Sharing Power in the Classroom
It's strange how similar articles or themes emerge at a time - as if by coincidence. Or perhaps we just are able to see the links that have always been there.

Susan Hyde's article came to our attention in background papers for a DSP regional conference in the NSW Met West. At the same time, Jane Law from that region, was chasing material on curriculum negotiation; this resulted in the start of a bibliography which we share through this issue. And 'out of the blue' (almost) came the article from Lisa Shnookal and Terry Bain which provided a further example of classroom negotiation of curriculum.

Publication of this focus on negotiation is, of course, set against the hectic background of the visit of Wig, Lee and Chris from Foxfire. Suddenly, the voices seem almost as one. The descriptions of negotiation from Susan sound so like Wig talking of his 'Language Arts' class. Common themes of choice, trust, challenge, rigour, audience become apparent.

Arching and connecting again, is the exciting prospect of an Australian network of practising teachers, supported by and linked with Foxfire, exploring (through the same processes of action research, of which Susan writes) the practices of classroom negotiation, of experiential education and of real-world significance.

Meanwhile, an index to back issues of Connect is long overdue. We had prepared one for this issue, but ran out of space. So next issue. It's organised a little differently to earlier indexes, with a brief summary of each copy of Connect rather than a cross-referenced index. We hope it's useful.

We would also like to put together an issue of Connect early in 1991 that leads up to and focusses on the ACSA Curriculum Conference - around the theme 'Liberating the Curriculum'. How does this connect with student participation? We encourage you to get pens, typewriters and word-processors moving.

Roger Holdsworth
SHARING POWER IN THE CLASSROOM

Introduction

Since 1977 I have been developing teaching strategies that are designed to help students learn cooperatively in science and mathematics classrooms. I began by completely rejecting teacher-directed learning when I realised that the students were not committed to their learning.

I have documented some of my investigations and learnings elsewhere (Cosgrove, 1978; Cosgrove, 1981; Cosgrove, 1982), however, the next section, Learning Theory was written in 1978 to help a group of University students to understand my practice. I include it here because I want to explain how my understandings have been changed and strengthened since then.

Learning Theory

The way that I encourage my students to learn is based on my understanding of how people learn and how, as a teacher, I can help them.

1. All people know how to learn.
2. And, whereas the general process of learning is common amongst people, the style with which they learn can differ.

During the learning process, language, experiences and imagination are all important. The order in which they are used is individual. For this reason I do not offer my students a prescription such as a teacher-directed plan or sequential activity based materials; I encourage them to develop their preferred style.

3. When people learn, they begin with a decision to do so.

This decision is based on their prior knowledge and experience of the subject, their interest and the confidence that the proposed learning is worthwhile and within their capabilities.

The starting point of a person's learning is very important and individual. I believe that an important role of the teacher is to help the students realise this starting point. At the beginning of a new topic, I will arrange class and/or group discussion where the students discuss what they know about the subject. Discussion is valuable at this stage because:

* it encourages students to bring to their mind things from their own knowledge and experiences that may be connected to the new topic;

* as the students realise what they know, they gain confidence in their ability to learn the new subject. In the discussion situation, the students also gain confidence as other students mention points that they may have forgotten. In this way, the group or class helps to build each other's confidence.

* it helps to generate an interest and enthusiasm about the new learning. As
the discussions continue, the students begin to realise where their interests lie, and what questions and activities they would like to pursue. In group or class discussion situation, sharing of these interests can turn students into avenues that may have not originally interested them. This helps to generate an enthusiastic learning atmosphere, which certainly makes my job easier; * it helps to generate an intention to learn. As the students realise what they know and what they are interested in, and as they gain the confidence to learn, they find it easier to decide what it is worthwhile for them to do.

4. People learn best when answering their own questions and following their own interests.

After the initial discussion about the topic, the students choose what and how they will learn and then negotiate their intentions with me. Some students' choice can be too ambitious and others may not be ambitious enough. Sometimes the balance of areas being pursued is lopsided from a class view. My role is to negotiate with the students about these factors and encourage them to be more explicit about their intentions.

5. People learn a lot from each other as well as from individual study.

In the classroom, the students' interests and experiences will expand if they collaborate and share their learnings. This means that:

* the students must feel confident that they can help each other. The teacher must be seen as only one of the people that can help and so the teacher must relinquish her traditional role of controller of knowledge;
* a considerable amount of group work and class discussion needs to be arranged;
* the students must be allowed a variety of ways to present and explain their learning to others.

If a cooperative learning atmosphere is developed in a classroom, then the students must share the responsibility for what is to be learned with the teacher. Each student or group takes on the responsibility of teaching other students what they have learned. They do this using a variety of media including: giving talks, showing a video, arranging experiments, presenting a play etc.

6. The learner should know all of the above.

With each class, I arrange time for them to discuss the learning process before we launch into the year's work. At regular intervals, we have class meetings to discuss the class' activities and my role. I find these discussions important because the students gradually develop an understanding about power in the classroom. They also learn to respect each other's opinions and abilities.

7. The basis of a successful cooperative learning atmosphere is friendship and honesty between students and the teacher.

Whilst I still use the basis of my understandings of the learning process as described above, I have refined my practice and my understandings of my practice in several ways. Through experience I have learned how to manage the cooperative classroom learning more effectively. My classrooms are much more ordered and systematic than they were when I was beginning my development (and when I was somewhat younger). The most powerful part of my developing understandings came when I broke through the euphoria of working in an exciting atmosphere to realise some of the political implications of this style of learning.

My naivety was challenged when I realised that some of my colleagues were feeling threatened by the different power structures in my classrooms. Then I realised that the decision-making process in the classroom was at odds with the way schools are organised and, in fact, the whole society. I began to get interested in action research as a systematic way of improving my practice, to change my practice to something better - better in that I could help my students cooperate more effectively, help them to question their lives and work out ways to improve them.

By the time that I got around to reading about the different theories about how society is organised and about how existing inequalities in society are maintained, I was already steeped in classroom practices that were designed to help my students question and learn in a cooperative way. I was already democratising my classrooms. My practice helped me to develop my theoretical understandings about society, power, ideology, schooling, privilege, inequalities, labour power and about how society is formed and transformed. And my theoretical understandings have helped me to refine my practice and the way I interpret what goes on in the classroom, between students and
teachers, in how the school is administered and the effect of different teaching resources and curricula.

Giroux (1981) says that we need to develop a "pedagogy which helps students to link knowledge to power and human interests" and move away from classroom content, structures and processes which maintain the students' powerlessness. This sounds all very mysterious, but what he means is that we must examine these aspects of classroom experience in the broader context of how society operates and how schooling maintains the power structures in that society. For instance, maintaining a gender balance in your classroom interactions, and working to discourage and expose sexist behaviour in the classroom and school, especially your own, will help girls to challenge their powerlessness and help to break down patriarchal power relations which in turn help to maintain economic inequalities in our society.

Giroux and others call this type of thinking and connecting: critical self-reflection. It is an empowering process and it is exactly what I try to model to my students.

Sharing Power:
Jump or Take the Steps?

I believe that sharing power in the classroom, which in turn will help students to become more powerful and independent learners (and persons) rests on teachers challenging aspects of classroom practice that maintain the authority and power vested in them by the system. Naturally this can be a stressful process for students and teacher and can be achieved in stages.

Personally, I jumped off the cliff and did it all at once, and my students and I then rushed headlong into the stresses, excitement, confusions and doubt that were generated by letting go of all of the structures at once. I remember some hair raising, noisy and confusing times as we learnt how to cooperate, to share, how to discuss and negotiate, but I can also remember the students running down the stairs to science lessons and the way they learnt to articulate about how they learnt! It was an exciting time.

However, I have also developed cooperative strategies more slowly with other groups of students, letting them into it carefully, building up their skills and letting their trust in me develop until the point that they took it for granted that they should share power in the classroom.

Allow me to recall an anecdote that occurred recently with a Year 10 Science class that I had been teaching for about 12 weeks. We were using work required assessment and had just finished a topic called Physiology Questions. I had decided that they were ready to negotiate constraints surrounding the new topic of Acids and Bases. In a class meeting, I explained how the science teachers generated the work required statement and showed them what we came up with. I then asked them to modify the statement. To cut a long story short, they made their suggestions, voted on them and I included them in the final draft of the work required statement. The following is a note from my journal:

"Today I presented them with the work required statement and went over it point by point. They were obviously surprised that I had included the decisions that they had made in Friday's class meeting. They are starting to trust me and can see that I want them to take more control over their learning. I nearly blew it though. We were discussing how to find, design and order experiments. They were all looking a bit perplexed (I thought) so I said to them: "If you like, I'll order an experiment that the whole class can do tomorrow, one which will show you how to tell the difference between acids and bases, then you can see what the experiments are like." There was dead silence. They were looking at each other sideways and I could feel them thinking, "Oh yeah ... so she is going to take over." Quickly I said, "No, no - that's a silly idea! forget I said it. I'm only interrupting again. Go ahead with your planning." The students went back to their discussion, the trust had been restored, if a little tenuously. I nearly blew it, but I learnt something."
Whether it's the steps or the jump, the challenges necessary to share power in the classroom are concerned with assessment, valuing students' knowledge and experience, developing negotiating skills (rather than directing skills), developing cooperative skills (sharing, discussing, group work) and establishing a less formal relationship between the students and the teacher.

Assessment:

Non-Competitive vs. Competitive

I moved to non-graded assessment when I began developing cooperative strategies in my classroom. I could see that in a cooperative classroom, marks and grading would be a major obstacle in encouraging the students to cooperate because of the competitiveness inherent in graded assessment. As well, I wanted to encourage self and peer evaluation in order to help students take more responsibility for the quality of their learning, and as a way to increase the confidence of the less confident students. I experienced considerable resistance from the more competitively successful students who realised their loss of power in the classroom. Graded assessment sets up a power structure within the classroom, with the teacher possessing the rights over the allocation of the grades, and students allocated to various levels in the pecking order in accordance with the way that they can compete. Other pecking orders also exist in classrooms. By removing grades, and sharing the power with the students, I removed some of the reasons behind some of more reluctant students' decision not to participate in the classroom learning.

As I developed theories about society and schooling, I could see the assessment issue in a wider context. There is a good deal of literature that demonstrates that grading in schools, while being supposedly unbiased, is based on a value system that advantages more privileged students, and therefore perpetuates inequalities concerning class, race and gender that exist in our society. It encourages and legitimates competition as a way of sorting out what is seen as success and failure and indeed is an important ideological factor which underpins the way society and its economic structure is organised.

This understanding had helped me to be more articulate about why I use non-graded assessment. As well, it has caused me to question how my values impinge upon classroom practice and how my students' values can be valued in the classroom.

The development of work-required assessment has been very helpful in making my assessment procedures in the classroom more systematic. One of the main problems in my cooperative classrooms was the issue of varying degrees of participation and quantity of work attempted by the students. (This problem also exists in competitive classrooms, although the problem is often expressed as one of quality.) The Work-Required Statement, as negotiated by the teacher and the students, makes participation in class activities necessary to complete the work successfully. Before I used work-required assessment, I was much too fuzzy about what could be regarded as a fair amount of participation, as it was usually an individually negotiated factor with the more reluctant students and this was often seen as unfair by other students.

In my experience, students appreciate the work-required statement because it makes clear what is fair participation as well as what can be negotiated.

What I appreciate most about work-required assessment is that I can build cooperative processes into the required participation in a variety of ways. I can build in negotiation, group work and sharing as well as individual study. I usually discuss with the class the sort of activities that they and I think fair and interesting and then devise the work-required statement around that. The 'Physiology Questions' work-required statement which follows (Appendix I) arises from my negotiations with a class and includes a cooperative process appropriate for this type of subject matter. The process also acknowledges their questions as valid and worth pursuing, which helps to build their self confidence and worth.

Work-required assessment also acts as a rigorous evaluation of the teacher's own practice. Through using this assessment approach, I have refined my recording procedures to make my negotiation with students more systematic. This has helped me develop a better understanding of the negotiating process as well as helped me to concentrate on the various factors needed to be negotiated, especially quality of work.

In summary, I find work-required assessment a systematic way of developing a cooperative atmosphere in the classroom and a powerful process by which to empower students as they negotiate their participation in their own learning. The work-required statement as negotiated by the teacher and the students provides a clear statement of expectations for the student and thereby the decision to succeed rests with the student.
However, I am aware that some teachers work in schools where they have no choice about grading students when it comes to the end of the course. I have worked in such a school and, while there, I developed ways to negotiate the grades with the students, thereby increasing their responsibility over their own evaluation, and sharing the power that I had to assign the grades. (I didn't want to assign the grades.)

I always maintained non-competitive assessment throughout the courses and this generated plenty of discussion about grading and competitive learning. In one class, when it came to the end of the course, I ran a class meeting and asked the students to generate criteria on which we could assign grades. The students then agreed to write down what grade they thought they should get, with the appropriate reasons. The next day we discussed each person's assessment and assigned the 'A's to 'U's accordingly. (We even attempted to follow the normal curve and achieve gender balance.) The students thought the whole process was very fair, and had a say in the process as we developed it.

I am convinced that cooperative learning cannot be developed in classrooms that revolve around competitive assessment. It certainly occurs in them, but usually as a resistance to the competition that the students find themselves in (this is particularly true for girls, and particularly in science and mathematics) and it usually consists of a form of cheating where students copy each other's work if they can't do it.

If a teacher believes in sharing power in the classroom, then she needs to seek ways to include non-competitive assessment into her practice. This certainly means taking risks for those teachers in schools which are heavily into competitive structures like grading and streaming.

Valuing Students' Knowledge and Experience

Part of the power structure of a teacher directed classroom is that the decisions made about what and how to learn are made by the teacher. This rests on the assumption that the teacher is the only one in the classroom that knows the subject matter and knows the best way to go about learning it. Indeed, one traditional barrier that students raise when resisting cooperative learning is that the teacher ought to know and ought to tell the students what to do (that's what she's paid for). The students know about this power and many of them, especially secondary school students, expect the teacher to hold the power.

There are several strategies that I use to share this power. Firstly, when setting up the cooperative student-centred classroom, I encourage students to learn from themselves. This is the basis of group work, and I encourage students to discuss problems together and then consult me if they need to check their understanding. On occasions, a whole group of students can work out an understanding which is at variance to the standard explanation. I have overcome this problem somewhat by building in regular teacher contacts into the work-required statement (see No. 4 in 'Physiology Questions', Appendix I). Usually this contact occurs with the group of students and I am able to help them clarify their understandings at that point. With regular encouragement, students can become less dependent on the teacher's knowledge or, should I say, on the teacher's authority, and learn to respect their own and peers' abilities to solve problems. This is sharing the power.

Secondly, I always try to build into the beginning of the topic, a session where the students discuss and recall what they already know about the topic. At the moment I am teaching a Year 10 topic called the Laws of Motion. The following is an extract from the work-required statement:

Extract from Laws of Motion
Work-Required Statement:
7. Participate in generating a class list of what you know about motion.
8. Write your own definitions of words identified in the discussion.
9. Develop a glossary of technical terms (new words) that you come across in this unit.
10. In consultation with the teacher, design or find an experiment that tests one of your existing ideas, and share your findings with the class.

11. Generate at least 2 questions about motion in negotiation with the teacher. Find the answer to these questions by:
   * doing at least one experiment;
   * using a textbook or resources from the R/C.

12. Solve problems set by the teacher.

13. Rewrite Newton's three laws of motion in your own words and illustrate your understanding by referring to at least two experiments for each law.

14. Participate in a weekly lesson where the teacher answers questions set by the class. The questions must be submitted at least one lesson in advance.

The knowledge generated by the initial discussion about what the students know has led to two weeks' lessons of experiments and sharing.

In this case, I had a student teacher working with me and he managed the session which began the process. He encouraged them to think of examples and then explain what they thought was happening. They then spent the rest of the lesson in group discussion. At the class discussion next lesson, each group shared and explained their idea to the whole class. Most groups had begun with an example and then attempted to generalise in the explanation. I wrote it all on the board. Here is a note from my journal:

"... Once I had all the groups' contributions on the board, I was going to suggest that we group statements into relationships. Turning to the work-required statement, I explained that if they could define some of the ideas in what they knew, then they would have a clearer idea of the one that they wanted to test. 'Well,' said Prue, 'what we should do is all write an example to each point because then we can see if we really understand it or not.' Not exactly what I had in mind, but the rest of the class were in total agreement. Well, they are the ones learning it, and it's obviously the wrong time for generalisations now ..."

And that's what they did. It took them about a lesson to work on that in groups and to write it into their books and by the end of that lesson some groups were looking through books or designing their own experiments. We had soda bulb rockets, inertia experiments, parachutes, ticker-timers and collisions going on for several lessons. Once they had finished, most of them spent about a lesson discussing the experiment and writing it up. We then spent a lesson on class discussion sharing their experiments and discussing their original ideas.

The point that I am trying to make with this example is that by starting with what they knew and building on that, the students have begun to learn about the laws of motion. And I haven't said very much about what I know at all.

As well, they are learning to respect the power of what they and their peers know. This is sharing the power.

Thirdly, I encourage and then insist that students do not copy secondhand meanings from books. Teaching students to value their own understandings and become less dependent on expert (book and teacher) meanings is a process that takes time and requires patience. In my experience, most secondary school students need to be taught how to do this. I use the following activities to develop this skill:

(a) I do a lot of questioning when I recognise secondhand meanings written in students' books and try to persuade them that it is pointless to copy things that they don't understand without translating it into their own words;

(b) I show them in a one-to-one or small group situation how to write down their meanings as they say or discuss them. Many students don't realise that they can write their spoken language onto paper and then refine the meaning from there;

(c) I model how to take notes from prose by doing it on the blackboard in front of them, thinking aloud as I go. I then rewrite these notes into prose, using my own words;

(d) I run rewriting exercises where I use a statement from a book and then get them to discuss it in group discussion. At the end of the group discussion, they collaborate in a class discussion and then refine their understandings back in the group situation (see No. 12 of the 'Laws of Motion Work-Required Statement'). The teacher has to be careful not to rephrase statements that the students make into formal language. They have to develop the language themselves (just as a child learns the spoken language);

(e) I try to vary the audience for student writing. Generally this is for their peers to be used for class presentation
and sharing times, or to go into a booklet for the school library (see 'Physiology Questions'). However, where the opportunity exists, younger students, family members and wider audiences (magazines, newspapers, newsletters) can be sought. Faced with this situation, the students know that the writing and explanations must be comprehensible for their audience.

Only after I have modeled the processes that they can use to write their own meanings, can I expect them to do it. Students need a lot of encouragement to become confident to make, use and learn from their own meanings rather than relying on the teacher. This is sharing the power.

Negotiating

Developing the appropriate negotiating skills is essential for managing cooperative student-centred classrooms. Whilst I have had plenty of practice, I still haven't actually worked out what it is that I do and what factors affect the development of these skills. This is the focus of my action research at the moment.

Through journal writing and focused observation, a group of teachers with whom I work are investigating the development of our negotiation skills with our classes. We have identified four areas to investigate: levels of negotiation, issues raised during negotiation, type of interaction during negotiation and feedback from students. We are interested to reflect on our behaviour as well as the behaviour of the students as we develop student-centred learning in the classroom. For instance, we are interested to see if the students will increase the number of times that they initiate negotiation at all levels as they become more independent learners. I have already recorded this on the individual level and at the class level in two Year 10 Science classes.

Negotiation at the class level requires patience and persistence to develop, particularly with students who commonly resist learning in schools. The teacher cannot resort to traditional control behaviour, which rests on the assumption that the teacher is responsible for controlling the behaviour of the students. The cooperative student-centred classroom is based on the assumption that the teacher and students share this responsibility, because the behaviour of students, individually and in groups, can influence the learning atmosphere in the classroom, especially as the success of the strategies of group and class discussion depend on students listening to each other, not interrupting, asking each other questions and helping each other to learn.

I use several strategies to develop an atmosphere in which class discussion can proceed:

(a) Developing shared and individual rules for classroom behaviour

This is best done at the beginning of the year (semester or module). It involves discussion about why and how to share the responsibility of classroom behaviour and then brainstorming the types of behaviour that are appropriate or not appropriate to the classroom in group discussion. Once the students have shared their lists, then each point is discussed and a decision made whether to include it in the rules. After the rules have been established, then the students can discuss what will happen if the rules are contravened. At the school where I am teaching at the moment, this is a school policy, and we have found it particularly successful for helping students to individually reflect on their behaviour as well as encouraging the awareness that students can do something about the types of behaviour that interrupt their learning in the classroom.

(b) Holding regular class meetings that deal with teacher and student concerns about the management of the classroom and behaviour

I usually hold one of these at the end of each learning topic. The lesson before, I give out a feedback sheet to students and then use the collated results to give
stimulus to the discussion. The following is an example of the questions I asked recently. I modify the feedback sheet to fit each topic:

Year 10 Science:

Feedback about the Laws of Motion

1. What was the best thing that happened in Science in the last unit?
2. Write down one important thing you have learnt.
3. How do you feel in Science classes at the moment? (circle the words that apply to you:)
   - interested
   - relaxed
   - worried
   - confused
   - clever
   - happy
   - successful
   - bored
   - rushed
   write your own word/s:
4. Which work-required statement helped your learning the most? Please explain why.
5. Do you have any concerns about your learning at the moment?
6. Are you getting enough help from the teacher? YES: NO:
   Have you any advice or comments about how the teacher manages the class?
7. On a scale of 1 – 10, how did you enjoy the unit? (circle)
   NO 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 YES

Thank you for your contribution.

According to the comments made by students, I can negotiate constraints, behaviour and methods of learning with the students. For instance, the statement No. 14 in the Laws of Motion Work-Required Statement referred to above, was the result of an idea brought up by a group of students during a class meeting. On other occasions, students may identify the behaviour of a student or a group of students that is causing concern, and then the class can discuss what we can do about it. I have also brought up my own ideas or concerns for discussion.

With time and patience, the students will get more confident about bringing up their concerns. The teachers must develop their trust by taking ideas seriously and by making an obvious effort to include their suggestions into the classroom and by not using the class meeting for a complaining session. The students can appreciate and respect the responsibilities that the teacher has towards the school and their parents and can accept that suggestions have to fit in with certain conventions. (For instance, they cannot decide to spend lessons listening to AC/DC and not doing any learning about the subject for which the lesson is designed.)

(c) Insist that students listen and share their comments during class discussion

I will not tolerate inconsiderate behaviour during class discussion. While the students are learning to conduct themselves during discussion, I chair the meeting, and I will interrupt any speaker to deal with students who are talking amongst themselves or talking over the speaker. This can be really frustrating at first, for the students and the teacher but, in time, the offenders realise that it's not worth the attention that they get from the behaviour. I have one class at the moment who take it in turns to chair the class meeting. I notice with amusement that they have learnt the same tactics as I use to keep the attention of the class. This class has a rule which excludes any student from the meeting on the third reminder.

I build into the class meetings time for students to discuss ideas with one another. This is useful when there is a lull in the conversation, or when students are obviously excited about something and need to talk about it all at once. Then I say, talk about that idea with your neighbours for two minutes.

However, some students will continue to resist. Why tolerate it? Arrange for them to go elsewhere while the class meets, rather than put up with their inconsiderate behaviour. In fact, I have a class of Year 11 boys where, until recently, most of them couldn't cooperate together to have a class meeting. I have spent a lot of time working on this one, and with the help of consistent effort from their other teachers, reading the 'riot act' and other intimidatory tactics, I have secured enough control to hold some class discussions. As mentioned, the control is mainly my responsibility and I believe that it will most likely be fairly short-lived. These students have resisted for so long, it is an up-hill battle to persuade them to share the power. I keep trying though.

It is worth the time and effort to establish the atmosphere where a class of students can cooperate to hold a class discussion. Because, apart from being a useful medium to develop the shifting of responsibility, it is also a powerful way for students to learn through talk and sharing.

Negotiating with individuals and groups of students requires other skills. Whilst the main issue for negotiation at the class level is about classroom management and organisational matters, the issues raised with the individual student or a group are more diverse. So far I have documented the following:
* timelines
* finishing times
* planning
* completeness of work
* neatness
* written expression
* editing
* redrafting
* final presentation
* making your expectations clear
* use of time
* helping students to realise their interests and decide the direction of their learning
* depth of understanding
* helping students to generalise from their experiments/research
* individual/group effort
* group interactions and involvement
* use of resources.

I have no doubt that this list is not exhaustive.

Firstly, the teacher needs to have good communication skills, those of listening carefully, friendly body language, not interrupting etc. As well, the teacher needs to be able to judge how much withholding of information is appropriate in different situations. For instance, withholding information is important when students are grappling with new concepts, or when a student wants to copy your knowledge second-hand. In the former case, I ask questions of clarification that will be helpful for the student in her/his understanding, and in the latter, I direct the student to find out for herself/himself. However, when I am aware that the student/s have really tried to understand or have searched carefully for information, then it is not appropriate to withhold information that will help to relieve the student's frustration and develop their understanding.

The most important skill, however, is the ability to encourage the learners and to build up their confidence to go on learning. Certain groups of students, for example girls, need constant encouragement. This does not mean that the teacher oozes with praise; it means recognising low self-confidence or discouragement, and helping the students to recognise what they have achieved so far.

Students also need to develop skills too as they develop as independent learners in a student-centred classroom. Independent learning takes time to develop, and depends on the confidence and the organisational skills of the learner.

Students need to be able to conduct cooperative group discussions by themselves. I make this issue a matter of regular discussion and encourage groups to reflect on the process regularly. I have had some groups tape record and videotape their group process so that they can see ways of making it more efficient. As well, students need to be well organised. Some students need more help with this skill, and they are mostly boys. Students who are not well organised are the most dependent on the teacher.

In summary, developing effective negotiating skills is very important when sharing power with students in the classroom. For teachers who are attempting to change their practice from teacher-directed methodologies to student-centred strategies, it means that they will have
to change the focus of their communication with students from direction and control to negotiation and encouragement.

**Relationship**

When I first began using cooperative strategies, my relationship with the students changed from being a formal relationship generated by my authority to direct classroom activities and judge their work (and I admit readily that my personality was never suited to this type of behaviour) to an informal relationship necessary to sharing power in the classroom. I knew then that it was an important transformation if students were going to trust that I would share that power.

Now I see my decision in a wider context. I now know that the formal relationship that is often generated between students and the teacher using teacher-directed strategies, is connected to a particular value system, a value system that defines power structures between the powerful and the powerless people in our society. Dwyer et al. (1984) argue that informality is a vital aspect of working class culture and that by developing informal relationships with students, teachers can help to value the culture and experiences of their students. In turn, this helps to increase the students' self-confidence and make schooling more relevant and meaningful.

I consider that informality is very important for establishing an atmosphere in which students can engage in cooperation, reflection and evaluation. I believe that formal relationships between students and teachers are inappropriate if all the students in the classroom are to feel confident enough to question and reflect, because even the most polite formal relationship is intimidating as it is based on an unequal power structure.

This doesn't mean that the informal classroom is all 'lovey-dovey' or 'wishy-washy'. In fact it is more the case of being a lot more fun, interspersed with tension and sometimes confrontation. In other words, more like the relationship between friends and families. It also doesn't mean that the atmosphere is disrespectful. By informality I mean a friendly and respectful behaviour that exists between all parties. In TA terminology, the relationship refers to that classified as adult. And for some students, the contradiction between the traditional authority of the teacher and the informality that I want to develop can develop into mistrust and confusion. Some students who do not trust my intentions will continue to resist by taking advantage of the power I wish to share. This is often the cause of confrontation.

**Action Research**

The process of action research has been vital to my development as a teacher, and I have written about the way that I have used action research elsewhere (Cosgrove, 1981). I recommend action research to teachers who want to investigate their attempts to democratise their classrooms because it is a systematic way to test ideas in action and, if used collaboratively with other teachers, it models a style of learning that can be used in the classroom. Using action research is to recognise the teacher's own need to learn, and because the teacher must involve her students by collecting their feedback on her process, then she models the process of critical self-reflection for the students. Over time, the investigation through action research will help a teacher see her development, and this acts as a basis for increasing self-confidence and for developing theories from her practice.

Don't take my word for it; do it yourself!

Susan Hyde

Susan Hyde is currently Principal of Port Augusta High School in South Australia.

This article draws upon examples at Risdon Park High School and Elizabeth West High School.

**References**

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Dwyer, P. et al, Confronting School and Work, Sydney, George Allen & Unwin, 1984

Appendix 1:

Science 10 6

Physiology Questions

Date work required by: ..............

1. Attend all lessons.
2. Set homework for yourself at least twice a week (and do it). The H/W must be entered in your diary.
3. Keep a journal of your lesson and H/W activities.
4. Make contact with the teacher at least once a week regarding the progress and quality of your work.
5. Participate in a class discussion in which the class collaborates (works together) to generate questions about the human body.
6. CLASS BOOKLET:
   (a) Choose at least 3 questions that interest you and are not chosen by another student. Students who wish to answer the same questions will need to negotiate the task with the teacher. Tell the teacher the questions that you have chosen.
   (b) Answer those questions with words and/or diagrams.
   (c) Present the rough draft to the teacher and negotiate the quality and content of the answer.
   (d) Present your final drafts in a manner suitable for printing at least one week before the due date.
7. Form a group with one or two other students. Tell the teacher who is in the group. Choose at least 5 experiments from those prepared in the laboratory and do these experiments together. Fill in those that you have chosen:

Keep organised notes and results from all experiments and write a formal report on at least one.

Group members must not present formal reports of the same experiment. Negotiate with the teacher if you wish to work by yourself.

8. Make organised notes from a lecture called 'Major systems of the human body.'

9. Teach a member of your family where the following organs are in their body: ............
   A signed declaration from an adult member of your family who witnessed your teaching must be presented.

10. Keep organised notes on any video shown to the class. Write a formal report of at least one of the videos.

11. Participate in the reading of the class booklet. Write at least a half-page comment on the quality of the answers and make reference to those which you found particularly interesting.

WORK COMPLETED? Y N

SIGNATURES: Teacher
            Student
            Parent/s

COMMENTS: Teacher
           Student
           Parent

Notes on Work-Required Statement

WORK REQUIRED BY:

At the first lesson, the due date should be negotiated with the students. At first, you will have more idea than they will, but with some experience the students will be able to negotiate this factor. It is important to be firm about the due date, making obvious allowances for sickness etc.

As well, the teacher needs to go through the work required in detail, elaborating where necessary, discussing her expectations about quality and quantity according to the year group and time available. This work-required statement is fairly detailed. This is more necessary when students begin work with this form of assessment; however, with experience,
students can participate in the writing of the statement and processes do not need to be spelt out in such detail.

The work-requirement statement should be stuck into the student's book/put into their folder so that they can refer to it readily. They should use it to mark off work as they do it. I always get my students to do this in the first lesson, and get them to draw up their journal page right next to it.

1. Attend all lessons

This item emphasises that the student must participate in classroom activities rather than be able to pass a course with irregular attendance. Whilst skipping classes and school is not an issue at some schools, making this point explicit helps the students to understand this form of assessment.

2. Set homework for yourself at least twice a week (and do it). The H/W must be entered in the diary.

3. Keep a journal of your lesson and H/W activities.

The journal and homework entries are important in helping to develop the students' abilities to plan their time, as well as modeling a way of recording activities so that students can reflect on their process.

The way that students keep their journal varies. Most write brief statements about their activities, whilst others keep a more detailed diary-type style. I allow all styles, but its daily completion is not negotiable. I usually remind them to write their entry five minutes before the end of each lesson, and I keep regular checks of the regularity at first until I see that it becomes automatic for them.

4. Make contact with the teacher at least once a week regarding the progress and quality of your work.

This is an important process necessary for good management of a cooperative learning style. The teacher needs to interact with groups of students or individual students continually, in order to allow sufficient negotiation of the quality and quantity of their learning.

By making this process part of the work required, it ensures that the students take responsibility for making contact with the teacher to discuss their work. They can use their journal to keep a record of their contacts with the teacher, and I always keep a record of my contact, as I do with homework entries.

As in all classroom interaction, the teacher needs to be aware of the gender balance of the interaction. Boys tend to make more demands on teachers and this needs to be discouraged if they are to develop more independence in their learning. Be vocal about this concern, and ask a student to keep track of the time spent with boys and girls regularly. The girls will be encouraged if you acknowledge that they have the right to as much of your attention as the boys. There are other issues involved with the type of interaction that the teacher maintains with boys and girls and this can be observed and changed by the systematic process of action research.

5. Participate in class discussion in which the class collaborates [works together] to generate questions about the human body.

Begin by brainstorming questions about different areas of the body. They may need prompting at first, but in my experience they get the hang of it very soon. Encourage them to ask commonsense questions like "How does the blood move around the body?" and "Why do farts smell?" rather than the ones like "What is the circulatory system?" The lesson can be very stimulating for the students and a good deal of laughter and discussion between groups of students can arise. Allow some of this but keep them on the track as much as possible.

As the questions are generated, write them on the board. As well, ask a student to keep a record of them. The discussion may take more than one lesson, and so the questions can be duplicated if time permits, so that students can choose the ones that they wish to answer.

This session is a very important part of the process of cooperative learning. Firstly, it helps the students to work out what they already know about the body, as well as helping to generate enthusiasm, intention and confidence to learn.

6. CLASS BOOKLET

(a) Choose at least 3 questions that interest you and are not chosen by another student.

Students who wish to answer the same questions will need to negotiate the task with the teacher. Tell the teacher the questions that you have chosen.

The number of questions that students can do will depend on the year group and the time available. The first time I did this process, I was working with a Year 11 class. They managed about 10 on the average and the topic ran for about 8 weeks. Another time, my Year 8 class could only manage one each, mainly because their research skills, prior knowledge and language skills were not as developed as those of the older students.
I usually ask the students to note down their interests and then do the initial negotiation in class discussion. Encourage them to answer related questions to help keep the research more manageable.

Keep a record of each student’s choice. Encourage students to choose other questions if they have chosen those that coincide with other students. Allow group work on those questions that are complex.

(b) Answer those questions with words and/or diagrams.

Students will need access to the resources in the Resource Centre, including books, vertical files, magazines, encyclopaedias, slides etc.

Keep in close contact with the students as they work. Be firm about copying. You may need to show some students how to take notes and form them into their own words. Model it for them, taking some notes and then writing down their words as they explain how they understand.

Students can also find out the answers by asking someone. Students will be more or less dependent on you for the answers according to their abilities.

(c) Present the rough draft to the teacher and negotiate the quality and the content of the answer. This may involve several redrafting and negotiation sessions.

This part of the process is a golden opportunity to help students with their written expression. An important aspect of the class booklet is that the students are writing for each other rather than for the teacher.

If the student’s writing has badly formed sentences or incorrect punctuation, get them to read it aloud. This helps them to hear the mistakes and provides them with a process for future checking of their expression. The students’ ability to correct their work will depend on their language skill and this will always vary.

I always encourage my students to get another student to help to check their writing. As well, I encourage students to find their own spelling mistakes, making allowances for technical or new terms.

In any classroom, the depth of the answer will vary with the students’ abilities to learn and to communicate their learning. You have to learn to tolerate simplified understandings as well as a range of depth in the answers.

(d) Present your final drafts in a manner suitable for printing at least one week before the due date.

When preparing for printing, make it as professional as possible. Use a contents page if you have time, but definitely arrange a well designed front cover.

(When arranging for the copying, don’t forget to make extra copies for the Resource Centre, the Principal, the Senior, and one for your file.)

7. Form a group with one or two other students. Tell the teacher who is in the group. Choose at least five experiments from those prepared in the laboratory and do those that you have chosen.....

All sorts of experiments are appropriate to the work of various organs and mice or rats, microscope work looking at blood, check cells and prepared slides, food tests, and urine tests, to mention just a few. The important thing is that students choose five or more than five.

I usually have two sets of each experiment made up, except for dissections and experiments requiring demonstration. I publish the dates of the dissections and the students have to let me know if they want to do it.

I also encourage single sex groups for experiments to ensure that girls get experience in practical skills and to give boys the opportunity to improve their recording skills.

8. Makes organised notes from a lecture called "Major systems of the human body".

Try to make the lecture go for only one lesson.

I believe that note taking skills are important for the students to develop. For this reason, I model a style of note taking on the board as I give the lecture, outlining the main points. Students will elaborate if they wish. The important thing here is to model a style that doesn't involve the writing of full sentences, as this is an inefficient way of taking notes in a lecture situation.

Encourage the students to put notes directly into their books. Discourage making good copies, however I always make allowances for the students' confidence in this matter.

When I give feedback about the note taking I mention spacing, underlining and the use of abbreviations to help them develop an efficient style.

9. Teach a member of your family where the following organs are in their body.

This item encourages contact with parents about the students' learning at school.

10. Keep organised notes on any video shown to the class. Write a formal report of at least one of the videos.

If students are not confident about
Appendix 2:

Electricity

Work completed

Name: ........................
Teach.  Stud.
Sig.  Sig.
Start Date: ...............  Finishing Date: ............

Complete/Not Complete

To complete this unit, student should:

- Attend all lessons.
- Set homework for yourself at least twice each week (and do it). The homework must be entered into the diary.
- Keep a journal of your lesson and homework activities AND/OR use the planning sheet.
- Make contact with the teacher at least once a week regarding the progress and quality of your work.
- Participate in class meetings about the progress of the class work.
- Keep organised records of all experiments that you do.
- Participate in generating a class list of what you know about electricity.
- Provide an explanation of how electrocution can occur and how it can be avoided. Outline the first aid treatment for a patient who has been electrocuted.
- Select an issue of safety related to electricity and explain how accidents can be avoided.
- Provide evidence of experiments you have done to investigate the effects of electricity eg heat, light, noise, movement, magnetism.
- Write a description of what you understand about electricity. Relate your description to the effects you have seen. Show evidence of having compared your description with that of at least one other student.
- Contribute to the compiling of a class list of things we know about electricity and help to generate a list of questions and tasks that will help our understanding of electricity.
- Show some evidence of updating your list of knowledge and understanding by dating your glossary or making suitable journal entries.
Appendix 3: A Checklist for Assessment Goals

The main features of work-required assessment are:

* Students and parents are given goals at the commencement of the course.
* The goals represent the products of the course.
* The processes which are expected to be learnt must be followed and learnt in order to achieve the goals.
* All goals must be completed to complete the course.
* All goals are attainable.
* Negotiation of and within goals is possible.
* All students can be accommodated.
* Students are able to say what they are doing in the course.
* The role of the teacher is to facilitate and support learning.
* A student's sense of worth and achievement is not fed through the teacher.
* Student self-assessment is part of the process to attain goals.
* If learning or progress is not occurring for students, then the course itself is failing (course evaluation).

To make work-required assessment effective in promoting learning:

1. Focus on learning, not behaviour control.

Work-required assessment operates on an assumption that the learning processes that make up the course are spelt out - and that if students are prepared to involve themselves in those activities, then the school will report that they successfully completed the course.

The idea is that students know what is expected of them - and that they are doing those things so that they will learn. Work-required assessment should not seem like a system to force students to be compliant. If it seems like this, some students are likely to rebel against it.

Often work required includes 'cooperate with teacher and other students'; but almost always it is necessary to cooperate to complete the work required! So it is usually unnecessary to have behaviour requirements listed in the work required, which should concentrate on recording how students are learning in the course.

2. Specify processes which can challenge students at different levels of ability in your subject.

Sometimes teachers spell out the products that students are to submit, rather than the processes they are to be involved with. The problem with describing the products is that many students may then submit these products without actually learning much. For example, work required can include "spend time with a person from the country under study and report on what has been learnt". This is much better than specifying "that students must draw up a set of interview questions" etc, because it leaves more room for students and teacher to suggest strategies appropriate to the student's investigation and the student's level of confidence.

3. Clarify what the purpose and the audience of the work is.

Clarifying the purpose of the work suggests the criteria for assessing whether it has been completed. For example, if the purpose of a journal is to provide an on-going evaluation of the course for the teacher and other students, then it will need to be legible, the organisation of the journal will need to be easily understood, it will need to be clear which parts of the course are being referred to, and there will need to be some discussion of what the student is learning.

If, however, the purpose of the journal is to be a working resource, in which the student experiments with different styles of writing and gets feedback from teacher or other students to selected experiments, then the criteria for deciding if the work has been completed will be very different.

Without a clarification of its purpose, it is often difficult to decide if a journal is satisfactorily completed, and students' motivation is often low.

4. Provide time for students to practise and be coached in strategies and skills.

Tasks which relate to audiences outside the school (eg preparing food for sale) require a certain level of success. If a course involves tasks like these, it is important that students be able to rehearse, practise and be coached, so that they can learn from their mistakes before presenting their work to an external audience.
5. Specify work sufficiently that students will know if they are progressing with it.

While the wording of the work required should leave room for students to negotiate aspects of how they work and what they work on, it should still be specific enough that they know when they are working satisfactorily.

Requirements like 'participate in class' do not make it clear what is expected. If such expectations are not clarified in class, there is a danger that the students will see the teacher's judgements as arbitrary and when that happens, the cooperative teacher-student relationship, which work-required assessment aims to foster, will be impaired.

6. Provide time for unsatisfactory work to be redeemed.

In work-required assessment, it is not a case of anything is good enough. Often the teacher will point out where revision or development is necessary for some work to be completed. So the organisation and time-tabling of work should allow for this review of the work before the end of the course.

7. Avoid a long list of requirements.

Aim for about five very challenging requirements. If there are too many goals, some will be dealt with as busy work - and students' overall commitment to the course is likely to be less.

8. Include work which involves a group product.

Requiring a group product, by which every member of the group must stand or fall, is the best way to set up focused group work. This provides a setting in which much social learning can take place - and is more akin to most work situations than individual work.

Some people argue that it is unfair to assess a group product - that only individual products should be assessed. They are, in essence, asserting that people should be seen as independent individuals, and not as interdependent parts of a team. But both are legitimate ways of thinking. If schools are to teach cooperation, they must not allow the 'isolated individuals' world view to dominate all work. Work which is recognised for assessment should include both individual work and group work.

9. Include work in which students can express their own individuality.

If the work in a Maths course (for example) involves doing exercises which each have one correct answer, then we know exactly what we want the student to do and the student's individuality has no bearing on the nature of this finite outcome. Courses which produce documented assessments of students should include a fair amount of work which does not lead to such finite outcomes. Otherwise, the assessment is in no way an appreciation of the student, but only a measure of them on narrow criteria.

At Allendale East Area School, goal-based assessment in Maths involves students undertaking a specific interest project (showing documentation of problem-solving techniques and decision-making processes). This work can reflect the students' own interests and creativity, and can be included in an across-the-curriculum folder of best work for showing to employers, parents and course evaluators.

10. Emphasise the most important processes in your subject area.

Some teachers are very cautious not to be attacked on the requirements they spell out. It is a great pity if this cautiousness leads them to leave out important aspects of the course because they seem too subjective.

For example, it might be important to spell out 'use your imagination' in an Art course. It will then be necessary to discuss what this means in class.

11. Help the students complete the work.

Sometimes teachers sit back and simply expect that students will 'get on with it'. Then the teacher's role is merely to check that students are doing the work. But teaching involves helping students with their work in many different ways, by developing organising strategies, by increasing access to resources, by encouraging collaboration, by acting as proof-reader, by direct instruction about task components to individuals etc.

Some people argue that work that the teacher has helped with is not a fair measure of what the student would do on his/her own. This argument has some validity, but the highest priority for schools should be to help students with their work, not to assess how they work when help is unavailable.

If a teacher is unconvinved that, on educational grounds, students should be required to demonstrate knowledge or skills in situations where they cannot get help, then this should be assessed using redeemable tests which may be oral, written or practical. Coaching should be available for these tests.

12. Encourage students to believe they can complete the work required.

An advantage of work-required assessment is that virtually all students can at
least imagine themselves completing the work. (In contrast, with grades, many students feel they could never maintain the standard to get a high grade.)

The advantage of students being able to imagine themselves succeeding is lost if the wording of the work required is such as to intimidate rather then encourage them. Requirements like 'cooperate at all times' and 'obey all class rules' cause problems if the students don't do these things early in the course. They are likely to give up - or assume that the requirement need not be taken seriously.

It is better to state the requirements more simply (eg 'obey class rules'). Then, if some students have difficulty doing that, help them to work towards successfully adhering to the rules in future. As long as a student improved his or her performance and obeyed the rules over the last weeks of the course, they would usually be credited with completing the required work.

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**NEGOTIATION: A Partial Bibliography**

We were recently asked for some materials on negotiating the curriculum. The following is a partial list of materials we found - it is hoped to develop a more complete list in the near future.

Enquire at the Victorian Ministry of Education's Education Shop for the pamphlet series.

Into Practice: Books One and Two (Vic. PEP Schools Resource Program on Goal Based Assessment and Negotiated Curriculum, reprinted 1987) ISBN 0 7241 42177/43130

Over To You: A handbook of ideas, in-services and resources on goal based assessment and negotiated curriculum (Vic PEP, 1987) ISBN 0 7241 6692 0

Negotiating the Curriculum: A Teacher Student Partnership, G Boomer (ed) (Ashton Scholastic, 1982)

'Negotiating the Curriculum', G Boomer, in English in Australia, 44, June 1978

A Series of Ten Booklets about Year 12 Curriculum, M Freeman (ed), (Vic PEP STC Schools Resource Program, 1985) ISBN 0 7241 3892 7 to 3901 X

Increasing Participation through Goal-Based Assessment and Negotiated Curriculum (Queensland Department of Education, Curriculum Services Branch, PEP, 1985)

A Review of Negotiation and Assessment (Huntingdale Technical School, Victoria, 1986)


Approved Study Structure V: STC Course (85-12-082, VISE, 1981 and 90-12-082, VISE, 1985)

The STC Book, P Reid (ed) (VSTA, Melbourne, 1981) ISBN 0 909473 04 8

'Negotiating the Curriculum' paper and bibliography in Implementing Ministerial Paper Number 6 (Ministry of Education, Victoria, 1986) ISBN 0 7241 7547 4

**BACK ISSUES OF CONNECT:**

While many articles in Connect are based on the ideas of curriculum negotiation, the following contain explicit reference to the processes of negotiation:

'Network and Negotiation' in Connect 40, Aug/Sept, 1986;

'STC and Tutoring' in Connect 24, Dec 83.


**ARTICLES AVAILABLE FROM CONNECT:**

055  STC Course Construction: Suggett (15 pp)

148  Negotiating the Curriculum: Boomer (14 pp)

150  Interpretations: 'negotiation/Negotiation': ETAWA (24 pp)

152  Negotiating the Curriculum: Programming for Learning: Cook (17 pp)

167  Negotiation in Drama Curriculum: Parker (6 pp)
The following article provides another example of a course structure developed from and using an explicit process of negotiation between teacher and students. Though it provides less detail about the process of negotiation, it does illustrate one answer to "what is negotiable?" and outlines some student reactions.

**GIRLS IN TECHNOLOGY**

My first creation! The two-tone doorbell. When it actually worked, it was a big thrill.

This girl's enthusiasm for her task comes across plainly in the journal she wrote for her Girls in Technology class. The subject has been running at Diamond Valley Secondary College during 1989-90, and has been most successful in linking girls into practical areas of technology.

Girls and technology have generally been considered at variance. Traditionally there have been only small numbers of girls in technology classes, for a number of barriers have prevented girls from freely choosing and participating in these subjects.

In 1988, the Curriculum Committee at Diamond Valley Secondary College identified that subjects offered in technology areas for year 10 students were biased towards boys' interests and aspirations, and were therefore not being chosen by girls. As it was compulsory for all students at this year level to do at least one semester unit from the technology area, it was decided to devise a course that was more relevant to girls, so that a viable option was available to them.

There was concern expressed by this committee that mixed technology classes tended to disadvantage girls. Male students often belittled the worth of the girls' contributions and even male teachers doubted the girls' capabilities. In the face of such criticism, the girls themselves frequently had little confidence about their own practical skills.

The subject, Girls in Technology, was therefore set up by Terry Bain to be a girls-only class. By providing an environment that was positive and non-threatening, girls elected to do this subject and enthusiastically set about learning new skills.
Today I cut out all my wood for the table. I worked out how to bring the wood together and everything. I’m rapt that I worked out how to do it!

The confidence that was developed as a result of the single-sex environment was clear. The girls felt free to try new tasks and even to make their own mistakes without fear of ridicule from the boys. The course content was negotiated between the teacher and the participants, so that right from the outset, the girls felt valued in the process. Tasks agreed to were:

* Repairing an electrical fuse
* Replacing a light globe
* Replacing a washer in a tap
* Repairing hinges and locks on cupboard doors
* Car maintenance eg changing/cleaning sparkplugs, changing a tyre, replacing/maintaining fan belts and car light globes, and identifying problems
* Tinkering with an appliance from home.

These activities were designed to develop practical skills that girls generally do not have the opportunity to acquire.

Many of the journal extracts echo the sense of achievement the girls experienced after mastering such non-traditional skills.

I now know how to make a 3-core extension lead ... and my dad doesn’t!

Because the girls were involved in the curriculum process, they chose activities that were of particular interest to them and often of some functional value.

Apart from practical activities, the Girls in Technology classes also introduced the girls to various women employed in non-traditional occupations. These women came to the school as guest speakers through the Women Talk Work Register. Having gained new confidence and expertise through the completion of their practical projects, the girls were ready to be confronted with a whole range of career opportunities in non-traditional areas. By listening to these talks, an important transition began, for the girls started to be aware that their acquired skills could be developed into a feasible career.

It was then possible to link them into a program at Box Hill College of TAFE which provided the opportunity to explore further vocational training options. Trade and Technology days and "Taste" days for girls have been a feature at Box Hill College of TAFE for several years and were particularly suited to the girls participating in the Girls in Technology classes. During these days, the girls developed and extended their practical skills. They also gathered information about what is required for apprenticeships and non-traditional courses.

I think that was when I was really bitten by the electronic bug and decided to do a technician’s course.

Linking curriculum at a secondary college with what is offered at a TAFE College has proved valuable, for all the career options have been presented to them and not just those narrow occupations traditionally regarded as acceptable for girls. With the skills and self-confidence gained in the technology classroom, the girls at Diamond Valley Secondary College were able to seriously consider such options as being viable future careers for them.

The course and the days at TAFE have been really great! You know, I didn’t realise before that girls really can be plumbers and electricians these days. As for me – no way! I’d much rather be a Motor Mechanic!

Lisa Shnookal
Women’s Trade & Technology Officer
Box Hill College of TAFE, Vic

Terry Bain
Diamond Valley Secondary College, Vic
To a stranger's eye, young people in Sweden seem to be caught in a somewhat ambivalent situation. On the one hand, they live in a beautiful country which is economically successful, where unemployment is now officially 1.1%, and where there is a substantial network of counselling and training arrangements to assist students to enrol in further study or to enter the labour market. There is an old tradition in Sweden called 'everyone's right' which means that anybody can go hiking or camping wherever they want to, irrespective of who owns the land, provided that they stay away from people's houses and respect their rights also, in relation to animals, crops etc.

On the other hand, there seems to be growing concern about how interested young people are in their society, its politics and in taking up the available employment opportunities. Large companies like Volvo are worried especially as they simply cannot attract young people to work in their factories for long enough for them to become sufficiently well trained to take up the more skilled jobs. They are trying to find ways of making industrial work more attractive to young people. At present, it seems as though many are happy enough to leave school and work in a factory for 6 to 12 months, after which time they have made sufficient money to travel overland to Australia! It is claimed that 80,000 Swedish young people visit Australia each year. One recent study showed that 36% of Swedish young people say that being a travel guide is their preferred future occupation.

Some people are beginning to question whether the pathways available to young people to enter adult society are too tightly structured. Another recent study on teaching strategies showed that well over half the Swedish students are unwilling to exercise initiative without consulting their teachers. And the proportion gets higher as they spend more time in school! Swedish schools do have Student Representative Councils. They can meet during class time, and are able to make decisions about social activities and some organisational issues. School food often seems to be a source of trouble!

Curriculum details, however, are very tightly prescribed. Once a student enters the last three years of secondary school (which over 90% do), they have relatively little option about what they can study, when it can be done, and how much will be done. Students who drop out have few other choices available to them, as it is illegal for many young people to be employed before they are 18 years of age. If they do drop out, it is the local school board which is responsible for them until their 18th birthday, and they will normally be subject to considerable pressure from counsellors to return to school.

Ironically, however, once they turn 18, young people are able to attend a distinctively Scandinavian educational institution, the 'folk high school'. They originated as initiatives of local people who joined together in the mid-1850s to "provide their youngsters with more knowledge and inspiration than elementary schools at that time had to offer". Courses offered within the folk high school can be for two years. Some are vocational, and normally at least half of the students live in at the school. There are no fees, and the normal allowances for higher education students are available to folk high school students.

Students are actively involved in the schools' decision making but, more importantly, the courses are based on students' needs and the learning methods stress the importance of students sharing in shaping the process. Well over half of the students believe that they can 'strongly influence' what happens in the classroom, excursions, evaluation of courses, project topics and subject content. They have much less influence over timetabling, assessment, homework and employing new teachers.
What is interesting, however, is the effect that this experience has on their subsequent participation in public decision making. One recent research project, undertaken with graduates, 3 to 6 years after they had left, found that the proportion involved in an association or a union after being at the folk high school had increased by almost half; the number likely to hold a position of responsibility had doubled, as had their confidence in speaking at public meetings.

This is small evidence in some ways, but important in the emerging debate about passivity amongst Swedish young people. There are almost 130 folk high schools throughout Sweden, with 100-110 ongoing students per year. In addition, another 200,000 people participate in some type of short course offered by folk high schools. Many of the students are between 20 and 24 years of age, with disappointing experiences of secondary school behind them.

From an Australian perspective, at least two implications stand out clearly. In the first place, is there a need for some development (perhaps within the framework of TAFE) which would parallel the Swedish folk high school, with its emphasis on small-scale (residential) groupings, and courses grounded in students' needs, even in vocational areas? Secondly, teachers and students in Australian educational institutions have already learned a lot about how student participation can work effectively, and why it is important. It is obviously important that they should continue to document their experiences with more participatory learning strategies, and to demonstrate their potential for enabling people to contribute more assertively and positively to public decision making.

Bruce Wilson and Kerry O'Neill

Further information about young people in Sweden and about the Folk High School has been provided by Bruce - see the index of articles available - #345, 347 and 348 (this issue).

WANTED: Car or Van to Rent

Ron Wetteroth and family, from an alternative school in North Carolina (USA) will be visiting Australia from October 4th to December 4th. They are arranging visits to alternative schools in Sydney, Brisbane (hopefully), Albury/Wodonga, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth.

They are looking for a car or a small bus/van to rent for all or some of their visit - possibly separately for the east and west coast visits. They will be in and north of Sydney in early October, in Victoria in late October, in South Australia in early November and in and around Perth in late November.

If you can help them with private rental of transportation, can you let Connect know on (03) 489 9052 as soon as possible.
"All work must be infused from the beginning with student choice, design, revision, execution, reflection, and evaluation."

To me, the most exciting times of the recent visit of Eliot Wigginton, Lee Carpenter and Chris Nix from the Foxfire project, were when we worked as a group through the steps which are used in Foxfire classrooms to allow and encourage that initiative.

Wig and the two year 10 students were in Australia for two weeks in early July. The trip was sponsored by the Victorian Country Education Project, the Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia and by the Foxfire Foundation. In addition, a Melbourne-based seminar was supported by the Small Grants Project of the Victorian Consultative Committee for International Literacy Year.

In that brief visit, the group covered a substantial area of Victoria. For three days, they conducted three workshops a day for students, teachers and community members in Manangatang, Pyramid Hill, Nathalia and Kyabram. They then presented a keynote address and conducted a large workshop at the SPERA Conference in Albury/Wodonga, before returning to Melbourne.

Straight off the early morning Albury to Melbourne flight, they recorded a long interview for the ABC's Education Now (see box) and finally led a two-part workshop/seminar at the University of Melbourne (presented by Connect and the University's Youth Research Centre).

Over 70 people took part in these two sessions - teachers, students, parents, administrators - from as far away as Northern Tasmania and Adelaide.

Finally they were able to relax with what they describe as "a glorious couple of days in Sydney ... we filled the time with ferry rides to the Taronga Park Zoo and various exotic seafood restaurants, walks to the Opera House and through the Royal Botanic Gardens, photography, shopping etc."

***

The visit reinforced the impressions of a move by Foxfire from a culture-centred project to one that stressed the underlying and general pedagogy. This will come as no surprise to those who read the most recent interviews reprinted in the last issue of Connect. Equally, it will come as no shock to those committed to and practising curriculum approaches that stress student participation.

Wig was particularly keen to commend projects that he encountered and heard from in Australia. Certainly our impression was that the educational climate here is much more favourable to the development of such approaches than it is in the USA.

Yet it is as true for Australia as it is for the USA that this emphasis on student solution to problems, on turning questions back to the class to wrestle with and solve, and of continuously trusting students, has often proved most difficult for teachers to embrace. The teacher as collaborator and team leader, rather than as 'boss' or repository of all knowledge, is a situation of uncertainty for teachers familiar only with teacher direction and control.

"One of the things that makes teachers very uncomfortable about this particular style is that you're never really sure, once you begin the adventure together, where it's going to wind up. You're never quite sure where you're going to go... Another thing that is unsettling to many teachers about this style is that they're not used to the idea of collaborating and negotiating and problem solving face to face with kids. They're used to the notion that good teachers are the ones who do the most work for kids."

So what drives Wig to continue with this approach, after almost 25 years' teaching, and in the face of daily pressure
to retreat to textbooks and sequential worksheets. Apart from a conviction that this approach works, Wig's answer is simple: "It is much more interesting intellectually. I don't have any intention of living the rest of my life in repetition!"

***

Foxfire has received a grant to support the development of the form of teaching and learning that they've refined, in other communities. They now sponsor teacher networks throughout the USA. In these, practising teachers come together regularly to learn of ways to structure their classrooms as 'learning laboratories', to share experiences and to document their approaches.

There is interest from Foxfire to explore whether such a network is viable in Australia. That will depend both on the interest of a sponsoring educational institution or education system, and on the interest and commitment of a group of teachers. Watch for more details.

The articles from the Foxfire magazine have been collected into nine books. We have two of these available from Connect:

The Foxfire Book

The first of the collections could now be regarded as a 'collector's item'. It is still the most popular of the series, with articles on Aunt Arie, Building a Log Cabin, Quilt Making, Mountain Recipes, Weather Signs, Hunting, Moonshining, Faith Healing and much more. In all, 33 articles with 294 photos in its 384 pages.

Eliot Wigginton's introduction sketches the beginnings of Foxfire and the vision of its growth.

Foxfire 9

The final book in the Doubleday Anchor series provides the other book-end. There are articles on Foxfire (the luminescent fungus), 'Remedies, Herb Doctors and Healers', The General Store, Quilting, 'Two Men of God', Scary Stories and 'A Second Look at the Log Cabin'. The 28 articles are grouped in sections, with 482 illustrations and 493 pages.

The introduction provides a neat tie-up for the series, looking back and also forward to more specific publishing ventures.

Both The Foxfire Book and Foxfire 9 are available from Connect for $25 plus $5 postage and packing. Order using the form at the back of this issue or phone us on (03) 489 9052.

For those interested to learn more about Foxfire, its principles and the classroom practices that put it into operation, get a copy of Wig's book Sometimes a Shining Moment. We sold out of the copies sent out to coincide with the visit, but more have been ordered. Use the form on page 32 to order your copies now - we'll advise you when they arrive.

Roger Holdsworth

Friends of Connect:

By subscribing at a higher level, the following have helped keep Connect going. We gratefully acknowledge receipt of the following financial contributions since the last issue of Connect:

SUPPORTING SUBSCRIBERS ($50 pa):
Anne Holland/Les Cameron E Brunswick, V
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Ken Thompson Essendon, Vic
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Joe Denaro Marrickville, NSW
The original Lance Holt School was founded in 1970 by the educational pioneer Lance Holt. At that stage, the school of 24 students was housed in North Fremantle.

Since 1974, the school has occupied its current premises (which it now owns) at 10 Henry Street, Fremantle. Its location in the West End allows students attending the school to experience at first hand the unique resources of Fremantle: its historic sites, its arts centres and its city life.

Students have first-hand knowledge of a community at work. Business, craft workshops, art galleries, the port industries, parks and beaches are all within walking distance, and form the basis of many excursions. This environment provides the basis for much of the school’s educational curricula.

Being surrounded by a community provides our students with opportunities to develop an understanding of how a community operates, as well as skills necessary for effective participation in that community. The school in turn contributes to Fremantle by taking part in festivals and events about the city.

A Lance Holt School education focuses on the ‘whole person development’ of students. To this end, careful attention is given to the 3 Rs and much emphasis is placed on art, music and drama. Small class sizes are maintained to maximise attention to each child’s abilities and needs. This also allows for individual programming and a closeness between teachers and children.

The school curriculum is flexible enough to enable students to negotiate areas of study in the form of options and inquiry-based projects. This gives children an opportunity to select and develop individual interests.

The whole school meets daily to share responsibility for the everyday running of the school. This forum enhances the development of communication skills and a non-competitive environment.

Camps are also an important part of Lance Holt School life. One whole school camp is conducted annually, in addition to individual class and small group camps. Social relationships are reinforced and cooperative living is enhanced.

Administrative structure

All parents, students, teachers and councillors are members of the Lance Holt School Association. The Association is governed and administered by the School Council, which consists of four parent representatives, three ordinary representatives, one staff member, the Coordinator, one student representative (nominated prior to each meeting), and up to four co-opted members.

The Council’s areas of responsibility include: building, property and vehicle maintenance; financial administration; school and educational policy; fundraising; staff appointments; and the promotion and conduct of courses of instruction.

The Coordinator is responsible to the School Council for the promotion of educational policies and affairs of the school, and in particular for community relations, social interaction and the general public image of the school, liaison with government bodies, the promotion of health and safety policies within the school, and all information made public.

Parental involvement is encouraged both in discussion on educational and school policy and as participation in school life, to integrate school and home.
DSP & SJ Curriculum

In 1989, the Disadvantaged Schools Program in Victoria supported eleven schools to document models of good curriculum practice. These documents are now available in easily accessible booklet form, collectively entitled 'The Social Justice Curriculum Collection 1989'.

The DSP has contributed a great deal to our knowledge and understanding of appropriate teaching and learning. It has encouraged teachers, parents and students to review their practice and develop new and innovative methods of improving the educational outcomes of all students.

The intention of this project is to develop the link between good classroom practice, evaluation, documentation and professional development, and to encourage sharing of successful curriculum strategies.

The books can be used to stimulate ideas among all school communities when they look to extend or improve their own curriculum. The books are available individually or as a package.

Each of the eleven books is available for $3.25 or the entire set for $27.50. Add $3.60 postage for orders up to $50.

Order from The Education Shop, GPO Box 4367, Melbourne 3001, or from the School Support Centres at Shepparton, Wangaratta, Inner Western, Doncaster, Latrobe Valley, Bendigo, Waterdale and Bay-side. For details, phone (03) 628.2124.

Request: Information

I am currently doing a Masters in Social Ecology at the Uni of Western Sydney, and am using my work as a freelance teacher - sometimes working with students at home, sometimes with classes and teachers in schools - as the subject matter of my action research. Eventually I'd like to be working with a number of other teachers in some kind of cooperative, working with kids and adults, setting up workshops, going into schools, writing, nudging the people we work with towards a more holistic way of thinking about education. If there's anyone working in this kind of way - somewhere in between (and including) classrooms in schools and alternatives outside the school structures - then I'd be interested in hearing what they're up to and how they're going.

Steve Shann
39 Gawler Cres., Deakin ACT 2600

Request 2: Foxfire-type Projects

We are a multiracial team of sociologists who have published in the areas of urban education, multicultural education and educational policy. We have both taught in inner city public schools at the secondary level. We also both sit on the Research Committee of the Urban Appalachian Council in Cincinnati.

We are both concerned about the fact that the vast majority of research in education concentrates on the description and rationalisation of school failure. Much of this research is subsumed under a victim blaming genre, which attempts to place blame on students and teachers.

Given this context, we are especially excited about the various Foxfire experiments around the country and congratulate you on your effort. As we reviewed the literature on the Foxfire projects, we were dismayed to observe its paucity in general and specifically the lack of effort to build upon existing efforts.

Our purpose in writing to you is to initiate a study which will isolate and elaborate upon those elements which contribute to the successes among the Foxfire projects. In this first inquiry, we are asking you to share any material which describes the nature of your program and also any assessments of your program. We will then assemble and analyse this data in an effort to discover those theories, constructs and practices which tend to maximise the success of Foxfire projects. We will, of course, share our findings with you.

Please send any program descriptions, literature or other related materials describing and assessing your project. We thank you in advance for your cooperation and look forward to hearing from you.

Marvin J Berlowitz
Associate Professor of Education
University of Cincinnati

Henry J Durand
Assistant Professor of Sociology
Northern Kentucky University

Department of Educational Foundations
College of Education
University of Cincinnati
406 Teachers College (ML 2)
Cincinnati, Ohio 45221-0002 USA
The Ethnic Youth Issues Network is a Victorian based network of individuals and community based organisations who are concerned about the well-being of young people from Non English Speaking Backgrounds (NESB).

The network aims to provide a support base for these workers. Secondly, it aims to affect policy change in the government and non-government sectors, which reflects the multicultural nature of our society.

EYIN is located at:
Suite 1, 250 Gore St,
Fitzroy, 3065
Tel (03) 419 9122,
Fax (03) 416 0450

The Ethnic Youth Issues Network would like to invite you to a training workshop, to explore more fully the issues covered in this resource manual. The Bicentennial Multicultural Foundation has generously provided assistance to EYIN to run a series of these throughout the year. If you are interested in a workshop, either as a participant, or in running them, then please fill out the form below and tick the appropriate boxes.

ORDER FORM
Please include payment

training (sponsored by the Bicentennial Multicultural Foundation)
Training workshops are planned throughout 1990.
If you are interested in being involved in the running of these, then tick here □
If you would like to attend one, then please tick here □

All workshops will be subsidised.
Training will also be conducted in Western Australia and in South Australia.

Please send to: Ethnic Youth Issues Network
Suite 1, 250 Gore St., Fitzroy, 3065

NAME ________________________________
ADDRESS _____________________________
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TELEPHONE __________________________

NO. OF COPIES ________ @ $9.50 = $ ______
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An enthusiastic team of workers is currently planning the 1991 ACSA Conference in South Australia. Conference organisers are calling for people to conduct workshops and present papers.

For further information, contact:
Ms Leonie Ebert
C/- Christies Beach High School
Beach Rd, Christies Beach, SA 5165
(W) Ph: (08) 382 2655
Fax: (08) 384 4011

Dr David Prideaux
SA College of Advanced Education
Magill Campus
Lorne Ave, Magill, SA 5072
(W) Ph: (08) 333 9634
Fax: (08) 332 6122

We are especially keen to encourage a substantial student involvement at the 1991 ACSA Curriculum Conference. If you are considering attending, also consider a joint teacher-student-parent team. We will be developing a workshop theme around student participation issues and invite your suggestions and participation. We're also keen to incorporate sessions outlining school practices. Contact Connect on (03) 489 9052 with ideas, offers, proposals and for further information.
6 SRC PAMPHLETS

The establishment of student organisations in all of our post-primary schools is to be encouraged, and their use as a desirable component of the school decision-making process should be taken seriously.

Director-General of Education, 22 March 1985

Yet few resources have been available to assist student organisations. Until now . . .

Six pamphlets, produced by the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, are essential resources for SRCS. They can be used for general reference, for individual reading or for workshop discussion.

Topics covered are:

• #1 Why Have an SRC?
  — what you get from an SRC
  — what an SRC can do

• #2 Making Decisions
  — different ways
  — small group approaches

• #3 Meeting Procedures
  — roles in a meeting
  — formal procedures

• #4 A Good Representative
  — what a representative does

• #5 Getting Ideas and Reporting Back
  — working with a class/group

• #6 Making It Happen
  — action plans
  — getting resources and support.

All pamphlets also contain suggestions for discussion and activities and a list of further references. They are attractively presented and illustrated.

The pamphlets are either available individually ($1 each) or in a packaged set of all six ($5). Each pamphlet is also available in a 'class-set' of 20 for $10. All prices include postage and handling.

The SRC Pamphlets are available from the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Suite 1, 250 Gore Street, Fitzroy 3065

Individual pamphlets are $1 each; a set of all six is $5; a 'class-set' of 20 of any one pamphlet is $10; a 'class-set' of 20 copies of all six pamphlets is $60 (all prices include postage).

Sets of all six pamphlets are also available from Connect for $5. Use the order form on page 32.

For more information, phone YACVic on (03) 419 9122
Local & Overseas
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 on (03) 489.9052:

AUSTRALIAN STUDENT PUBLICATIONS:

Through Students' Eyes (Met West DSP Conference, NSW) - conference booklet.
Openings (Staying On, Met South West, NSW) - 1989 collection.

OVERSEAS STUDENT PUBLICATIONS:


OTHER SOURCES:

Student Enterprises: Learning by Doing (CEP, Vic) - report, April 1990.

Update NIE (ANPA, USA) Vol 16 No 2, March/April 1990.

Family Reading Challenge 1990 (ANPA, USA) May 1990.

Foxfire News (Rabun Gap, Georgia, USA) Vol 1 No 2, July-August 1990.

Options (Youth Bureau, Canberra, ACT) May, June, July 1990.

Network News (Surry Hills, NSW) June '90

Collective Notes (COSHG, Melbourne, Vic) Nos 52, 53; June, July/August 1990.

Bush Telegraph (VCYAN, Vic) 6; Apr 1990

That Kid Can't Even Read (Grassmere Youth Services) 1990.

SCIP Newsletter (Red Cross, South Melbourne, Vic) No 10; June 1990.


Young People, Social Justice and Multiculturalism (EYIN, Fitzroy, Vic).


National Coalition News (NCACS, Tennes-see, USA) Vol 14 No 4; Spring 1990.

Media 3 (Rusden Media, Clayton, Vic) No 34; June 1990.

Towards a Murray Valley Curriculum (CEP, Vic) June 1990.

Lib Ed (Leire, UK) No 14; Summer 1990.


ASA News (Asia-Pacific Students Association, Hong Kong) No 1; March 1990.

ASIN Newsletter (Australian Students International Network, Vic) # 1 Apr 90

Youth Peace Project (Melbourne, Vic) - kit 1989.

Articles:

The articles listed in this column are of general background value or otherwise not appropriate for reproducing in the columns of Connect. However, they are available on photocopy for research purposes. The length and cost (copying and postage) are listed. Please order by code number. (A fuller listing is available in Connect 46/47 - to October 1987.)

Code Description/Pages/Cost

341 "Educating Young People for Political Change" (Bruce Wilson, Youth Research Centre): Paper to International Sociological Association Congress, Madrid; July 1990.

13 pp; $1.30

342 Press cuttings from visit of Eliot Wigginton.

2 pp; 60¢

343 "Parliamentary Education is a mainstream activity ..." (Andrew Fitz-Simons) - notes.

5 pp; 70¢

344 Parliamentary Education: An annotated guide to existing resources; October 1989.

36 pp; $3.60

345 The Swedish Folk High School - NBE Information 1986.

26 pp; $2.60

346 SRC Planning Day - Kurunjang Secondary College (Vic), June 1990 -workbook.

7 pp; 70¢

347 "Facing the Future: Research and Policy for Young People in Sweden and Australia" (Bruce Wilson); July 1990.

5 pp; 70¢

348 Youth Research in Sweden (Bruce Wilson) July 1990.

14 pp; $1.40
Materials Order Form

Connect has some material available for sale. Use this form to order:

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44, 45, 46/47, 48, 49, 50, 51/52, 53, 54/55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63

* Students Publishing - Connect reprint #2 ($2) $ ...........
* Students and Work - Connect reprint #5 ($3) $ ...........
* 'Youth Radio' issue of the CRAM Guide (3CR) ($1) $ ...........

* The Foxfire Book (Doubleday Anchor) ($30) $ ...........
* Foxfire 9 (Doubleday Anchor) ($30) $ ...........

* Sometimes a Shining Moment (Eliot Wigginton) ($25) (orders taken) $ ...........

* SRC Pamphlets Set (6 pamphlets; Youth Affairs Council) ($5) $ ...........

* Photocopies of the following articles (see index in issue 46/47) $ ...........

(All prices include postage and packaging) TOTAL ENCLOSED: $ ...........

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