University of Melbourne in August 1980 (reprinted from *Connect* 6/7 in December 1981); and the third is a reflection from ten years ago, in *Connect* 180 (December 2009), on the occasion of *Connect*'s 30th anniversary.

Why youth participation programs?

There is no revelation involved in the statement that the chances, and choices, for youth to participate (politically, economically and psychologically) in our society are being continually eroded. Increasing numbers of youth are experiencing the fact that they have no place, and there is no place, in the legitimate social structures of our social system. These youth are disconnected and the personal and social implications of this locking out process are quite dramatic and often very destructive.

I do not intent to quote a litany of side effects from this social alienation because that is documented quite thoroughly in other social welfare, educational and government sources. The implications, however, of increasing unemployment and lack of perceived future for youth is having dramatic effects on the schooling process. The glue or promissory note that we held out in 'education' – that more schooling equals a career or work placement – is no longer true for numbers of young people. It is still accurate that a correlation does exist between actual school credentials and status work, but only for the upper echelon of students. It is the middle (HSC) and lower levels of credentials that are being excluded.

Considerable talk in business and political circles about 'declining educational standards' abound. Even if we had data to make such comparisons (which we don't) it is a source of speculation as to why students would continue to take seriously those 'standards'

when a distinct majority know they have lost their legitimacy. Schools have become discredited institutions for these youth because they know that years of schooling does not necessarily connect them to legitimate and personally satisfying futures. Meanwhile, back at the school, teachers, parents and students have to face this reality on a daily basis.

Where do we go from here? Another article might well offer political and economic debate as to possible 'solutions'. But this is not the intention of this article. To continue with the compensatory, remedial, or old liberal colonialist strategies to help 'failing students' is, according to the evidence, certain to produce failure on our part as teachers. Evidence of our success in these areas is scant and shaky to say the least. Let us therefore explore the possibility of alternative programs that could make sense.

Youth owning their own experiences

One of the problems with out efforts in the past is that much of our program work was not seen by recipients (ie students) as being very useful or personally meaningful. This shouldn't come as a surprise. I don't imagine any of us enjoy being seen as remedial, special or whatever, especially if these categories are embarrassing or demeaning. To shift away from the often passive and dependent role imposed on students by this process, then becomes an alternative.

If we, as educators, are also to see our teaching as introducing students to political, cultural, economic and personal understanding and debate, then our programs should reflect that concern both theoretically and practically. The problem with many school programs is their rampant anti-intellectualism, which is often hidden under the classic liberal colonialist strategy of student-centred teaching or providing safe environments for students free from the drama of outside political or economic realities. While not all the content of these teaching strategies can be seen as undesirable, it is nevertheless very difficult for students to own their own experiences when subject to such close attention and control. How is it then possible for students to move forward

in understanding of their world, while at the same time feeling that their school and community is meaningful and they have a part in its planning and process? The task is how to provide a context of meaning and purpose for students, that enables essential educational skills and learning to take place.

Programs or projects will have to be seen by the community as useful and young people, in turn, can feel useful and wanted by their work within the school/community. It is the connection between school and community that becomes a key to the program theory, especially if the program can be linked with a sense of social and economic usefulness. Students can bring to the experience their own history and skills, and blend these qualities with the program intentions.

A good example of this process is shown in the youth tutoring youth programs, where young people can bring both cultural and language differences to a tutoring relationship and have their background highly valued. They are not put down by their differences, but instead they can teach through them. In my experience, I do not know of any program that has not witnessed a positive interaction between tutor and tutee. In educational terms, it is trying to set a meaningful social context for students, in order that they have a reason for learning.

Examples of Youth Participation Programs

- Peer and cross-age tutoring
- Education radio programs
- Youth employment skills and service projects
- Child-care programs
- Peer group programs in drug abuse prevention
- Clerical aides for teachers
- Office aides in administration counselling and library
- Student evaluation aides
- Student advice centre in a school
- Youth consultants
- Student study centre
- Student cooperative paperback and supply store
- School recreation facilities programs
- Student-Faculty Advisory Council
- Youth involvement in community programs
- Youth advisors to regional and school departments
- Elective courses developed and taught by teams of students
- Youth operated study groups
- Paired learning programs

The purpose of these programs is to allow students to develop and demonstrate competencies to:

1   Function as participants with adults in the planning and the resolution of problems in school and community setting;

2   Learn the processes of debate, discussion and decision-making in group structures;

3   Develop and plan human service activities;

4   Link academic content and learning in order to deal with important social issues.

The importance of these programs is to find new careers, new functions and new roles in schools that broaden competencies and life experiences. The world at large certainly doesn't offer youth (or adults) a very coherent perspective or worldview. The reality is that the schoolhouse in 1980 increases this cultural fragmentation (or alienation) rather than attempting to take on, and make clear, the critical social issues of our time. Seldom do the economic/social issues that encroach daily on youth become reflected in school curriculum content and process.

These programs are offered in the spirit of debate and discussion. There is no evidence we cannot solve social problems. But there is considerable evidence that, if we ignore them, they will get worse.

A new definition of the 3Rs

I agree that students must be both literate and numerate. What youth participation programs try to establish is a different form of the 3Rs. That is: **Reading, Research** and **Report**. Each program builds into its format a formal statement of academic intentions. It is not an escape from intellectual skills; to the contrary, it is a strong confirmation of skill training to move students through the reading,

research and reporting of their program experiences. There is nothing particularly new in this proposal. For example, Alfred North Whitehead, in his *Aims of Education*, written in 1929, proposed that instruction have immediate relevance and that it be connected to other life experiences and learning.

The problem with so much of the schooling process is its vigorous irrelevance to the lives of young people. Moving young people through stages of skill acquisition, intellectual understanding, to the consideration of problem solving, becomes the teaching strategy involved.

In summary, what youth participation programs aim to achieve is to establish processes within and between school and community, that have political and economic significance, to develop a sense of caring and sharing within the program, and that the overall context provides for students a reason for learning in order to participate in problem-solving activities. None of this is easy. Variations on this theme are all within the imagination of teacher and student. It however does appear, from past program experience, that these programs can contribute to student educational learning and a sense of social responsibility.

Dr Tony Knight
Connect 3 (April, 1980)

The political, economic and social context of youth participation programs

Excerpts from opening address at the First National Student Participation Conference/Workshop: August 26-28, 1980

I'm really delighted to see this Conference get off the ground and to have as many young people here as we have. I personally am delighted to see this addition to educational thinking in this country take place on a national scale. I very much welcome all of you because I think it's very much a first step and you people are all pioneers of a particular kind. I think you're to be commended for that.

Let me just try to put together some things to set a context for this Conference. I want to do two things: firstly, to talk about the place of young people in the community in the 1980s, and secondly, to talk generally about what this means for young people and for others who work in schools – such as teachers and parents.

I guess that any talk like this, starts with some assumptions – some we admit to and some we don't. This talk has an assumption and that is that we try to use education to solve the critical social issues of our time. We don't use education to fit people back into the status quo or look at the world as an unchanging situation. The world is in flux and we have some critical social issues and we have to deal with them. So that's an assumption I make about education in general.

These issues, the critical social issues, that I see threatening human survival on this spaceship Earth, to use Buckminster Fuller's expression, are ones that most of us are quite aware of:

- The inadequate distribution of finite resources, especially energy and food;

- Population increase. In the next 19 years, we will double the population on this Earth. Already the children have been born that will reproduce that doubling of the population;

- Poverty;

- Racism;

- Destruction of our social environment.

All those I see as critical social issues and, from my stance, they've got to be taken up in schools and to be seen as important parts of the school curriculum. I think that, unless we tackle these problems, they will get worse. The good side of the ledger is that we have no evidence whatsoever that we can't solve them. There's no evidence that they're beyond solution.

So what we're trying to argue is that we do create a society that does allow for choice and that this choice is involved in education, work, culture and a range of other activities.

I'm further arguing again that these proposals be built into curriculum inside schools and that all those practices are

at least consistent with long-term goals – some vision about the world that could be. This brings us to the necessity of trying to create models, and this is where, of course, youth participation programs start to connect.

But I also do start with another set of assumptions about the world and about people, about 'human nature'. I tend to have a wide view of human potential. I don't think that any of us have ever reached our potential, and I don't think there are ant tests that can predict intelligence – none that I know of. All they test, maybe, is what we did at that particular time on the testing procedure. My assumption is that people can learn and are capable of solving difficult problems. That's a particular view of personkind. Unless you start with an assumption like that, youth participation programs won't make much sense. You can't be a cynic and take the sorts of stands that you people do in the work you do in the field.

Much of this flies in the face of what we do in schools, because schools are on about sorting young people into slots, into various economic destinations, if you like, based on some notion of ability. Margaret Mead once talked about the schoolroom as a place where we all learn to run the race alone. Cooperative learning ventures, such as the sort of thing we're doing in youth participation programs, are generally never encouraged – in fact, it is against the ideology of the essential school.

However, having made these two assumptions – one about human nature and one about what schools should be doing – before we enter into that debate, I would like to look at the position of youth and why it's essential that different forms of learning and understanding need to take place. We need to establish the context of where people are, before we can answer the question of what knowledge is worth knowing in the 1980s.

…

Arthur Pearl argues for a 'post-technical human services society'. He argues that it is possible to talk about a full-employment economy. If we believe we can't do that, then they've got us, because that's their version of truth. We can design a society where a full-employment economy is possible, where we can think about what work needs to be done, and we can also talk about creating a society which doesn't use or need the same amount of energy and can fulfill work that needs to be done on society. I think we can talk about transportation, education, care of the aged and young, health aesthetics, environmental repair and extension, labour-intensive agriculture, cottage industries, restaurants and other sorts of services. Those are all human-service activities in which all of you work with your youth participation programs.

By trying to create new forms of human service in society, we try to demonstrate to the community at large, a community that has forgotten how to employ young people, ways in which we can be socially useful.

So when you do a youth tutoring program, or when you are concerned with looking after young people or old people, or whatever it might be, it's not just an issue of connecting to that particular thing or person or job, but the wider issue is that we are creating ways in which we can demonstrate to society as a whole that we can create new forms of work. If we can show those forms of work are necessary, then we can do something very valuable.

That's where I see the sense of the connection for those sort of work models.

Youth participation programs are a linkup to those work models, a way in which we can try to discuss a culture of optimism instead of a culture of pessimism, and a way in which to build a hope back into the work force. We can open up a debate among staff particularly in schools, about the ways in which unemployment can be solved and we can create models that both address the issues and create choices.

We have learnt that there are two distinct sources of influence. We have to be able to give people a sense of hope, a sense of meaning, and that we're able to show that usefulness is important; all of that comes out of what we know about social psychology.

The other thing we know about people who behave conventionally in society – most people who have a good job and those sorts of things – is that they're bonded to society through affiliations with conventional groups. What youth participation programs try to do is address the central core of those bonding conditions such as commitment, attachment, belief and involvement, and try to build these into programs. If we have schools that are continually alienating kids and pushing them off to one side, those sorts of things are not going to be met – and I think they're important.

The final point is to try to have one eye on the big picture: the sort of world you want to live in – to be able to share those visions with people you're working with, to be able to demonstrate to the world at large that young people can be useful, that they can be competent, and that these programs have a valued place in the school curriculum. It makes more sense to do these sorts of things than other sorts of things in schools. It's an important part of a school's curriculum that we have these valuing activities that make sense to young people.

It's up to young people who are working in these programs to share your views of the world as widely as possible, and to make sense of it in the wider community.

I admire the work you're doing. I've read with great interest the reports I've seen in *Connect*, and I particularly admire your courage to stand up in the face of a very hostile and often very conservative school setting, and often very hostile environments – stand up for what you believe to be important. If the program experience that you get leads to those sorts of lessons, it's been worthwhile. I wish all of you the very best luck in sharing your visions about the world you want to live in, with both your schoolmates and friends, and the adults in our community.

Dr Tony Knight
Excerpts from Opening Address:
Connect *6-7, February 1981*
For the full address, see the on-line copy of this issue:
https://bit.ly/2ZkhlLK

On *Connect's* 30th anniversary

Each time I open my mailbox to see a newly minted *Connect*, I am filled with enthusiasm and the expectation of a good read. I have never been disappointed. My good fortune is that I was present at the first edition.

During all of my years as a teacher-educator, my university students were introduced through *Connect*, to a constantly evolving series of school and classroom projects, where school students were initiating projects, and developing as problem-solvers and classroom researchers.

The 30 years of developing practice can be classified as longitudinal research, through the use of action-research, and a developing theory of school learning (student learning through practice); theory was generated from data emerging from actual community and school-based programs, run by students and teachers. This learning practice was invaluable for teachers in training, as it made a very important addition to their knowledge of teaching and learning practice.

Learning 'to risk' was an important component for the school students involved in the learning process. Over time, school students moved from personal to community issues that they saw as important. Local issues were a starting point that led to broader themes to be debated and researched. All of this practice and student school-based research stretched university students toward newer forms of classroom teaching and learning practice. It became known, in an abbreviated form as, 'learning by doing'. Other contributors will talk of the valuable contribution made by students and teachers; however *Connect* also added to teacher education as a much valued research teaching model. Well done *Connect*; it is 30 years of invaluable service to education in general.

Main Challenges for the Next 30 Years

Connect was a critical addition to our (with Art Pearl) collective successes and failures, in developing our understanding of democratic education.

The next development for *Connect*, as I see it, is an emphasis on developing forms of democratic education a part of everyday schooling. The concept of democracy is cited regularly in educational circles, however there is a hidden curriculum involved in almost all contemporary writings, ie a process of osmosis. Such a process cannot achieve a democracy. It cannot be achieved from outside the school, nor from top-down administration. It must be learned by active practice, by a 'doing' on a daily basis. Each step will include a hard combination of vigorous debate and practice.

Connect is well placed and situated in schools to start small, and expand when ready. Our premise here is that students will learn democracy by practising democracy, by learning to change their world, and reflect on that action.

What are the principles being proposed for this democracy within schools? For example, how do students address authority (always problematic in a democracy)? How do students/schools achieve inclusiveness? How do students learn to be democratic citizens? What inalienable rights do students have? How is racism defined?

Well, that is a full agenda, and a good start for the competent student and supportive teachers to take on.

Dr Tony Knight
Visiting Scholar, Victoria University
*from **Connect** 180 (30th anniversary)*
December 2009

Tony Knight (right) with Art Pearl (second from left) - from Connect 180, 2009

Remembering Tony Knight - Educator

December 17, 1933 – August 27, 2019

Few people could claim to have influenced the shape of contemporary school education in Victoria, and even Australia, more than the recently deceased **Dr Tony Knight**.

Tony was best known to a very wide network of Australian and international educators through his long career with LaTrobe University reaching back to the mid 1970s.
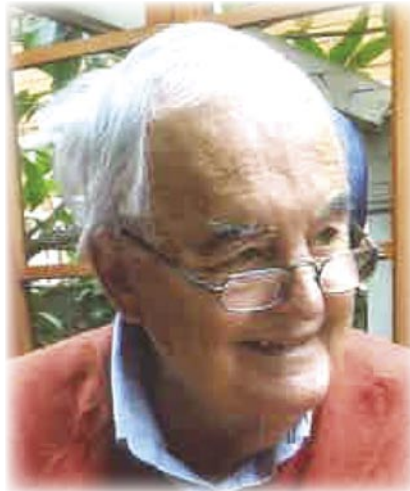
Soon after he had completed a PhD in the United States under the supervision of the equally well-known **Professor Art Pearl**, he returned to Australia and set about his lecturing and education program. It had a very strong emphasis on students being actively engaged in their learning journey, teachers behaving as intellectual leaders, a global outlook, and the importance of democratic procedures and practices being embedded in our schools, not just our communities.

These four cornerstones of his university life, his work in schools and with the wider education community accelerated the transformation of Victorian classrooms and the teaching profession from their more inward-looking and conservative practices. Like Art Pearl, he was ferociously opposed to the streaming of students according to unreliable testing practices, and encouraged all staff to have high expectations of each student, and a theory of how to assist young people to become competent and independent adults.

Whether it was in his everyday conversations, or his academic lectures, books and journal articles, he emphasised the importance of 'learning by doing' such that students would not just learn the basics of English and Maths, but do it in an applied and creative manner. He was, therefore, a strong proponent of students learning to extend their language and maths powers through programs like cross age tutoring, oral history projects, and student research and action teams. Students, he would advocate, can be active producers of new knowledge, not just informed consumers of important and past history.

The role of the teacher, in all this, was to provide intellectual leadership and structure classrooms and learning opportunities to introduce students to a broad range of insights into any issue or subject, then expect them to improve on, and create new outcomes based on those knowledges and skills. Becoming highly literate and numerate were first order goals for him, along with maximizing every student's option to make their way positively in the changing world of work.

Tony Knight, like all those associated with what could be called a social democratic view of education, placed a very high value on inclusion of all groups who bring their stamp to contemporary life, regardless of socio-economic status, ethnicity, cultural diversity, or gender. Having being heavily influenced by his experiences in the USA he was a pioneering advocate for a multicultural approach to schooling. He insisted that you didn't reduce racism by talking about it, but by creating structured opportunities for people of different cultural orientations to work in joint projects. I well remember him returning from a visit to the VW factories in Germany where their teaching practice in the apprenticeship programs was to work on a common problem for six months with students from a mix of economic, social and cultural backgrounds.

My colleagues in the special education and integration studies field also reminded me of his huge impact on more effective and contemporary approaches to working with inmates in our juvenile detention centres, and men's and women's prisons. Tony, and those who shared his wide-angle approach to teaching and learning, rejected the 'pour the jug into the mug' philosophy that unfortunately still prevails in much explicit and transactional teaching. Interestingly, Tony and his close colleague Dr Bob Semmens, spent considerable amounts of time in China and other countries assisting them to achieve a much higher level of learning engagement with the most difficult of all students.

All of these projects in Tony's contribution to education are now embedded in Victorian classrooms and schools that have high expectations of students, foster active student voice, create effective communities of practice amongst teachers, and assist students to be future ready. The testing ground for many of these 'good practices' in Victorian schools were the numerous task forces that Tony and other staff from LaTrobe University established in disadvantaged schools in Collingwood, Brunswick, Sunshine, Preston and Braybrook and many more.

The lessons learned through the combination of school-based taskforces with assistance from the University sector were fed into the Ministerial Papers of the day, and expressed in key system themes of increased access and equity whilst pursuing excellence. Never one just to work in the ivory tower, Tony was the President of the Northlands College School Council from 1996 to 2007 when he worked with the school to rebuild itself after two indigenous students had successfully challenged its closure under the Kennett era.

If there was a bottom line for the brilliant and compassionate Tony, he was a very strong advocate that our teaching and learning first projects should be directly connected to the further improvement of democratic traditions and practices in uncertain and volatile times. His commitment to the key democratic conditions of elections, equal rights before the law, freedom of religion and association, and the values of openness and tolerance was well known and was incorporated into the Victorian Government Education and Training Legislation in 2006. And to the best of my knowledge, this stands as the only government in Australia to embed these central principles and practices in education legislation, and to back it up with an accompanying system of school reviews that are consistent with these community values, and provide the next generation of learners with the necessary tools to navigate the storms of progress.

Much more could and should be said about this giant among Australian educators, and all whom he influenced. What must be said, is that he was a beautiful man who assisted so many people to lift their eyes.

And all this from a lad who had spent two years in an 'opportunity grade', left school at 14 and half, and over his life time would help establish best practice life-saving clubs at Torquay and in the USA, work as fitness adviser to Coach Robert Walls at the Fitzroy Football club, undertake lengthy volunteer work with Pentridge prisoners to smooth their rehabilitation, and shake hands with Robert Kennedy.

He learned from them all; we learned from him.

Jim Williamson

Deliberative Democracy:
Keeping the spirit of the Humanities alive

As I begin my teaching journey, I've been thinking about the crucial role of education – and my Humanities classes – in building **deliberative democracy**. I've been influenced in that by reading Nussbaum who, in 2012, wrote *Not for profit: Why democracy needs the humanities.*

I will be a teacher of Humanities, an area of study with a rich tradition of debate, critical thinking and discovery. In this regard, the purpose of education is more than the provision of a qualification for future employment, but is directed to socialisation: the immersion of students in a set of values and beliefs. Humanities can then be viewed as an opportunity to socialise students into the values of **deliberative democracy**.

So my purpose in Humanities is about preparing students as members of a democratic society. Under **deliberative democracy**, arguments are conducted as a thoughtful, fair-minded examination of possible solutions (Cole, 2013). This approach to democracy emphasises cooperation and mutual understanding over more adversarial notions of winning and losing. It places great value on seeking out voices often excluded from debate, and ensuring that every perspective is heard. Nussbaum refers to the *'spirit of the Humanities'* as being characterised by critical thought, imagination, an ability to empathise with diverse groups and an understanding of the complex nature of the world, and further articulates abilities associated with the Humanities such as the ability to transcend local loyalties, the ability to think critically and the ability to sympathise with others' predicaments.

All of these abilities possess close ties to notions of **deliberative democracy**. The spirit of Humanities is very much one of deliberation. Through emphasising the role of deliberation in the Humanities classroom, I recognise that I'll be fighting against the pressure to produce depoliticised, uncritical students who conform to the existing power and political structures, and I'll also be aiming to bridge the increasingly widening gaps between polarised ends of the political spectrum.
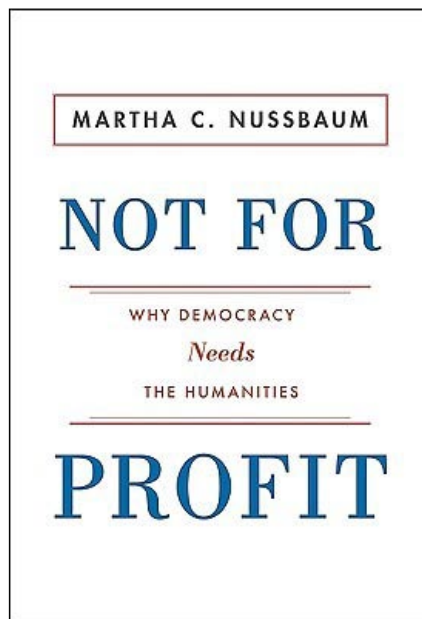
Democracy needs the Humanities

A democratic society needs the 'spirit' of the Humanities: of deliberation, of critical thought and of boundary pushing imagination. This spirit has never been under more threat than at the current juncture in which schools are at risk of becoming *'dead zones of the imagination, anti-public spaces that wage an assault on critical thinking, civic literacy and historical memory'* (Giroux, 2016: 351). The dominance of standardised testing has resulted in a preponderance of instructional styles that 'teach to the test'.

Nussbaum refers to these as pedagogies of stupidity and repression that emphasise memorisation and passivity. She says that, in such a context, the *'creativity and individuality that mark the best humanistic teaching and learning has a hard time finding room to unfold'* (Nussbaum, 2012:

114). The consequences are to produce *'useful machines'* rather than active and democratic citizens with a capacity for critical thought.

Herein lies the significant value of the Humanities for me: the opportunity to immerse students into the values of **deliberative democracy**. Engaging students in a deliberative fashion increases their communication skills and their overall social competence, it improves their capacity to evaluate arguments in light of conflicting evidence and perspectives, and they are able to empathise with people from diverse experiences and backgrounds.

Teaching Humanities can also address the increasing fragmentation and polarisation of our political systems. In the recent federal election, the gulf of communication and agreement widened between the two major parties. Indeed, the outrage clearly evident amongst a younger demographic around issues such as climate change would have represented an ideal opportunity to emphasise to students the importance of a deliberative rather than adversarial approach to discussion.

Under a deliberative approach, majority decisions are recognised as legitimate, so long as conflicting views are taken into account. Deliberation serves to preserve mutual respect among the parties. **Deliberative democracy** also encourages citizens to grapple with complexity and clarify the implications of values. These critical literacy skills help to understand and challenge underlying values and beliefs within political messages. My classroom should preserve the tradition and spirit of Humanities, equipping students with the critical competencies to thrive in our increasingly complex and polarised world.

However, ways to ensure that students continue to act as deliberative democratic citizens, even once they step beyond the confines of the classroom, must be considered.

Drawing on the example of a unit regarding Indigenous Australians, I can

think of two ways to consolidate student knowledge and their deliberative ideals. Firstly, I could connect my students with the relevant local **Aboriginal Education Consultation Group**. Establishing a collaborative relationship between students and these Indigenous members of their local community would result in students gaining insight as to Indigenous perspectives on issues and on the curriculum. Students could then implement what they have learnt from these discussions into helping a teacher design a unit of work.
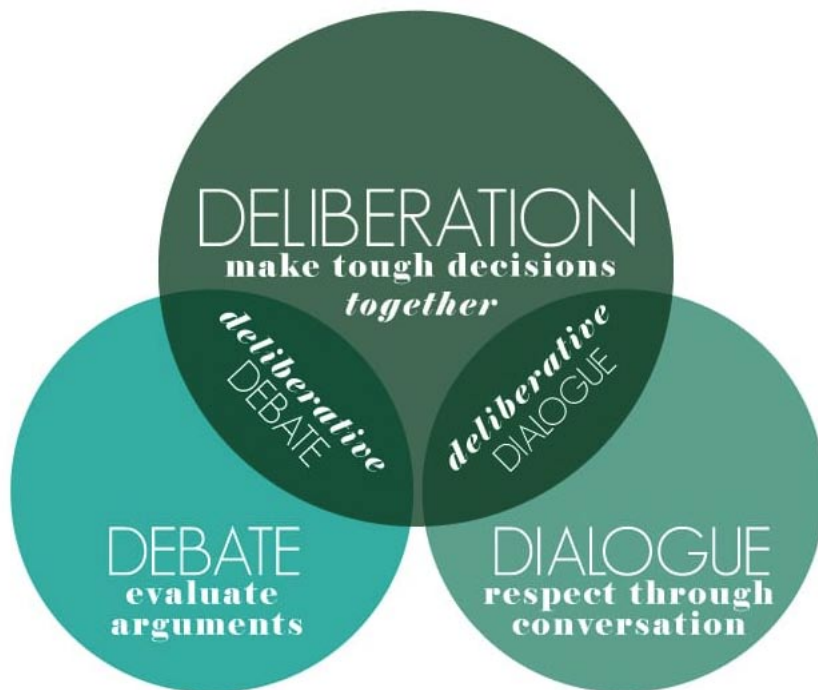
Another way students could act on their learnings about Indigenous Australians is by helping their school implement a **Reconciliation Action Plan**. A **Reconciliation Action Plan** involves the steps a school is taking to move towards reconciliation with Indigenous Australians. Students could help the school plan how to improve relationships with local Indigenous people, and how to increase the levels of respect for Indigenous people in the school community. They could help the school provide more opportunities both for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, to increasingly engage with Indigenous culture and history. In these two examples, students learn to consolidate their values as deliberative democratic citizens and begin to realise that these values do not belong solely in the classroom. Furthermore, students begin to realise the positive outcomes that can result from taking action around an issue: another key ideal of a dutiful democratic citizen.

How to teach?

The question of how to teach a truly deliberative unit of work must be answered by both students and teachers. For the skills of deliberative democracy to be completely entrenched, students must be involved in selecting content and activities that are most relevant to their own experiences and preferences. Asking students to collaborate and choose activities they find engaging means that, before the first explicit lesson begins, students have already begun resolving disagreements and dialogues in a deliberative manner.

In regards to pedagogy, I think I can incorporate two pedagogies to best enable me to encourage deliberation amongst my students: *dialogic teaching* and *critical pedagogy*.

The links between **dialogue** and **deliberative democracy** are clear: by engaging students in reciprocal exchange and thought, students respect and listen to others' opinions and re-evaluate their own stances by seriously considering alternative perspectives. **Dialogic teaching** can activate what Nussbaum refers to as students' *'inner-eye'*: their ability to understand, sympathise with and explore alternative perspectives. Students can be brought into contact with cross-cultural experiences and outlooks as well as overarching structural issues such as gender, race and ethnicity.

I can challenge students to ponder essential questions such as *who is speaking, when do people speak, where do people speak* and *how people speak*. This has been described as a 'third space' that escapes the domination of explicit instruction and rote learning. Dialogue increases students' knowledge of alternative viewpoints and result in students developing a more complete understanding of issues as they synthesise contradictory information with pre-existing beliefs.

By modelling appropriate, deliberative forms of dialogue, students will be better equipped to communicate with a diverse range of groups, such as the conversations they have with members of the local **Aboriginal Education Consultation Group**.

But how could I best incorporate a dialogic stance into the classroom? Four types of dialogue could form part of my 'repertoire' (drawing on Burbules, 1993): *inquiry, debate, conversation* and *instruction*.

Through **inquiry**, students co-investigate a question and formulate compromises on the path to addressing a specific problem or question. When students **debate**, alternative view-points are entertained and arguments strengthened or re-evaluated in light of contradictory evidence. By setting tasks that encourage student **conversation**, I can engender open-ended discussion aimed at achieving understanding. Lastly, when I use explicit **instruction**, through pre-planned question and answers, I can guide students to conclusions while also allowing them to arrive independently at this outcome. All of these approaches involve students deliberating and further developing their critical thinking skills.

Central to notions of **critical pedagogy** is the recognition that how we teach implies certain sets of social relations, and privileges certain types of knowledge over others. **Critical pedagogy** rejects ideas that teaching is somehow separate or removed from matters of values, norms, and power. Pedagogy can inform students how to know, be and relate to others in a deliberative manner. Students are exposed to marginalised perspectives in a way that brings about cultural, social and political empowerment. **Critical pedagogy** closely aligns with **deliberative democracy** due to its emphasis on education as an opportunity to *'create students who are socially responsible and civically engaged citizens'* (Cole, 2013: 7). In doing this in my classroom, I must incorporate tasks that provide students with the knowledge and skills to enable them to

become *'engaged critical citizens willing to fight for a sustainable and just society'* (Cole, 2013: 11). These sentiments are clearly reflected in the endeavours suggested earlier, such as students assisting their school implement a **Reconciliation Action Plan** and interacting with the local **Aboriginal Education Consultation Group**.

Two approaches to inculcate these values and skills are through teaching *critical literacy skills* and through *collaborative learning*.

Critical literacy explores how text relates to language, power, social groups and social practices. This represents an opportunity for me to form meaningful relationships with diverse students and to help these students develop academic and other skills needed as critical citizens in a multicultural democracy. Through teaching students how to critically analyse the world around them, my students will be able to make more empowered choices and participate more fully in democratic systems. These literacy skills are of the utmost importance, to enable students to see the values, messages and power structures that lie beneath the surface of political advertisements, speeches and agendas. For example, students could bring in articles by different sources regarding Indigenous Australians and discuss the agendas behind these articles: in what way do they portray Indigenous Australians and why might the author do so?

Collaborative learning precipitates intellectual negotiation and collective decision-making amongst my students. There is an emphasis in **collaborative learning** on identifying differences – both in student experiences and perspectives, and negotiating these differences to reach a collaborative, amicable solution. **Collaborative learning** tasks enable students to discover collective explanations about how they differ, where differences come from, and whether and how they can live and work together with these differences. Students practise negotiating with other people who have different perspectives and experiences within a heterogeneous and collaborative classroom.

But how can we imbue these values, skills and pedagogies into our classroom practice? Firstly, content has to be made relevant: it has to have real life connections and implications for students. For example, when teaching my Year 7s about Indigenous Australians on placement, I emphasised the change and continuity of historical experiences, encouraging students to connect how the

effects of atrocities committed against Indigenous Australians in the past can still be seen in the present day. I had students form working groups and armed students with the relevant evidence to respond to stereotypes that are still widely held about Indigenous Australians. Students were then tasked with coming up with a response if they were to hear a stereotype about Indigenous Australians voiced in public. Students then modelled this behaviour as I voiced a stereotype and, based in their research, they informed me as to why my opinion was misguided.

In this activity, students developed their ability to deliberate through undertaking a collaborative task with their peers. A critical approach to pedagogy was incorporated, as students were encouraged to challenge the dominant, privileged structures of our society, such as the stereotypes people hold against first peoples. Students modelled multiple forms of dialogue including conversation (in their groupwork) and debate, when they convinced me (a person espousing a stereotypical view of Indigenous Australians) of why my views are misinformed.

I hope that, after having enabled students to explore this activity, they have moved along the path of becoming more deliberative citizens who, if presented with a situation in which they believe marginalised people are being discriminated against, now have the skills to actually say or do something about it.

This is just one example of an activity that could be incorporated into the Humanities classroom to socialise students into the values of **deliberative democracy**. I am hoping that, through teaching Humanities as an effort to socialise students into the values of **deliberative democracy**, I can overcome pedagogies of 'teaching to the test' and rote memorisation. Dialogic learning will encourage deliberative dialogue amongst students in numerous forms; it will precipitate diverse, non-adversarial forums for discussion, conversation and debate. Critical pedagogy will equip students with the tools to understand complex policy platforms and appreciate the relationships of text and speech to dominant structures and ideologies. If this endeavour is to bear fruit, our political system can move away from its increasingly adversarial trajectory as our citizenry are empowered with the tools to conduct respectful debate and to be critical of vested agendas and messaging.

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Parliamentary debate ~ statewide conventions

Victoria's Parliament House plays host to the **Schools' Parliamentary Conventions** every year. The program is funded by the Department of Education and Training, supported by Catholic Education Melbourne, Independent Schools Victoria, Parliament of Victoria and the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority.

The Conventions aim to give primary and secondary students from across the state a direct experience of Parliament by putting them in the chairs of the politicians to debate an issue themselves. With the help of Parliamentary staff such as Hansard, students use the basic procedures of Parliament to explore an issue as a Bill, ending in a final vote.

Primary Schools' Convention
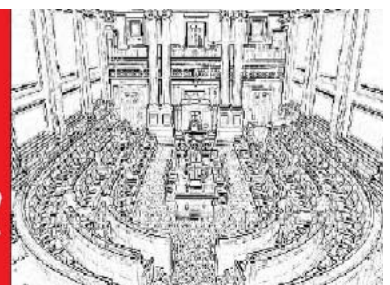*Tuesday August 6*

One hundred Grade 5 and 6 students from across Victoria took their seats in Parliament. The topic under consideration was:

> *"Should athletes and celebrities use their popularity to influence political and social issues?"*

Prior to the Convention the student delegates each received a research kit with a range of media articles to help them explore the topic in advance of the formal debate. The media coverage on celebrities such as Magda Szubanski and her activism in the marriage equality debate was considerable, as was the array of American celebrities commenting on the Presidency of Donald Trump. Students, however, pursued their own research and reported finding great information on Anthony Mundine's comments on vaccination, as well as the more recent case of Mack Horton declining to share the podium with an accused drug cheat at the world swimming championships.

Each school delegation was given the opportunity to present their initial findings and positions at the beginning of the day. This is a more formal setting for prepared and rehearsed speeches. Delegates did not disappoint. They demonstrated a considerable talent for analysing the media reporting from both sides as they presented their *Opening Statements.* With teachers and parents relegated to the gallery where all they could do was watch, delegates stood to address the Chamber and impressed with both content and style.

The Convention was opened by **Tim Richardson**, MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Schools and representing the Education Minister, The Hon. James Merlino.

Guest speakers **Clementine Ford,** social commentator, and **Rayoni Nelson**, CEO of Sports Victoria, were on hand to challenge students with different angles on the topic, including an interesting discussion on the parallel between celebrities being told to *"stick to sport"* and recently politicians telling students to *"stay in school"* rather than express political views.

Student debate swung between the powerful social good that can be achieved by athletes and celebrities using their status to engage people in issues, balanced against the responsibility not to misuse that power.

At the conclusion of the open debate segment of the program, student delegates voted 63 to 47 that athletes and celebrities ***should*** be able to use their platform to influence social and political outcomes, citing as their main reason that it was essential to freedom of speech not to silence anyone, even if the power was disproportionate.

The day was closed by The Hon. Leader of the Opposition, **Michael O'Brien**.

Secondary Schools' Convention
Tuesday September 3

*"Should we abolish the Legislative Council
(Upper House) in Victoria?"*

A revolution?

Eighty secondary students participated in the Secondary Schools' Convention – and half way through the day several of them formed a rogue committee to discuss the topic of the day on their own terms.

The rest of the day ran like clock-work. Dr. Zareh Ghazarian from Monash University, as the guest speaker, gave an insightful history of the need for checks and balances; students presented compelling opening statements; and the open debate session was full of fireworks! The final vote was a compelling 64 votes in favour of keeping the Upper House to 15 against (1 person abstaining). Yet that might not be the most exciting thing about this day.

All the students were randomly placed in small groups, or Parliamentary Committees, to make it easier to discuss the issue: *"Should we abolish the Legislative Council (Upper House) in Victoria?"* before reporting back. Feeling that their opinion was very much in the minority, about a dozen students from across the small groups formed their own break-away committee they named *"The Revolution"* so they could formulate their counter arguments together.

What does this tell us?

Sometimes conference programs are planned with the best of intentions but the delegates don't entirely want to work under the structures we've carefully thought out. If we're serious about student voice – and we hope we are – the response on the day needs to be one of acceptance and negotiation for a change in plans, not one where we reassert control.

Upon further reflection, it also raises some good questions about the structure of discussion groups. Can minority opinions get a fair hearing if you're the only one voice for them in a group? Do you need to have a chance for those of the same opinion to confer in order to protect the minority opinion? Or does this only give rise to an echo chamber, demonstrating that good debate needs challenge and disagreement?

The answer seems to be: *both*. In Parliament, political parties sharing similar, but not identical views, will already be discussing their approach to an issue, whether they find themselves in the minority or majority opinion. In the chamber itself, the debate is supposed to challenge assumptions and opinions. What we feel is missing from both the Victorian Parliament and our own Students' Parliamentary Convention, is the skill of truly listening to the opposing thoughts and reflecting upon them before crafting your reply.

Parliament may not always be the model for a true exploration of issues, however it has served as an educational experience in two ways. First, students take away a practical understanding of being in Parliament that includes the formal debate style. It is to be hoped that this can be replicated in a student-led fashion back at their schools. Secondly, politicians witnessing the debate, see that discussion in the chamber can be conducted without hostility and strict adherence to party lines. We hope these learnings stick.

For a copy of the reports, or to participate in the 2020 Victorian Schools' Parliamentary Conventions, contact David Mould at *Second Strike*: info@second-strike.com or phone: 03 9071 1813.

David Mould

Connect: On turning 40!

The next issue of *Connect* (#240, December 2019) marks our **40th anniversary**! Some days it seems like forever; some days it seems like just yesterday!

We're thinking of summarising these 240 issues (still all available on-line) in *'Four Decades in Four Pages'*.

But we also invite you to share our birthday reminiscences by contributing shorter or longer pieces on the **changes in student voice, agency and participation**, that have occurred over the past 40 years.

We recognise that you may not have been round or with us for all those 40 year. (Some of you have, however.) But you all may have perceptions on what has been achieved over that time - and what perhaps has been lost.

What have been the most useful things that *Connect* has provided? Do you have a favourite article or story?

And, of course, we'll encourage looking forward: **what do you hope the next 40 years will bring?**

Practicalities, as always: **we need copy by the end of November.** Because of the *Student Voice, Agency and Partnerships International Conference* (9-11 December in Melbourne), we'll try to get this issue of *Connect* out so we can celebrate its birthday at that Conference. Hence a tight deadline.

E-mail to : r.holdsworth@unimelb.edu.au
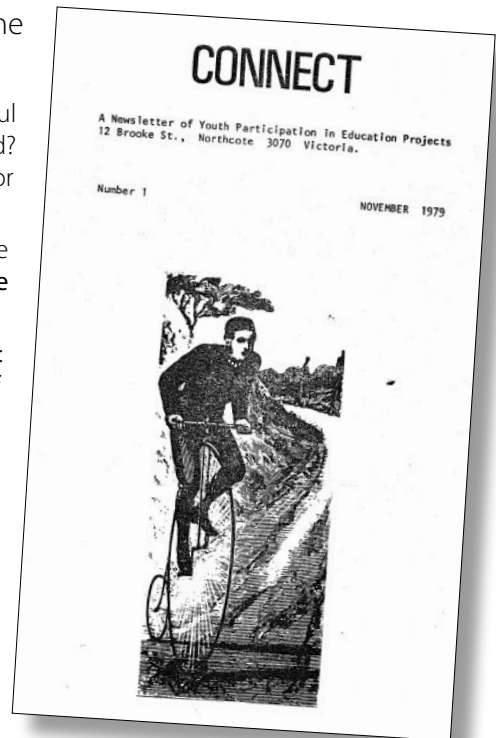
Can you help us celebrate?

www.vicsrc.org.au

School Strike 4 Climate Action

Not listening to students' voices?
How dare you!

It is an amazing time for student voice. On Friday the 20th of September, an estimated 300,000 Australians joined the 4 million strong **Global Climate Strike**, led by students and the *School Strike for Climate Action* movement. An estimated crowd of 100,000 in Melbourne entirely enveloped Fitzroy Gardens and spilled out onto Spring and Collins Street – a massive presence that dominated the city for the better part of the day.

In case you've been living under a rock for the last year, Australian students began striking from school to protest our government's weak climate policy in November last year, and the movement has grown massively since. These protests now encompass people from all walks of life, and other groups, such as *Extinction Rebellion*, have played a huge role in the action.

This blog post was originally intended to be a wrap of the empowering event, complete with a highlights reel, like the pride I felt when my friend's band *Stop That Mammoth* got up on stage to an MCG-sized crowd ... and seeing an awesome group of grade 2s with their teacher ... but the follow up has been just as massive.

The *UN Climate Action Summit* was held the weekend after the **Global Strike** in New York, with leaders from all over the world attending (not Scott Morrison though). Here, Greta Thunberg, the Swedish student and activist who instigated the **School Strike for Climate Action** movement, gave a momentous speech (**https://bloom.bg/2nWlSSK**), which has since gone viral, been remixed (**https://bit.ly/2n5F1RY**), and almost brought me to tears (I swear, it doesn't happen that often).

Greta's message to world leaders: **'how dare you'** look to young people for hope – has reverberated around the world. The young activist adjured world leaders to not only *'understand the*

urgency' but to act on the demands of students around the world. She asserted that the *'remaining CO_2 budget will be gone in less than eight and a half years'* with current emissions levels, and that we cannot rely on *'technologies that barely exist'* to save us while we go about *'business as usual'.*

While *'the science has been crystal clear'* for more than 30 years, the huge uproar of student voice over the past year has brought this issue undeniably and uncomfortably to the forefront of public debate. There are still many people who oppose climate action and the protests, both amongst students and the wider community, and there is no doubt that the transition to a carbon neutral future will not be an easy one.

But we must try, and we must act urgently.

As Greta said: *'those numbers are simply not acceptable to us',* and we will continue to fight for our future and the future of the planet: *'change is coming whether you like it or not'.*

Cohen Saunders
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School Strike 4 Climate Action: Melbourne

Students across the world have identified the need for global action to respond to the climate crisis as a priority and, at the recent state-wide conference VicSRC Congress 2019, Victorian students called for climate crisis education and action from schools to ensure Victorian schools are leading the way in response.

We've put together some tips to help you stay safe and be as effective as possible in your activism!

1. Let your parents/carers, teachers and the school know that you are striking

Schools have a duty of care to ensure you are safe and obviously your parents want to know where you are if you're not at school. By letting them know you're striking, you can also talk to them about WHY you are striking and how they can support you and make change themselves.

School Strike 4 Climate Change have a great letter template for your school that you can adapt to suit (https://bit.ly/2m0C6Jp).

Encourage your parents/carers to join you! Here is some info put together by *School Strike 4 Climate Change* they can use to get their workplace on board (https://bit.ly/2kqHSUd).

2. Use the strike as an opportunity to educate

Offer to report back to your school about the strike and what your learned. Talk to your teachers about the importance of protest, and the cause behind it, can be included in your classes. Compare Australia's response to the strike to other countries – for example, the student strikes in Hong Kong. Understand what you're striking for and why it's so important that action be taken now!

Talk to your friends about the issue. Even if they don't want to strike, there are other great ways to be involved. Check out *School Strike for Climate Change* (https://bit.ly/2yQpuHp) and *Australian Youth Climate Coalition* (https://bit.ly/2lWYhQS) for more ideas.

3. Go with or plan to meet people there

Crowds of people can be pretty overwhelming so if you can, have a plan to attend with friends or make a plan to meet friends at a very specific place and a specific time. When there are thousands of people trying to use their mobiles in one place at one time, phones tend to be not so reliable.

Look out for each other and plan to meet up at the end of the strike (if you get separated) at a specific time and place to check in, debrief and ensure everyone is safe and well.

If you do attend alone or find yourself alone or unwell at any point; stay calm, alert and aware of your surroundings. If you feel overwhelmed or panicked, take deep breaths and look for emergency or support services. They will usually be near the edges of the crowd and wear identifiable bright clothes.

4. Be aware of your rights and responsibilities as a protester

The right to protest is enshrined in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (article 19) however it is important to understand that there are a number of responsibilities under the law and as a good citizen that you should be aware of.

As you will be striking in a public place there are laws associated with public protests including:

- Obstruction
- Trespass
- Unlawful Assembly
- Anti-mask laws
- Offensive behaviour
- Offences against emergency workers
- Violent disorder
- Property damage
- Defamation

For further information on these laws in Victoria, please check out the *Law Handbook* (https://bit.ly/2mmghnK).

It's best to comply with any reasonable request from the police or protective service officers but if you are unsure, you can politely ask for a reason behind the request.

We hope these tips are helpful for making your strike experience as meaningful and impactful as possible but please remember that this is just a guide and should not be considered legal advice.

VicSRC
from the Student Voice Hub
https://bit.ly/2lY1NdK

VicSRC STUDENT Voice AWARDS

Through the **Student Voice Awards,** the VicSRC recognises the best innovations, practices, schools and people in student voice each year. This year's finalists in some categories are:

Student-Led Project Award

recognises a group of students that have implemented a project in their school or community with the intention of a clear positive change or outcome.

Minaret College (Officer Campus)

Our long term student-led initiative, named Project Zero, aims to teach the younger and current generations of our school about how we should be "stewards of the environment' in a sustainable manner. Our project was designed by the student body and volunteers ... so we can have a positive effect on to our brothers and sisters around the world sustainably.

Patterson River Secondary College

With many students spending a high proportion of time on their devices, whether it be mobile phones or laptops, the Patterson River SC SRC wanted to provide a way in which students could easily borrow sporting equipment. The PRSC Sports Hub was intended to provide a means for students to borrow a variety of sporting equipment during lunchtime to increase the amount of physical activity students are able to participate in.

Warringa Park School

The SRC students decided that they wanted to implement something at the school to help students feel more confident when transitioning to a new campus at Warringa Park School. They began by looking at the Attitudes to School survey data and found that their peers had marked the area of transitions as low. They found that most of the students indicated that they felt scared and unhappy about coming to Bethany Road and would like some more support.

The SRC students made a video of the Bethany Road Campus that could be shown to the students before they come on their transition day. The students have been using the iMovie app to make their video and they have collated photos they have taken of the campus and used a voice recording to explain the different areas.

Student Voice Ally Award

recognises an adult (including teachers, educators, youth or social workers or other members of school staff) who has supported and amplified student voice in a school of community.

Allirra Scott from Melba College

Allirra Scott has worked with student representatives to bring a much greater focus to student voice and agency at the school. She has provided us with training, resources and encouragement to overhaul the way the SRC meets and makes decisions, and has advocated for more student voice and agency in classrooms, insisting that students attend staff meetings and workshops in order to get their perspective on decisions regarding learning.

Justin Esler from Diamond Valley Special Developmental School

Justin has made significant contributions to strengthen the culture of student voice at Diamond Valley SDS. All students at Diamond Valley have complex communication needs and are non-verbal or have limited speech. For most of our students they are learning to use communication systems to communicate. Prior to Justin's arrival, while many of the students at Diamond Valley had their own communication systems, this was not happening consistently throughout the school.

Simone Brown, Kilmore PS

Simone Brown is the Student Empowerment Coordinator at the school. She introduced the AMPLIFY document to the school and re-established a Student Action Team.

Mrs Brown takes minutes while we run the meetings; this is important because it means that we can actually change things that we are passionate about.

Mrs Brown coaches other teachers and shows them ways they can include student voice in classrooms. She has completely changed the culture of student voice in the school.

Student Voice Primary School of the Year

recognises a primary school that has embedded student voice and agency into the school culture, undertaking a whole-school approach.

Canterbury Primary School

Our student voice infographic has three main components: **Discovery Learning**, **Co-designing** and **Student Leadership**, all of which put student needs and interests at the core of teaching and learning.

Discovery Learning in our Prep classrooms provides an authentic and student-centred environment for learning. Investigations follow student interests to create a shared sense of purpose between the teacher and students.

Co-designing units of work alongside Year 1 – 6 students is a consistent approach across the school, and ensures that there is a shared language and expectation for student input into learning design in every classroom. Teachers identify student interests through observation, conversation or through more formal approaches, such as Student Parliament or classroom surveys.

In our student leadership program, students learn through experiencing the parliamentary process for themselves, rather than through traditional methods. Year 6 students are elected into ministerial and backbencher roles in the House of Representatives, and students in Years 4 & 5 are elected onto the Senate. Students participate in a law-making process, where bills are written, presented, debated and implemented, reflecting the high level of autonomy and agency our students have.

Ivanhoe East Primary

Ivanhoe East Primary School staff have built a shared approach to the inclusion of student voice and agency through:

- building an understanding of the importance of working with students so that we can engage them in the learning process by listening to them, observing them and ensuring that the learning program reflects their needs and interests.
- allowing multiple opportunities for students to provide valued feedback,

opinions and insight to influence the school improvement agenda.

- developing planning and goal setting processes that include student voice and agency to engage students in the learning process and build on their knowledge, skills and strengths.

- developing the ability to respond to feedback during a unit of inquiry. Teachers plan the first two weeks of learning and seek student feedback to plan the remainder of the inquiry cycle. At times, the learning may continue for a term or continue for a longer period.

- supporting students to develop awareness of their own progress so that they know their next steps for learning and become responsible for achieving their learning goals. We use co-constructed rubrics, 'I can' statements, exit slips and goal setting to aid this process.

- establishing student bodies, such as the Principal's Advisory Group and the Green Team, which meet regularly to influence whole school improvement. New initiatives implemented by these groups include the whole school review of our values, the introduction of a school house system based on connection rather than competition and the redesign of our canteen area to include new mascots, painting and shade cloths.

Kilmore Primary School

Teachers and students designed our student voice and agency policies. As a school, we are one year into our 4-year plan for student voice and agency. It is embedded in our teachers' Professional Development Plans, our Annual Strategic Plan and most importantly, our classrooms!

Our policy and practice outlines non-negotiables of staff and students such as classroom meetings that are student-led, student-led reflections during classes and students giving feedback to teachers to guide practice and engagement. Students lead reflections at the end of lessons in most of our upper primary years with the vision for this to occur in younger years in the near future

Staff analyse AToSS data to look at where we are lacking and where we can improve. Students in Years 3 to 6 also share insights into the data. We use surveys to gauge teacher-student engagement and use this student voice to set goals for teachers. We have used the AMPLIFY document to do self assessments to see where we are at and set next goals.

Our SAT representatives have:

- Presented ideas to School Council and our school leadership team

- Designed some spray paint designs that will go on some shipping containers storing furniture

- Created a toilet transformation proposal including research, presentation, fundraising and even actually doing the transformation themselves

- Participated in ALTER VicSRC days to create an action plan around lost property within our school.

Student Voice Secondary School of the Year

recognises a secondary school that has embedded student voice and agency into the school culture, undertaking a whole-school approach.

Castlemaine Secondary College

Our SRC has developed a model to allow us to base our advocacy and action priorities on what students want.

We ask any student to submit an issue that they have with the school through a suggestion box in the library. We received about 150 submissions in a school of about 650 students. Next, we worked with students to develop solutions to these issues. We presented each problem and solutions at a whole school assembly, and every student voted on the priority that they would most like the SRC to focus on for 2019. From this, we have been working on the priorities of improving our uniform and improving our waste management systems.

Other examples of student voice through the SRC include two students being inducted into the committee that consults with the architects for our school rebuild; a restructure of the school captain system; and student involvement in the buildings and grounds sub-committee of school council.

At a classroom level, a program called Central Studies combines English, Humanities and Science subjects for Year 9 students, and student feedback heavily influences this program. Assignments are now peer-assessed.

Our school runs an Attitude to Class Survey for each teacher to evaluate their practice. As part of this, the SRC recently attended a staff meeting to present and discuss our interpretations (based on student consultation) of this data.

Northern College of the Arts and Technology

Student voice is valued and understood to be an area of shared responsibility. It is a journey where all students are encourage to find and use their voice and play a role as leaders in their learning. Student voice operates as a partnership where teachers and students work together within an agreed framework. It has a school culture that is built on mutual respect, diversity and equality.

Students play a key role in their learning and are active in developing the framework of learning and decision making in the College through:

- the introduction of student constructed and implemented surveys around teaching and learning in the classroom

- the introduction of the VicSRC Teach the Teacher program (Empower) into the College and provision of student feedback to teachers, leading to improvements in learning in the classroom

- student-led discussions around the future introduction of seeking student input on schedules of delivery that include curriculum content and assessment tasks in the Year 10 Arts stream classes

- input into school policies eg Anti-Bullying, hands off policy

- students as active contributors to the College's review process: students reviewed College feedback data, and met with reviewers to discuss and offer feedback on teaching and learning and in building a positive climate for learning.

- the development of College's unique student leadership model

- a student-led preferential voting system for students to elect peers into positions of leadership

- student-run information sessions on student leadership opportunities

- student-led weekly student leadership meetings

- establishment of Student Action Teams in diversity, social justice and sustainability
- student-led assemblies as a forum to educate their peers on student voice, agency and leadership and to showcase the wonderful student achievements and initiatives
- student leaders informing the NCAT community of the school values and made them visible by placing NCAT values posters in each of the classrooms.

Surf Coast Secondary College

Student Voice is when our school gets feedback and input from all members, not only staff, but all individuals who are affected by changes. It gives us, as students, the opportunity to have a platform where we feel comfortable to give constructive feedback to our teachers through our Students as Coaches role. We trust each other to give supportive and helpful feedback to our teachers because these changes will better our learning environment; we believe they have the ability to hold the responsibility to effectively change this school for the better.

We have assessment tasks that allow us to select a level that we feel is appropriate to demonstrate our learning such as Information, Knowledge, Know How and Wisdom. In addition to that, this year our teacher introduced us to a new opportunity to look at feedback and how we can provide this to our teachers. We use data such as Student to Teacher data which is collected across our College, our Attitudes to School data, as well as our small group collective data to feedforward our ideas to our teachers. Individually we complete a form reflecting on what we want our teachers to stop, start and keep doing and then we come together to discuss this and write an agreed one for our teacher. The student coach then presents this agreed data to our teacher and we start our conversations with *'we want you to start doing _____ immediately'* and this becomes our focus for our first discussion and observations.

In addition to coaching, our teacher also got us to reflect on a unit of work by looking at what were the strengths, weaknesses and interesting ways we learnt about the Humanities topics. From this we formed a Curriculum Committee across our year levels where we developed a variety of activities for our peers to select from to show their understanding of the content. Our teacher worked with us all to identify our learning styles and then provided us with the tools to develop these activities. The feedback from our peers has been overwhelming positive and the loved the excursion that we organised.

VicSRC Student Voice Awards will be presented on:

Thursday 24th October:
6:00 - 8:30 pm
The Library at the Dock
107 Victoria Harbour Promenade, Docklands
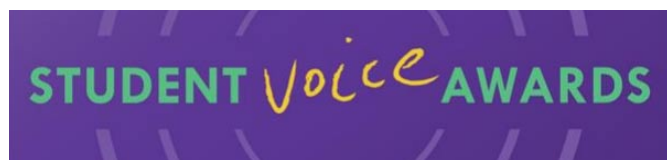
All schools in the state of Victoria that have primary, secondary or some mix of students can become **VicSRC Partner Schools**.

Partner Schools get:

- The VicSRC as your *constant companion* on the road to student voice super powers!
- Advice and referral for student voice at our e-mail address: **info@vicsrc.org.au**
- Eligibility to enter the *Student Voice Awards*!
- Discount codes for all *Student Voice Workshops* and *Student Voice Awards* tickets
- Access to bookings for *Teach the Teacher* and *Congress* tickets
- A monthly *Partner Bulletin* featuring resource highlights and best practice student voice
- A subscription to *Connect*
- A school membership of the *Student Voice Hub* with ten teacher accounts, access to restricted resources, private forums and more!
- Eligibility to *feature in VicSRC work* including blogs, videos and spotlights
- A sweet *VicSRC Partner School logo* for all your newsletter, website and email signature needs!

Become a Partner School at:
https://bit.ly/2TL848K

VicSRC **Member Schools** as of August 2018 are auto-matically **Partner Schools** until **31st December 2019**! New **Partner Schools** can join for **$150 + GST** for a full year of partnership (discount or cluster partnership options may be available).

Once you sign up, you'll receive an invoice to your nominated email address. This is an automated process and the invoices will come out yearly on this date to make maintaining your partnership easier.

At the start of the school year you'll receive a quick survey prompting you to update your details. This is to make sure we've got the best and most up to date contacts for all your student voice needs!

More details at:
https://bit.ly/2HXH2aI

The **Student Voice Hub** is where we celebrate and practice the best of student voice and agency. It's been over a whole year since launching the Hub at Congress 2018. We have started a student-led blog, talked about all kinds of things on the forums and hit (and passed) 400 members!

We're already hard at work to make the Hub bigger and better in 2020 but we need your help! The more students using the Hub the more we can do to make it better!

*We've got prizes going on the Student Voice Hub!
Sign up, post in the forums or comment on a blog post and you might win a voucher of your very own!*
Next draw Friday 18th October!

CONGRESS
WE DON'T MAKE CHANGE ALONE 2019

The report from **#VicSRCCongress** is live! Check out the priorities, pics and more right here!

http://ow.ly/EdwC50wrxVn

Are you a VicSRC Partner School?

Partnership discounts

Did you know that you can receive discounted event prices if you have a VicSRC Partnership?

If you are not yet a **Partner School** and would like to take advantage of discounted ticket prices to VicSRC events, simply select *'VicSRC Partnership (Annual School Partnership)'* at the start of your online registration. Or check about Partnership on-line at:

https://bit.ly/2KpgGjr

VicSRC
VictorianStudent
RepresentativeCouncil

**To sign up to the VicSRC
online e-newsletter ... visit:**

http://www.vicsrc.org.au/

VicSRC VictorianStudent
RepresentativeCouncil

student voice — listen speak act
Festival of IDEAS
Unleash Your Voice!

Brisbane Catholic Education

21 October, 2019

Brisbane Catholic Education students from Years 8 to 11 are invited to attend the inaugural **Student Voice Festival of Ideas**.

An initiative of the **BCE Student Voice Team**, the **Festival**, a first-ever for BCE, will provide the platform for students to:

- Identify a broad range of issues that impact on students' educational experience

- Collaborate in **Action Teams** to offer solutions to these issues

- Take responsibility by sharing these solutions with the Executive Director and Leadership Team and BCE school communities

- Vote on the **BCE Student Voice Team**'s top priority for action in 2020

And, of course, have fun.

It all happens on **October 21** *(student free day)* at **The Edge, The State Library, Brisbane, Queensland.**

To register visit:
https://bit.ly/2kAg5Rz

Dana Mitra

Dr **Dana Mitra** is the keynote speaker at the opening session of the **Student Voice, Agency and Partnerships International Conference** to be held in Melbourne in December. Dana is Professor of Education (Educational Theory and Policy) in the Education Policy Studies Department at Pennsylvania State University, USA.

SVC — STUDENT VOICE AGENCY AND PARTNERSHIPS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE — www.svcmelbourne.com

She has conducted research on voice and leadership as a Professor of Education Policy Studies at the Pennsylvania State University for the past 15 years. In her work as a professor, she was named as a Students at the Center "Distinguished Fellow" with Jobs For the Future/the Nellie Mae Foundation in 2016. She is founding editor of the *International Journal of Student Voice* and Co-Editor of *The American Journal of Education*.

Dana has published over 30 papers and two books on the topics of student voice and civic engagement. Her books include *Civic Education in the Elementary Grades: Promoting Engagement in an Era of Accountability*, *Student Voice in School Reform: Building Youth-Adult Partnerships that Empower Youth*, and a textbook entitled *Educational* *Change and the Political Process*. She also has published a memoir entitled *French Fries and Banyan Trees: American Kids Explore Bangalore and Beyond*.

Dana holds a PhD from Stanford University in Educational Administration and Policy Analysis. She has served as a Fulbright-Nehru Scholar in 2012 to study child participation and educational reform in Bangalore, India. Her prior work experience includes teaching elementary school in the Washington, DC area and serving as the coordinator for two *White House Conferences on Character Education*.

Social Education Victoria invites you to attend our **Student Voice, Agency and Partnerships International Conference.**

Join us for a gathering that will bring together researchers, school students, teachers and school leaders, policy workers, and support organisations to consider current and future directions in Student Voice, Agency and Partnerships.

This event recognises the importance of the Student Voice, Agency and Partnerships and provides us with a space to discuss its purpose, practices, agency and governance in 2019 and beyond. There will be keynote and other presentations, panels and roundtables, and vibrant and insightful discussions.

We are releasing a restricted number of registrations at Early Bird prices to ensure the accessibility of this event to all. Get in early to ensure you make the most of this limited offer!

This event will begin with a networking evening with an opportunity to meet like-minded individuals and hear from **Professor Dana Mitra** on the topic of *"Why student voices, agency and partnerships matter: their impact on classrooms, schools and policy."*

We would be delighted if you could join us.

Please direct all queries to:

enquiries@svcmelbourne.com

Student Voice, Agency and Partnerships International Conference

Date and Time
Monday 9-11 December 2019
Opening Night: 9 December
Full Conference Days: 10-11 December

Location
Arts West
Professor Walk, University of Melbourne
Parkville VIC 3052

Registration
*Opening Night Keynote Only ***
Full Registration: $70
Student Registration: $20

*Full Conference ****
Early Bird Release: $250
General Public (From October 26): $300
Student Registration: $70

* *Tickets include canapés and refreshments on Opening Night.*

*** *Full Conference day tickets includes morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea.*

Register
Book your Tickets by **29th November**

https://svcmelbourne.com/register

Sponsors and Supporters:

CALLING EDUCATORS TO ACTION ON CLIMATE CRISIS

We are educators who declare our solidarity with the students' uprising for climate justice action. We call on our fellow educators globally to respond to the students' appeals. We need to act now.

READ AND SIGN

'I want you to act as you would in a crisis. I want you to act as if our house is on fire. Because it is.'
(Greta Thunberg at Davos January 2019)

We are educators who declare our solidarity with the students' uprising for climate justice action. We call on our fellow educators globally to respond to the students' appeals. We need to act now.

Children and young people across the globe are rising up against a systematic failure to address the climate crisis. By strategically leaving their classrooms and organising mass protests, they are demanding immediate action to reduce carbon emissions, halt global warming, and combat mass species extinction.

Education is implicated in this climate crisis. Despite efforts stemming from the *UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development*, schools and higher education systems continue to prioritise workforce supply for economic growth over environmental sustainability. We know that fossil-fuel dependent profit-driven activities have escalated global warming and are exacerbating the climate crisis. Scientists have warned us that the planet's systems are dangerously close to irreversible tipping points. Students are well aware that we live in environmentally precarious times and that they face an uncertain future.

In the face of sobering scientific evidence of a climate crisis, the business-as-usual of education is not acceptable. We must radically rethink the purpose of education and make responsible changes in our classrooms and academic fields. We need to learn different ecologically attuned knowledges, educate for environmentally just and secure futures, cultivate an ecological consciousness about the interdependence of all beings, and challenge the unequal global power relations that drive reckless economic growth. We need to foster the types of learning that nurture non-exploitative relations with the natural environment and that will help us recuperate and sustain life on a damaged Earth.

We call on all educators at all levels to join us in:

- Supporting the striking students in their demands for immediate action to reduce carbon emissions and to restore the habitability of our planet.
- Transforming our own pedagogies and curricula to make them ecologically sound and responsive.
- Realigning research agendas and practices to address the climate crisis and other environmental challenges.
- Reformulating educational policy frameworks to prioritise inter-generational and environmental justice over reckless economic growth and development.
- Voicing our concerns by raising these issues with colleagues, parents, students, local communities, unions, professional organisations, and policymakers.

To the striking students we say: 'We stand with you. We know our house is on fire. It is urgent. Our future is at stake. We *will* take educational action for climate justice.'

Sign this call at: **https://educators-for-climate-action.org/**

School Circles is an independent documentary that explores the practice of democratic schools in the Netherlands. The film shows students, teachers and staff members coming together to dialogue, discuss proposals, mediate conflicts and make decisions about their school life.

These schools not only challenge the mainstream education, but also democracy as we know it. They put into practice *Sociocracy*, a method for collective organisation based on a systems perspective, in which the decisions are made by integrating all the voices through consent.

School Circles connects the theory of sociocracy to its practice within schools, taking us to new possibilities of organising ourselves and our communities.

It is available to watch here:

https://vimeo.com/ondemand/schoolcircles

We are adults who value children and childhood.
*We stand with children and young people
as they respond to the issues affecting their lives.*

We value the **voices** of and the **rights** of CHILDREN.

We stand alongside them so they know we care
and they are *not* facing these crises on their own.

They ask us to listen closely, seriously, respectfully.

Our children want a **FUTURE**.

They understand their role as active citizens, change-makers,
'climate justice and human rights defenders'.

With *courage* and *conviction*
they demand justice for everyone.

IT IS THEIR *RIGHT* TO DEMAND CHANGE.

THEY DESERVE A FUTURE.

They ask us to respond, help and support.

THEY ASK US TO ACT.

They seek **hope** for themselves and for the next generations.

Children's futures are in *all* our hands.

And so, we **stand**, we **listen**, we **respond**, we **help**.

We WILL be their **hope**.

Kids Action

http://www.icphr.org/kids-in-action.html

International Journal of Student Voice Volume 5

We are thrilled to announce a new volume of the **International Journal of Student Voice** has been published. Volume 5 can be accessed at **https://ijsv.psu.edu/** and features:

- Assessing Student Participation at School: Developing a Multidimensional Scale

  Donnah L. Anderson (Charles Sturt University), Anne P. Graham (Southern Cross University) and Nigel P. Thomas (University of Central Lancashire)

- A Pedagogical Design to Surface Student Voice by Integrating Youth Participatory Action Research, Restorative Practices, and Critical Service Learning

  Colby T. Kervick, Lance C. Smith, Bernice Garnett, Mika Moore and Tracy A. Ballysingh (University of Vermont)

- More Reasons to Listen: Learning Lessons from Pupil Voice for Psychology and Education

  Helen A. Demetriou (University of Cambridge)

We encourage you to participate in the discussion boards for each article and to consider submitting with us.

The **International Journal of Student Voice (IJSV)** is a peer-reviewed, open access e-journal publishing on the ways in which students co-lead their schools, universities, and communities by collaborating with teachers, administrators, and community stakeholders to define problems and develop potential solutions and/or take the lead on making change in their schools and communities.

IJSV, established in 2015 by the Pennsylvania State University, seeks submissions from teachers, students, researchers, administrators, and community stakeholders. In addition to traditional research-focused submissions, we welcome and encourage practitioner reflections and multimedia submissions.
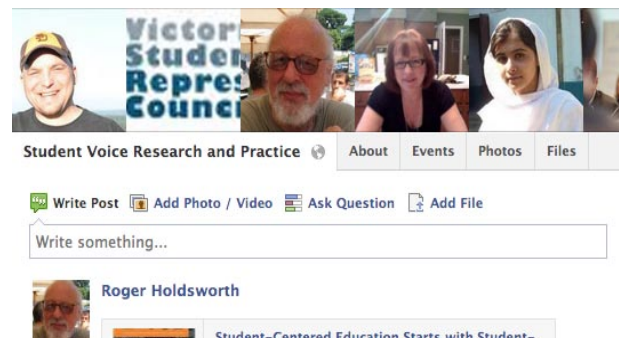
Dana Mitra
Professor of Education Theory and Policy
Editor, International Journal of Student Voice
The Pennsylvania State University
CSCO@psu.edu

Student Voice Research and Practice facebook group
www.facebook.com/groups/studentvoicepage/

*This open **facebook** group was initially established by Professor Dana Mitra, and is now supported by the work of academics, practitioners and students throughout the world. It provides a valuable community of people working and interested in the area of '**Student Voice**' - in Australia, USA, UK, Italy and elsewhere – as well as access to useful resources and examples, and up-to-date information about initiatives. You can easily log on and join the group at the above address.*

**Student Voice, Agency and Partnerships
International Conference**

www.svcmelbourne.com
Melbourne
9 - 11 December 2019

Connect on facebook

Connect has a presence on *facebook*. Find us at:

http://ow.ly/L6UvW

We've been posting some news and links there since June 2013, to complement and extend what you see in the on-line version of *Connect*. It would be great if you could go there and 'like' us, and also watch there for news of each *Connect*'s availability on-line - for FREE.

Donate to support *Connect*

Connect now has no income except donations and sales of literature (see page 48). By supporting *Connect* with donations, you keep us going. Even though we are now solely on-line, there are still costs associated with publication. To make a donation to the work of *Connect*, use the form in this issue or contact us for bank account details in order to make an electronic transfer of funds.

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Simply provide your e-mail address (below or by e-mail) and name and phone number (in case of bounces).
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ASPRINworld:
the Connect website!

www.asprinworld.com/connect

Connect has a website at *ASPRINworld*. The *Connect* section of the website is slowly growing, with information about subscribing, index of recent back issue contents (hyperlinked to PDFs) and summaries of and order information for *Student Councils and Beyond*, *Student Action Teams*, *Reaching High* and *Switched On to Learning*.

Connect is also archived and available electronically:

research.acer.edu.au/connect

All issues of *Connect* are archived through the ACER Research Repository: **ACEReSearch**. *Connect* issues from #1 to the current issue are available for *free* download, and recent issues can be searched by key terms. See the *ASPRINworld* site for index details of recent issues, then link to and download the whole issue you are interested in.

www.informit.com.au

In addition, current and recent issues of *Connect* are now available on-line to libraries and others who subscribe to RMIT's *Informit* site – a site that contains databases of many Australian publications. You can access whole issues of *Connect* as well as individual articles. Costs apply, either by a library subscription to *Informit*'s databases, or through individual payments per view for articles.

Articles from *Connect* are also discoverable through **EBSCOhost** research databases.

www.asprinworld.com/connect
&
research.acer.edu.au/connect

Local and International Publications Received

Connect receives many publications directly or indirectly relevant to youth and student participation. We can't lend or sell these, but if you want to look at or use them, contact us and we'll work something out.

Australian:

Assessing student participation at school: Developing a multidimensional scale (Donnah Anderson - Charles Sturt University; Anne Graham - Southern Cross University; Nigel Thomas - University of Central Lancashire, UK) *International Journal of Student Voice*; Volume 5, September 2019

Congress 2019 (VicSRC, North Melbourne, Vic) *Congress Report*; 2019

Research Developments (Camberwell, ACER, Vic) October, 2019

International:

A pedagogical design to surface student voice by integrating youth participatory action research, restorative practices, and critical service learning (Colby Kervick, Lance Smith, Bernice Garnett, Mika Moore and Tracy Ballysingh; University of Vermont, USA) *International Journal of Student Voice*; Volume 5, September 2019

Listening to student voice: Toward a more inclusive theory for research and practices (Katherine Cumings Mansfield, Anjalé Welton, Mark Halx; University of North Carolina at Greensboro, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, USA) in **Global Leadership for Social Justice: Taking it from the Field to Practice** (ed) Christa Boske, Sarah Diem; Emerald 2019

More reasons to listen: Learning lessons from pupil voice for psychology and education (Helen Demetriou, University of Cambridge, UK) *International Journal of Student Voice*; Volume 5, September 2019

Student voice and children's rights: Power, empowerment and 'protagonismo' (Harry Shier, Centre for Education in Health and Environment, Nicaragua) *Encyclopedia of Teacher Education (ed. M A Peters)*; Springer, 2019

The teeter-totter effect: How to avoid a common pitfall of learner-centered transformation (Helen Beattie, UP for Learning, Vermont, USA) *Education Reimagined*; 17 September 2019; at https://bit.ly/2ktVePx

**UPdate** (UP for Learning, Vermont, USA) September 2019

Connect On-Line!

All issues of *Connect* from 1979 to the present (that's very close to **40 years**!) are freely available on-line! Thanks to the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), all the issues of *Connect* have been scanned or up-loaded into the ACER's Research Repository: *ACEReSearch.*

You can find these issues of *Connect* at:

http://research.acer.edu.au/connect

The left-hand menu provides a pull-down menu for you to select the issue number > **browse**; the front cover of the issue is displayed, and you can simply click on the link in the main body of the page to download a PDF of the issue. Recent issues are also **searchable** by key words.

Connect has a commitment to the sharing of ideas, stories, approaches and resources about active student participation. We are totally supported by donations!
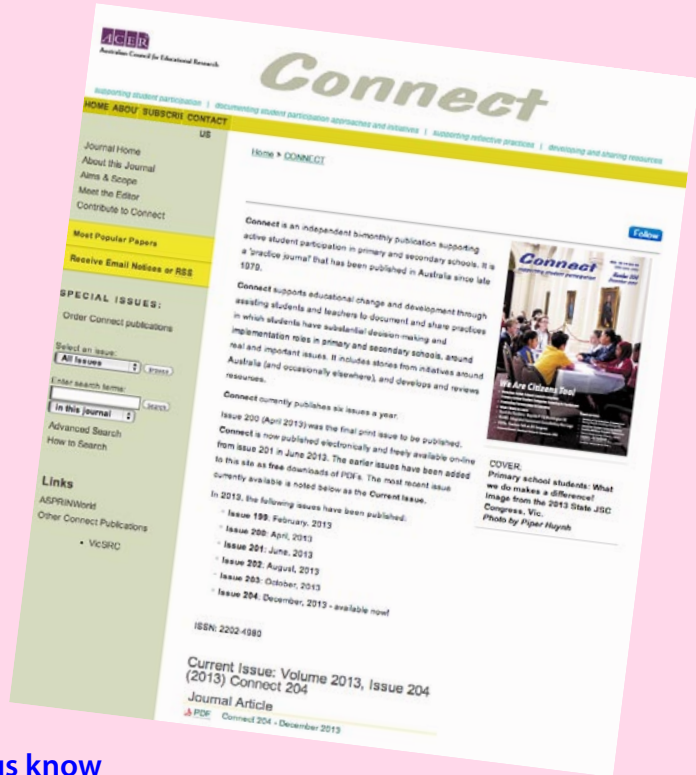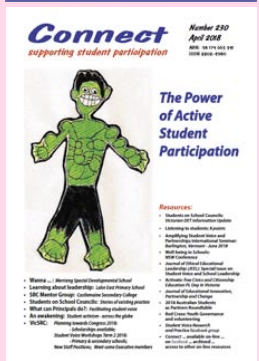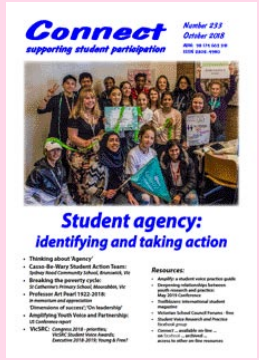
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There may be some gaps or improvements necessary. As you use this resource, let us know what you find. (If an issue of *Connect* seems to be missing, check the issues either side, as *double issues* show up only as one issue number.) If you have any ideas for improving this resource, please let us know.

Most importantly, please USE this resource.

All copies of *Connect* are available on-line ... for free!

http://research.acer.edu.au/connect