SUPPORTING STUDENT PARTICIPATION
THE VICTORIAN SCHOOL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IN ACTION

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Plus: YOUR GUIDE - consulting on the YOUTH AGENDA
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### In This Issue

For some time we have been interested to explore ways that central education programs support student participation. Two such examples form this entire issue of Connect.

The School Community Development Program in Victoria has played an important role in the development and support of student participation through its networks. In particular, School Community Officers have been essential to the development of Junior School Councils in primary schools, to the implementation of regular student training programs and to the support of networks of students between schools. This issue of Connect provides documentation of the various ways in which the Program has seen and supported student participation and, in doing so, indicates the role any central program can play in focusing statewide attention on participatory practices.

The publication of "Supporting Student Participation: The Victorian School Community Development Program in Action" was compiled as a result of the contributions of Networks and School Community Officers across Victoria, who took part in a participative evaluation of the Program. The support provided in publishing this document by the School Councils and Participation Unit of the Ministry of Education and Training is gratefully acknowledged.

This issue of Connect also contains a 'lift-out' resource kit of ideas and examples to use in consultations and discussions around the Victorian Governments Youth Agenda. Here, too, there are broader implications. This kit contains many useful ideas to support any process of consultation, local discussion and action development. The kit is produced with the support of the Office of Youth Affairs (Victorian Ministry of Ethnic, Municipal and Community Affairs).

### Next Issue

In the October issue of Connect, we return to our 'normal' pattern of articles. So far: the Peer Mediators program at Port Augusta High School, the Peer Support Program, an update on the Foxfire statement of its Core Principles (together with information and materials from their recent visit), the held-over article on Sherbrooke Community School's swamp project, a statement from students at the ACSA Conference ... and much more! Don't miss it!

Roger Holdsworth

**Connect**

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“The decisions and outcomes of decision making are better because of the input from the children,” says Geoff Jones, Principal of Kingsbury Primary School.

The value of the active participation of students (and other members of the educational community) has been formally recognised by the Victorian Government and its Ministry of Education in several policy statements.

For example, the Victorian Youth Affairs Act 1986 aims “to encourage and facilitate the effective involvement of young people in decision making in relation to the social, economic, cultural and political life of the community and the participation of young people in the attainment of the objects of the Act.”

The Ministry of Education’s Ministerial Papers contain specific commitments to the participation of students: “...parents, teachers, students, principals, administrators and others closely involved in the work of education will all have the right to participate in decision-making processes.” (Ministerial Paper 1, p 7) “The learner should participate in decisions regarding what is learned and when it is learned.” (Ministerial Paper 2, p 15)

The Victorian School Community Development Program (SCDP) has the following aims:

* To promote and develop collaborative decision making and more effective school-community relationships;
* To promote the development of curriculum that ensures the equality of educational outcomes;
* To promote the active redress of disadvantage and discrimination.

The SCDP is particularly concerned “to promote and develop collaborative decision making” with regard to student participation - in classrooms, in school structures and in relationships between schools and their communities.

This booklet shows how the Program has put that aim into practice. It illustrates the range of practices covered by the term ‘student participation’, the variety of approaches taken by schools, the role of the Program and School Community Officers (SCOs) in developing and supporting these approaches and some of the issues emerging. We aim to show some of the possibilities - and to challenge you to go beyond current practices to consider ways to extend and expand them.

**WHY IS STUDENT PARTICIPATION IMPORTANT?**

As Geoff Jones notes (above) the participation of students is important in improving the outcomes of decision making for schools. The experience of the SCDP, and other programs that have supported student participation, is that there are also substantial and direct benefits for students from their active participation - at all levels - in decision making about their education.

The value of student participation is many faceted: the more students become actively engaged in their learning, the more effectively they learn; student participation is a valuable preparation for, and a form of, involvement in decision making in society; students have a valuable contribution to make to educational decision making; students and those closely affected by educational decisions have a right to participate in the decision-making process, including forums where such decisions are shaped and determined; where students and others most affected by the decisions participate in the decision-making process, decisions are more likely to be accepted and implemented constructively.
In summary, it has been noted that participation increases students’:

* understandings, knowledge and abilities;
* commitment to their education;
* self-confidence and self-esteem;
* participation in the democratic processes of our society.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY STUDENT PARTICIPATION?

When we talk about ‘student participation’, we are talking broadly about the active participation of students in making and implementing decisions on all aspects of their education - in decisions about their own learning; in classroom discussion, planning, selection, implementation and evaluation; in student forums; on representative bodies; in formal decision-making committees. It is important that our view of student participation is not restricted or constrained to any one form, but rather that we hold a vision of the breadth and inter-connectedness of all these aspects of participation.

Student participation then exists in a number of arenas:

1. **Student participation in classroom and curriculum decision making within and between schools.**

   This arena includes participation in curriculum negotiation between learners and teacher, in specific ‘student participation’ projects, in inter-school curriculum cooperation between students and so on.

2. **Student participation in student owned and run structures in and between schools.**

   Within schools, various student-based and student-organised forums have developed - Student Representative Councils, Junior School Councils, Student Action Groups, Student Forums etc. These have been extended at local and regional levels through the development of Student Networks.

3. **Student participation in formal decision-making bodies within and between schools.**

   Students are represented on School Councils and various other forms of school decision-making committees; there has also been student representation on district, regional and state education committees.

   The participation by students in these three arenas is inter-related. Curriculum decision making involves student representatives in policy discussions on formal decision-making bodies as well as in classroom action; SRCs provide opportunities for students to consider educational issues and advise their representatives; classroom participation is supported by decisions made by School Councils and debated in SRCs; student networks provide opportunities for information, advice, inspiration and training.

   These ‘aspects’ of student participation share common values in their implementation:

   * they recognise the value of the experiences, knowledge, skills, attitudes and enthusiasms that students bring to the learning situation;
   * they trust students and give them real responsibility for determining goals, content, methods, outcomes and evaluation;
   * they emphasise real and useful outcomes, stressing the value of the students and the project to their community;
   * they have an ‘audience’ that goes beyond the classroom;
   * they enable students to learn from mistakes, building in opportunities to act and reflect.

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY OFFICER

The School Community Development Program has played a crucial role in supporting all aspects of student participation through its sixty Victorian Networks. With the demise of PEP and the decrease in numbers of other Ministry support staff, the School Community Officer has, in many cases, become the only local worker officially designated to support student participation across her or his local area. Where there is a commitment of support staff from School Support Centres or Regional Offices, SCOs have developed links with them through local Student Participation Support Networks.

Because the SCO has a particular ‘networking’ function, links between schools are most clearly developed by SCOs - links that influence, support
and inspire developments within individual schools. For example, the formal SCDP Network might sponsor a student network; where there are active SRGs in secondary schools, SCOs have enabled these to assist the development of student groups in primary schools; teachers who support student participation in schools are brought together to exchange ideas and resources.

In considering their role in support of student participation, School Community Officers have identified the following issues as important:

* Community-wide publicity for student activities and initiatives are a way of raising the awareness of issues and the profile of student participation in the school and in the wider community.

* Parent support for and understanding of the importance of student participation should also be ensured to enable students to participate freely with support from the home.

* Extension of the principles of student participation to the planning and evaluating of student activities should be ensured.

* Support from staff members in schools is an important element in the work of SCOs in the support of student participation.

* The linking of issues of student governance and democracy to the process of supporting student participation increases the value of student representative structures in the eyes of teachers.

**THIS BOOKLET**

In this booklet, the School Community Development Program presents some examples of student participation in the schools and Networks supported by the Program.

There are three sections to this booklet. The first provides information about the ways in which the Program has supported student participation in curriculum decision making, both within individual schools and in inter-school action. The second discusses the development of student organisations within secondary and primary schools. The final section considers support through the provision of student networks, forums and training workshops for students - development of activities that meet students’ needs and challenge their visions.

Each section of the booklet outlines the range of involvements of the Program and the particular responsibility of the School Community Officer. As well, a specific short example or ‘mini-case study’ illustrates one way in which the Program has worked. Each section concludes with a set of specific ‘questions, issues and challenges’ for you, and suggestions for further reading.

The stories are a few chosen from hundreds that the Program could tell. They are chosen to show the diversity of approaches used in support of student participation. There is no claim that they show ‘perfect practice’ - rather they involve SCOs working with their Networks, developing ideas, projects and programs, and reflecting on their successes and failures.

This booklet is another resource to help us all do that.
SECTION 1
STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN CURRICULUM DECISION MAKING AND ACTION

The participation of students in making decisions and taking action about teaching and learning - the curriculum of schools - is central to what we mean by student participation.

A variety of approaches and projects have developed to enable and encourage that participation.

Examples are found in the areas of:

* cross-age and peer tutoring, where students teach other students, often on a one-to-one basis;

* community research and action, where students carry out research projects into areas of community need, and on the basis of that research, develop community action programs;

* media productions in print, radio and video, where students present information, ideas, reports and views on issues of concern to them and their community, through newspapers (sometimes multilingual), radio programs (eg on public radio stations) and video programs (through video magazines or on the newly emerging public television networks);

* environmental action, where students carry out research and action programs on local and global environmental issues;

* collection and publication of oral histories, in which students interview local individuals and groups, transcribing and publishing historical accounts;

* student enterprises, in which students investigate local employment needs and opportunities and create business or other enterprises to meet these needs.

Some examples of such projects are included in this booklet and we could point to many more in other areas.

There is another common thread to these projects, and this is an approach which also defines student participation in more traditional areas of learning. Student participation implies a commitment to the inclusion of students in negotiation of curriculum and project goals, plans, content, methodology, implementation and evaluation. Such negotiation is part of the development of the above projects, and it also occurs in other subject areas where learning and teaching is a collaborative process between students and teacher.

School Community Officers often find this
area of student participation most difficult to approach. One School Community Officer notes that "student participation is not the responsibility of the SCO, but of the school; the SCO has responded to those schools who have requested support/assistance with student participation" and this applies most strongly to participation within classroom decision-making.

It is then not surprising that the clearest examples of the support given by the School Community Development Program for student participation in curriculum decision making, centre on cases of inter-school co-operation, the natural domain of the Program's networks. So, for example, SCOs have provided support and assistance with cross-age tutoring programs that involve students from a Secondary College tutoring at a Primary School, with inter-school environmental action, such as the Greening Irymple campaign, with Network-wide media production projects and with negotiated curriculum that focuses on inter-school student action on local youth issues.

As teachers and students learn about possibilities, processes and benefits of student participation in curriculum decision making and action from these inter-school examples, their individual classroom practices are changed and improved.

**CURRICULUM NEGOTIATION**

"Negotiation of the curriculum is about discussion, collaborating, sharing control over and responsibility for the learning process between all members of the class group, students and teacher alike. In particular, it's about mutual respect and recognition of the particular contribution each person can make to group members' learning."

*from One for All, Meredith Freeman, Curriculum Development Centre, 1987.*

Curriculum negotiation is a 'short-hand' description applied to practices that emphasise the active participation of students in planning, determining, implementing and evaluating what and how they learn. It is a process that applies across all levels of education, across all subject areas. It has probably been best described in relation to senior secondary schooling, but only because of the need for a formalised course statement at that level. It is probably implemented most naturally in primary school classrooms.

Yet, for many teachers, negotiation remains a misunderstood and frightening concept. Trained to 'teach' and maintain 'control', collaboration with students in planning for learning is a new approach and a new skill to be learnt.

Individual classroom collaboration between students and teacher is difficult for SCOs to affect directly - it is a domain jealously guarded by participants. However, it has been possible for SCOs to support teachers and students to understand the ideas of negotiation, of student participation in curriculum development and implementation of collaborative learning. This has been specially true where the practices of such curriculum negotiation involve more than one school in an area.

SCOs have provided reading materials to teachers, participated in in-service activities (in and between Network schools), organised professional development for members of school communities, carried examples of negotiation from one school to another and, by their own processes of negotiation with teachers and students, provided models of good practice.

**INTER SCHOOL CURRICULUM ACTION IN MELTON**

"The three secondary colleges in Melton, although relatively close in proximity, have not had a history of working closely together on curriculum issues," says Liz Moody, SCO for the Melton Network.

It's therefore significant that, in 1991, four VCE Australian Studies classes from these three Melton schools will be working closely on a project that is based on student participation and negotiation of local community research and action.

Australian Studies teachers from two of the schools began to plan the co-ordinated project late in 1990. A particular focus for the project will be on student identification of key local issues that affect young people, leading to the development of research and action proposals to be carried out by the four class groups. Students in each group will discuss possibilities within the Australian Studies Study Design, will consider areas for action needed in the Melton area (particularly as they apply to young people and the broad issues of homelessness) and will develop proposals for specific foci for study. These will be ranked by the classes and
brought to an inter-school co-ordinating group. The final proposals from this group will be taken back to the classes and eventually to a full student forum involving the 100 'student researchers'. This forum will endorse and launch a co-ordinated curriculum plan.

ROLE OF THE SCO

While the initial approach that led to this cooperation came from discussions between the local School Support Centre and the Melton Youth Homelessness Taskforce, the SCO from the Melton SCDP Network played a key role in facilitating and supporting the curriculum development process.

The group organised two in-service days for teachers from local schools on student participation approaches within the curriculum, on youth issues, on possibilities for research and action approaches, and on curriculum planning for 1991.

The first session included an introduction to student participation, examples of student research and action projects, a sharing of information on local projects already underway, a response by young people identifying local issues of importance, and a brainstorm around possible topics for classroom investigation.

The second session recapitulated and drew out the basic principles underlying the proposed approach to teaching and then discussed what a coordinated project between schools might look like. At this point, Australian Studies teachers from two of the schools indicated a strong interest to undertake such a project for 1991 and the discussion concentrated on planning the relation of this project to the VCE Australian Studies Study Design and outlining a plan for implementation at the beginning of the school year. Since then, classes from the third Melton secondary school have joined the project. Thus these two days have led directly into joint planning for classroom action in 1991.

The SCO will continue to resource the project in 1991, providing resource materials, contact with outside agencies, negotiation with funding sources and access to local and educational expertise. It is significant, however, that control of the project has now moved increasingly to the schools and to the students and teachers in the participating classes.

SOME QUESTIONS, ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

How can we increase possibilities for teachers and students to negotiate curriculum approaches?

How do we assist teachers and students to understand what is meant by negotiation?

How can we provide further information to teachers and students about negotiation?

How do we enable participants to practise negotiation?

How can the program assist individual participants (teachers and students) to improve their negotiation skills?

FURTHER READING

If you want more information about classroom and curriculum negotiation, try:

One for All, Meredith Freeman, Curriculum Development Centre, Canberra, 1987

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

Into Practice: Books One and Two, PEP, Victoria, reprinted 1987

The STC Book, P Reid (ed), VSTA, Melbourne 1981

'Negotiating the Curriculum' paper and bibliography in Implementing Ministerial Paper Number 6 (Ministry of Education, Victoria, 1986)
CROSS-AGE TUTORING

“I felt that I really helped someone. I think that this might be the greatest part of the program. A feeling of fulfilment.”

It's not surprising that students react strongly and positively to curriculum projects that give them responsibility, that trust them and that allow them to take on adult roles. Cross-age and peer tutoring programs have become widely accepted as one way to increase student participation in decision making about and implementation of learning programs. From a few tentative projects in the early 1970s, examples of tutoring are now found throughout the Victorian education system, at both primary and secondary levels.

Tutoring projects are generally characterised by older students assisting younger students with their learning in classrooms. Often paired one-to-one, tutors work on subjects such as English, mathematics, science, social studies - right across the curriculum. In some cases, tutors’ special abilities in languages other than English are used to complement and assist teacher instruction.

In other cases, a particular emphasis is placed on selecting tutors who are experiencing difficulties with a subject, and having them tutor students at a lower level. The tutor revises and learns basic concepts: “The person who teaches, learns.”

There are important values inherent in tutoring projects. Tutors are given real responsibility for designing and implementing learning programs, they are valued for the abilities and experiences they bring to the project, they are trusted and they are treated as exercising adult roles. In some cases, tutors are seen as ‘fellow teachers’, using the staff room and taking part in ‘professional’ discussions on student needs. In all cases, they are also asked to reflect on their own development as tutors/learners - evaluating their responses, defining their needs, recognising their growth.

Tutoring is offered as part of a school’s curriculum, either as a formal part of a subject (such as English or Mathematics) or as a separate subject (e.g. an elective called ‘Teaching Studies’ - which combines practical tutoring and theoretical studies about teaching).

School Community Officers are able to support cross-age tutoring programs through interschool linkages, advice and support in program development, material and resource provision and completion of formal administrative requirements. Both the Emerald and Mirboo North Networks have stressed support for tutoring for several years.

CROSS-AGE TUTORING AT MIRBOO NORTH

Mirboo North Primary School and Mirboo North Secondary College are two schools where Cross-Age Tutoring is an integral part of the English Curriculum Framework. In this program, tutors (in this case Year 10 students) spend one period every week for one term in a grade at the primary school with their tutees. The tutors are expected to keep a journal of their experiences and this activity further develops their literacy skills.

The program benefits all participants. The tutor gains a different insight into the classroom, takes responsibility for actions and, through this increased responsibility and decision-making role, increases his or her self esteem. The tutee is able to share experiences with another person other than the classroom teacher and learns to work and respond to different adults. As well as receiving more individual tuition, the tutees come to consider their tutors as role models in many cases.

At the beginning of the Cross-Age Tutoring Program, many of the primary school teachers had not heard of this approach and were initially reluctant to have a young tutor in their classroom. However, as they saw the benefits of having an extra two tutors with their class, especially in providing assistance with one-to-one tutoring for “slow learners”, the program gained support. The secondary school teachers started to see improvement in the behaviour of their “problem students” when they became tutors - as tutors they had valued and important roles in the school.

In 1991, Cross-Age Tutoring in Mirboo North has taken a new direction by being incorporated within the VCE. As well as being available to year 10 students, year 11 VCE students have the option of choosing Cross-Age Tutoring for their English Communications Project. The new path was suggested by the English Coordinator.

The most important part of the program is that the tutors themselves believe it is a worthwhile experience and both they and the tutees enjoy the time spent together.

Stav Kostarakis
School Community Officer, Mirboo North Network
ROLE OF THE SCO

Stav has also outlined her role as School Community Officer, in support of the Cross-Age Tutoring Program:

“My role, in the fourth year of the program, has been to further promote Cross-Age Tutoring as a valid and worthwhile project within the school community. In both schools, new teachers are often unaware of this project and thus I am always communicating with the tutors and teachers involved.

“An information booklet has been produced to assist all parties in the process and to provide a resource of ideas for tutoring. I often have to prompt teachers and students with ideas and information and ‘tap’ into their creativity to ensure they are comfortable in this situation.

“It has been important to know that the students have enjoyed their time in the Cross-Age Tutoring Program immensely and it will, no doubt, remain as a positive and memorable experience in their minds.”

SOME QUESTIONS, ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

How can curriculum links be made between neighbouring schools?

How can programs be developed to give real responsibility for curriculum decision making and action to students?

How can we increase the participation of students in such programs - so they are not just teacher-directed activities?

Does your cross-age tutoring program really trust the students?

How is student reflection and challenge built into programs?

Can we develop a program in which all students are tutors?

FURTHER READING

If you want to find out more about Cross-Age and Peer Tutoring Programs, see Tutoring, Roger Holdsworth (ed), PEP, Victoria, 1985. Other (international) resources you might be able to find include:


New Roles for Youth, National Commission on Resources for Youth, Citation Press, New York, 1974

There are also regular articles on tutoring in Connect; Connect holds a collection of practical resources from Australia and other countries.

INTERSCHOOL CURRICULUM LINKS

There are powerful possibilities in students and schools sharing curriculum development and implementation across areas. The School Community Development Program has encouraged interschool curriculum links in a number of areas - either across a Network or across schools from several Networks.

These curriculum links have resulted in a number of benefits. Students are able to develop perspectives on curriculum issues that go beyond individual classrooms; students are able to share curriculum information directly with other students; students have an audience (in other students and community members) for their curriculum presentations; large issues can be tackled effectively and efficiently; scarce resources are used well.

The example outlined earlier of VCE Planning in Melton provides one example of such an approach. Another has focused on student participation in media production in public television, through the Northern Access Television (NAT) network. As well as promoting active participation in the project, the project itself has served to publicise and promote ideas of student participation in the local community.
NORTHERN ACCESS TELEVISION (NAT)

"The best thing is that it's all for the benefit of the kids. We're trying to involve as many as possible this time, but the scope for the future is immense," said Margaret Brown (SCO for the Reservoir Network), commenting on the first test broadcast of a public television station - a test transmission put together by members of over 30 schools from four SCDP Networks. "We're trying to make programs about parents, teachers and students, by parents, teachers and students - about what's going on in schools today - and I think the community will be excited by that."

The SCDP Networks of Preston, East Preston, Reservoir and West Heidelberg share many characteristics: they are in close geographical proximity, they have similar school/student/parent/community needs, they have a history of joint action and they share common perspectives on Network priorities and approaches.

The Networks received permission to carry out a test broadcast of television programs for a week in late November 1990. A transmitter was hired, a studio at Preston Secondary College booked for several weeks, and Network schools invited to participate in program making.

Over 150 members of school communities came through the studio to make programs and many more (perhaps 500) were filmed at local and school events.

This television broadcast covered a broad range of curriculum issues, enabling students and other members of the school communities to discuss, share and reflect on information about their curriculum and Ministry priorities. Over 15 hours of programs were developed, including topics of:

- Student organisations (ISC/SRC)
- Local government and democracy
- Music, Drama, Dance in the Rock Eisteddfod
- Activity Maths, Family Maths
- Women on School Council
- Equal Opportunity
- Reading Together
- Health in Primary Schools
- Family Science
- VCE
- District Provision
- The School Community Development Program
- The Greenhouse Effect
- Multiculturalism
- Motor Development Programs
- Media Studies

- Languages Other Than English
- Bicycle Education
- Police in Schools Program

STUDENTS PARTICIPATED AT MANY LEVELS OF PRODUCTION

Students were also active participants in the production of the programs for broadcast. They played many roles that meant they were valued, given responsibility and treated as 'adults' in the project:

- in classroom activities - often the subjects of programs, but also making decisions about what they would show;
- interviewers of other students, parents, teachers, community members - including the Minister for Police and Emergency Services;
- interviewees - on panels and in classrooms - about school and community programs;
- camera, panel, sound, lighting operators in the studio - often at short notice and with 'on-the-job' training;
- transmission operators, putting pre-recorded programs to air;
- live to air presenters, linking pre-recorded programs during transmission;
- telephone operators, at the transmission site and in the studio;
- designers and artists of the TV Guide distributed to all schools.

Students often filled these roles in mixed school groups, in familiar groupings from a school and in groupings across year levels. This led naturally to inter-school and mixed-age discussions on curriculum issues within the schools - "do you really do that?", "how did this program start?" and so on.

Sometimes at short notice, students were introduced to techniques of interviewing or of equipment use and were then able to put these into practice for a real and immediate outcome, one which was broadcast to their local community. There was a strong element of students empowering each other in these techniques and, at times, they were introducing adult staff to them. Students were able to take these learnings back into the curriculum programs of the individual schools.

Student involvement in the project encouraged them to investigate these curriculum areas, ask questions of themselves and others and at other times to present their views on these matters. It encouraged self direction, self confidence, research, presentation, group learning, and activity-based programs that had a real world outcome.
ROLE OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY OFFICERS

The four SCOs associated with the Networks were central to the development, organisation and implementation of the television programs shown on NAT. They formed the core of the Steering Committee (along with local teachers and community members) and as well: organised equipment and broadcasts, publicised the project in schools, invited participation by members of the school communities, identified and approached specific groups to encourage them to make programs, organised groups to come to the studio, interviewed and otherwise assisted them in the studio, discussed and rehearsed what would be shown. In addition, the broadcasts complemented their existing activities in Network schools, enabling participants to summarise their programs and activities and work out ways of presenting them to a wider audience.

SOME QUESTIONS, ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

How can we make all curriculum areas productive?
How can we extend student participation to increased decision making in technically or organisationally complex areas?
How can we build partnerships of students, parents and teachers around curriculum issues?

FURTHER READING

For further information about inter-school curriculum links in the area of media productions, see:

Students and Radio and Students Publishing, - both: Roger Holdsworth (ed), PEP, Victoria, 1985

The following articles in Connect:

SECTION 2
STUDENT ORGANISATIONS

There are student organisations in most secondary schools in Victoria - Student Representative Councils (SRCs), Student Forums, Student Action Groups, Student Executives and so on. Similar structures are developing in many primary schools - Junior School Councils (JSCs), Junior Councils, Student Councils and so on. These ‘representative’ groups are elected by students to play an important role in the decision-making structures of schools.

Why do these bodies exist?
"In order for students to have a say in how their school operates, they need a forum in which they can raise ideas and concerns and reach some agreement on issues of importance to students," says Peter Barnes, SCO with the Wangaratta Network.

Most basically, student representative groups enable students to come together to discuss and decide on issues of importance in schools. Where there are student representatives on other decision-making bodies in the school, the student organisations provide a forum for the discussion of issues faced by these representatives, enabling the development of advice and direction to these representatives and providing moral and political support for them. The bodies are also an organisational forum for enabling students to carry out actions on behalf of all students. Finally, the student groups provide a role in the education of all students in ‘democratic procedures’.

There are substantial challenges for such student structures:

* What is the most appropriate form of student representative organisation? Some small rural primary schools involve all students in discussion of school governance issues; in larger secondary schools, a formal and manageable mechanism may be needed to advise student representatives. In some large schools, junior and senior or year level councils are elected and are then coordinated by a student executive.

* Do such organisations have the support of students, teachers, the Principal, School Council etc? Are they regarded seriously and accorded time and other forms of support? Factors such as the time of meetings (lunchtime or class time), access to resources, allocation of formal credit and enthusiasm of election processes, have all been found to be vital indicators of the strength of student groups.

* What issues do student groups spend most of their time working on? In some cases there is a formal restriction of student bodies to simple organisational tasks - fund-raising, socials, uniform sales and the like. In other cases, students restrict themselves to such organisational concerns, become ‘bogged down’ or have no other challenges in the culture of the school.

When School Community Officers come to work with student organisations, their main roles are in the two areas of provision of training support for these bodies (or representatives of them at interschool, Network forums) and the provision of advice and support to individual schools, usually through teachers. For example, the Traralgon Network reports that information about the SRC at the secondary school was conveyed to primary schools as a vital part of the development of JSCs there.
STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE COUNCILS

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

(memorandum No 87, Office of the Director-General, 22 March, 1985)

SRCs in SCDP Network schools are reported to perform a range of functions and undertake many activities: they raise funds, conduct social activities, run skill-based workshops, run issue based forums such as Girls Speak Up Days, debate educational issues and advise and support their representatives.

Many SRCs run or help organise activities across a group of schools in an area. Again, the type of activities range from issues specifically related to being an SRC member, to transition issues, the VCE, and forums related to wider social issues like equal opportunity.

An SRC support teacher is usually identified in each secondary school, and in some cases receives a time and/or special duties allowance for this position. However there is little information or support in carrying out this role and SCOs have provided essential advice, assistance and resourcing to complement the school-based positions.

WHAT THE SCDP HAS CONTRIBUTED

In 1988, the Wangaratta School Community Development Program Network decided to focus its support on Wangaratta Technical School (now Wangaratta Secondary College), to encourage the development of a Student Forum at the school to replace the now defunct SRC. The SRC had not been a successful group for many years, concentrating its efforts on fundraising and organisation of school socials.

The SRC was ceremoniously ‘laid to rest’ and, in its place, a new Student Forum created - a representative body with the clear role of enabling student input on educational matters and issues of concern to students. The School Community Officer worked with a teacher committed to ideas of student participation, and four year 12 students contracted as ‘advisors’ and resource people (as part of their studies) to assist the Forum to undertake its tasks.

One of the features of the process of transition from SRC to Student Forum was the deliberately high profile given to the process of establishing the new Student Forum. The election process was publicised in the school and in the local papers to alert the school and wider community to the fact that the school was changing its view of student participation. A two day workshop was funded by the SCDP Network to enable the newly elected Forum members to define their role and establish their structure. A dinner was held for Forum members and their parents to inform parents of their children’s role as Forum members, to explain that meetings were accredited activities conducted during school time, to emphasise the importance of their child’s involvement in the Forum and to raise the profile of the Forum as a legitimate decision-making body in the school.

The Forum developed and continues to operate successfully in the school as an effective vehicle for the development and voicing of student views in the school’s decision-making processes.

WANGARATTA SECONDARY COLLEGE’S STUDENT FORUM

The School Community Development Program has explicit aims related to increasing the participation of parents, students and teachers in all aspects of schooling. The work of the community of the Wangaratta SCDP Network illustrates the pivotal role that the Program in general and the local Network and School Community Officer in particular can play in the promotion and support of student participation as a priority in Network schools. In the time that the Wangaratta SCDP Network has been funded, the secondary college has transformed and refined its student body and four of the five primary schools in the Network have established participatory decision-making groups for their students.

The Wangaratta SCDP Network has had a long-standing commitment to student participation
in decisions affecting their learning. The Network has articulated four principles in relation to this commitment. The Network believes that:

1. Students have their own perception of their education which is different from that of adults.

2. Students need a forum through which issues of concern to students can be discovered, discussed and acted upon.

3. Students need to learn the values implicit in democratic processes from an early age and have the opportunity to explore and develop decision-making skills. Skills in decision making at primary level will facilitate greater confidence and involvement by students when reaching post-primary school and in later life.

4. Students require a great deal of support to effectively develop a system of student input to decision making.

The Network has also lent practical weight to their support of student participation in school decision-making by funding various conferences and workshops for SRC, School Council, Education or Curriculum Policy Committee representatives. The Network has also made the issue of student participation a major Network aim and committed the time of their SCO towards school-based, District and Regional student activities.

Wangaratta is not unique. Even where SRCs existed in schools before the funding of SCDP Networks, they have been supported to continue and grow through the work of the Network and the SCO.

The commitment of Network funds, the time and energy of the Network’s Officer and the highlighting of the issues surrounding student participation and governance at the Network level all have a major impact on the development of student representative bodies able to participate in the decision-making process in SCDP Network schools.

SOME QUESTIONS, ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

The operation of SRCs reflects the need for a solution to getting student views heard and for enabling students to reflect on their needs in their own forum, but raises important questions and issues for consideration:

What student structure is most appropriate to this school? What structure is supported by students?

Does your SRC allow or encourage the participation of all groups, especially traditionally underrepresented groups, in school decision making?

How are SRCs linked with decisions about curriculum, both at the whole school and the classroom levels?

How do we challenge SRCs to work on more than social and fundraising activities?

FURTHER READING

If you want to find out more about the operation of SRCs in schools, the following resources are valuable starting points:

Take A Part (Ministry of Education, Victoria, 1985) was written by students for students about methods of organising and taking action.


The set of six SRC Pamphlets produced by the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (ph: 03.419.9122) provide training resources around the headings ‘Why Have An SRC?’, ‘Making Decisions’, ‘Meeting Procedures’, ‘A Good Representative’, ‘Getting Ideas and Reporting Back’ and ‘Making It Happen’.

The Ministry of Education has produced the video Seen and Heard, which illustrates the processes used by a group of students in attempting to change a school policy.

Connect has frequent articles about the operation of SRCs.
There has been a steady growth in the number of student structures in primary schools in recent years. This growth has been fuelled by a number of factors.

Many schools have, themselves, recognised the need for and value of student representation within the school's decision-making structures - "we make better decisions". In some cases, the training days organised by SCoEs (see later in this booklet) have been catalyst events for schools that have been thinking about movement in this direction. The extent and success of student participation in school decision making in secondary schools has created a natural "flow-on", as has the commitment to democratic decision making reflected in parent and teacher representation on "senior" School Councils.

More broadly, the growth in student structures in primary schools reflects an interest in developing student understanding of and participation in the decision-making processes of our society, and the links with Local Government and the use of the Parliamentary Pack in training days have both illustrated this.

So bodies such as Junior School Councils, with representation from across the primary school or perhaps from senior grades only, have developed in schools. Because there is little or no teacher time release to support JSCs, this support frequently becomes the responsibility of the Principal or of a Deputy Principal. This enables the JSC to have a direct input to the decision-making structure of the school, but must necessarily see it in a different situation with regard to autonomy than that of SRCs in secondary schools.

Various forms of participation and governance structures are reported by the Program. In small schools, it is possible for all students and teachers to meet and discuss issues before and after School Council meetings. In larger schools, more formal structures have developed in which some students are elected to represent others.

Most JSCs do not share in formal decision making (for example through exercising votes on School Council) but rather report and make representation to such bodies, sometimes through the Principal or a support teacher. However, many schools are encouraging students to attend and make direct requests and reports to School Council.

The following account is taken from a videotaped interview and discussion, broadcast on Northern Access Television:

**KINGSBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL**

The Junior School Council at Kingsbury Primary School consists of about twelve students from grades 3 to 6. "The 5s and 6s vote for four people in the grade and the 3s and 4s vote for two people," reported one representative. "We put down on a piece of paper what we would do to help the school be better. The children then vote for who they want."

The elected students then pick the grades they wish to "represent". This means that at JC meetings, they ask their own grade teacher and the teacher of the grade they represent about good times to talk with that grade about what was decided in the meeting. Some students take this reporting back seriously, representatives report, while others "muck around". It's the grade teacher's responsibility to assist at these times. Good and bad ideas are brought up and discussed - impossible ideas usually weeded out - and the representative raises these items at the JSC meetings.

Geoff Jones, Principal at Kingsbury, plays an important role. JSC meetings are held in his office. "The JSC is a very important part of the decision-making process in our school. I think it's very important that all the students, not just the ones on the Council, see that we value student participation in decision making."

"So it's very important that I devote the time to the Junior Council. We meet on a fortnightly basis for about half an hour to 45 minutes. It's very important that the children see I take them seriously and that staff and School Council take their work very seriously."

"The other side of my role is to assist the children in understanding what democratic decision making is all about - how to be good representatives for a grade - and assisting them with committee procedures. By and large it's learning on the job - an apprenticeship in democracy."

Geoff points to the importance of the JSC: for the children's education in understanding what democratic decision making in our society is about, and for the school - "the decisions and outcomes of decision making are better because of the input from the children". The students also point to the gains for them: overcoming nervousness, learning to speak in public, getting to know more people in the school, and "it's fun!"
Your Guide to the Victorian Government's Youth Agenda

Decide on issues that are important to you!
Take action on issues relevant to young people!
Learn about Government programs and services!
Tell the Government about your issues and priorities!
Follow up issues and find out about action being taken!

ORGANISING DISCUSSIONS...

This Guide is written to assist young people in their use of the Victorian Government’s Youth Agenda. There are ideas here about organising discussions and meetings, and ideas and examples for you to use in these discussions. There are also suggestions on how to follow the Agenda through with action. For some ideas on organising discussions and for activities in these forums ... go to page 2.

INFORM...

What is the Youth Agenda? What’s in it? What programs for young people are operating in Victoria? What plans exist for further services? To find out what’s in the Agenda and how to find information ... go to page 4.

ISSUES...

What concerns young people in your area? What should be happening that isn’t happening? What should be happening differently? How can you find out? For some ideas on getting together with young people to talk about and decide on local issues ... go to page 6.

ACTION

When you’ve identified some issues and discussed what’s in the Agenda, what should happen now? Whose responsibility is this? What are you going to do about them? And how? For some ideas on organising to take action around your issues and around those in the Agenda ... go to page 9.

FOLLOW UP

What will you do with your ideas? Who will you tell? Who can help you? What resources are available? For some ideas on following up your decisions, and some information on who to contact ... go to page 12.

A RESOURCE KIT

"The Youth Agenda outlines what the Victorian Government is doing about issues that affect young people. Our policies and programs are constantly developing to meet your needs and your priorities.

"I want to know what you think about the issues that affect young people and about the issues that we have identified in the Agenda. What are we doing right? What needs more work? What is missing? Where should our priorities lie? What action should you, your local community and the Government take? How can we support you in taking action on issues that affect you? Please use the Agenda and this kit to let us know about action we can take together."

Caroline Hogg, Minister Responsible for Youth Affairs
THIS GUIDE ... YOUR GUIDE

This Guide provides some ideas, resources and examples for young people to use in forums – to help read and use the Youth Agenda, discuss local issues and decide on action. The examples are taken from recent consultations with young people throughout Victoria. Read them and adapt them to your needs. We didn't have room for every piece of useful resource material in these pages, so we've used this symbol to show where you can ask the Office of Youth Affairs for copies of other documents (address on page 12).

The Guide is divided into the five sections shown on the front page. But you don't have to use them in this order. Many groups have found it useful to start with a discussion of local issues and only then to introduce the relevant sections from the Agenda. In other cases, young people already have had specific action underway or in mind, and the Agenda and discussions of local issues served to provide information and structure to action decisions.

Most importantly, this guide is just a start. Adapt it, change it, add to it – develop your own consultation approaches ... and let others know how it went!

IDEAS FOR USING THE AGENDA

The Agenda is a large and quite complex document, so don't deal with it as a whole. Separate out the chapter or section you want. Many groups have taken a topic approach – for example, organising a forum around environment, health or employment issues. But it is also possible to take an approach which concentrates on a specific population group. The whole Agenda can then be scanned for information that relates to that specific group – for example, non-English speaking background young people or young women. Rural issues are specifically dealt with in Chapter 12, but there is also other relevant information throughout the Agenda.

It is essential to relate discussion of any topic in the Agenda to appropriate local issues. It would be valuable to put together some local information to add to the statewide picture provided. There are local workers from specialist areas who can provide this information. Consider inviting them to take part in your forum.

ORGANISING A FORUM

There are many young people who will be interested in and concerned about the issues in the Agenda. They might be an existing local group or a specific interest group. There might be a student network which is looking to expand its interests beyond discussions of Student Representative Council operations.

Or the start might come from a few people – young people or workers – who have an interest in an issue and want to find out what other young people think. In other cases, those involved in planning services in an area may ask for responses from young people.

In each case, the Youth Agenda can provide valuable information and discussion starters.

Is the Agenda itself the best place to start? The first section of this Guide is concerned with ways to discuss what's in the Agenda. But it may be more appropriate to start by talking about the local issues that affect young people, and then see what the Agenda says – the wider picture. Or young people may want to take action around a clearly defined issue and use the Agenda for information on policies and priorities.

It is also possible to 'piggy-back' discussions of the Youth Agenda on training and discussion days that are already planned – again it can provide information and focus action towards proposals for local and Government policy and action.

WHO?

Start by identifying possible groups of young people. Do you want to work through schools? You'll need to consider: at what level? in which subjects? through the SRC? who should you contact? How about young people not in schools – those employed locally or those unemployed? Who can help get information to these groups? Perhaps there are established community groups (clubs, churches, youth groups) who can be identified.

Depending on the group, you will also need to think about the most appropriate time and place for a meeting.
PLANNING A DAY

There are many possible formats for discussions. Right from the start, young people should be active participants in the decision making and organisation. How can workers make sure that young people are deciding and doing? Why are adults doing something when young people could be doing it?

A forum or meeting doesn't just happen. There needs to be careful planning: are you all clear and agreed on what you want from sessions? do you know the order in which things are to happen? who is doing what?

This planning doesn't have to be very formal – a small group getting together a few times before the day is enough – but it does have to be organised! Draw up a check-list of tasks so that you're all sure who has to do things (invitations, book a room etc) before the next planning meeting.

Advertise the time and place widely, with enough notice so that people can plan to come.

1. A meeting planning grid.
2. A sample meeting plan.

THE FORUM PLAN

A forum is for discussion not just listening. Limit the amount of speakers or information. Work out the time for each part of the forum – beware of leaving too little time for discussion and decisions. Change the type of activities round – some small groups and some large groups, some talking and some doing, some sitting still and some moving round.

It is always valuable to start the forum with some sort of activity where people can be introduced to each other.

3. Ideas for introduction activities.

The Forum plan should match up with what you hope to achieve. A plan for a forum designed to help participants read the Youth Agenda will be different to a plan for a discussion of local issues or for deciding on action.

WRITE CLEARLY

Remember to write your local information in direct language. Depending on the age group and experience of young people, the Agenda itself may need a summary and re-writing in a more direct language. Rather than a worker doing this, could this be a project for some participants (perhaps the organising group, or a school group who do it as a Communications project)? Re-writing a section of the Agenda for a specific audience is an excellent way to understand the contents and the ideas.

IDEAS FOR DISCUSSIONS

Here are some ideas for ways to get a discussion going:

A Guest Speaker: invite someone to talk about the Youth Agenda, or about local details of a section. Choose someone with information, who can communicate and answer questions. Someone from the Office of Youth Affairs may be suitable;

Workshops: divide into small groups – this is a way of making sure that everyone can talk. The workshop should have specific things to do – a list of questions to answer, a decision to arrive at, a report to prepare. Appoint (or get each group to choose) a facilitator to make sure that the discussion keeps going and that everyone gets a fair say, and a recorder to write down issues, points and decisions. A workshop can also invite a guest to answer questions on a particular topic. Participants can prepare questions and then spend the workshop finding out answers together;

A Panel: a group of guests can provide information about one topic and then answer questions or lead a discussion;

A Debate: on one or two of the issues in the Agenda. This could be a formal debate, with prepared arguments for and against, or it could be more informal;

A 'Moving' Debate: different views on a topic are marked across or around the room. The participants move to the area associated with their view and then argue (in turn) why they hold that position. They can change place if convinced. At the end, everyone discusses how and why people changed their views;

Read and Present: give each participant a different section of the Agenda. Each person reads it and tell others the main points;

Cut and Discuss: quotes from the Agenda are cut out, copied and used to start a group discussion.
THE YOUTH AGENDA: WHAT'S IN IT?

WHAT IS THE YOUTH AGENDA?

The Youth Agenda is a statement of the Victorian Government's policies that affect young people. It also gives the Government's views on some of the key issues and future challenges facing young people in Victoria.

The Agenda began in 1989 as a way of putting together a list of the programs and services for young people developed by various Government Departments. This resulted in the report: "What the Victorian Government is doing for Young People" (March 1990), which was updated in 1991. The Youth Agenda – a single document covering issues in the areas of work, education and training, housing, health, transport, the environment, economic security and income, sport, recreation and the arts, and justice – is the second stage of this process.

The Agenda is now being used to:

* coordinate youth policy across State Government departments and agencies;
* set up a way for the State Government, working with other levels of Government, the community sector and young people themselves, to decide on the best ways of reaching common goals;
* make sure that the government is meeting the needs of young people in the best possible way;
* support discussions with young Victorians and Youth Groups.

INSIDE THE AGENDA

There are three parts to the Youth Agenda:

Part A contains background information about the Agenda and about young people in Victoria. As well as general comments about young people, this section collects together valuable figures, graphs, charts and statements that describe how many young people there are in Victoria, where they live and what their characteristics are.

Part B contains chapters on some of the most important issues affecting young people. Each chapter is organised along the lines of:

Major Trends/Directions – what information and patterns are available about young people on this issue eg housing, health ...)?
Government/Programs – what is already being done by the Government in this area; what policies and programs already exist?
Key Issues – what are the important ideas and problems that face young people and the Government in this area?
Future Challenges – what ideas and proposals are there for the directions that young people, the community and the Government should take?

The sub-headings in each chapter can give you an easy guide to sections in which you might be particularly interested.

4. A check-list of the contents of each chapter.

Part C is a short section which outlines how the Youth Agenda will be used by Government and which invites you to take part in discussions and action around issues of interest.

The Youth Agenda can be useful in a number of ways. You can:

* compare information across the state with what is known or happening locally;
* see how different issues fit together;
* become better informed on the relevance of Government in your life;
* select information from the Agenda to back up your arguments;
* develop action plans based on the ideas in the Agenda;
* seek support to develop local action on the goals set out in the Agenda.

"The Youth Agenda is only the first step... The primary emphasis should be on specific projects and activities which have clear and tangible outcomes for young people, and (where) young people can be involved in their planning and design." (Youth Agenda, page 101)
CASE STUDY 1: The South Barwon Student Network includes students from five local post–primary schools. At one meeting, the students were enthusiastic to organise their own forum, using the Youth Agenda as a tool. They identified the topic of 'Employment Issues' and three students volunteered to lead the discussion day.

The workshop leaders met with the Regional Youth Affairs Consultant. They had all read the chapter of the Agenda, and found it difficult. Local information from the Youth Access Centre and from a draft study of the training needs of unemployed young people was added and that helped. Some activities for the day were developed together – sheets for nine brief sessions and some introductory and linking activities. This material was typed up for the student leaders, so they could go over it before the day.

SOUTH BARWON STUDENT NETWORK

At the forum, the three leaders ran all sections of the day except for an introduction ('setting the scene'), a video and a conclusion ('where to go for further information and assistance').

In each session (a mixture of whole group and small groups) the leaders took participants through a prepared sheet that provided information, engaged them in 'quizzes' and asked questions to start discussions.

As well as assisting participants to learn about the current employment situation and discussing issues, the forum has caused some students to think about organising another similar activity about issues associated with the VCE.

5. Program details, leaders' notes and a report of the day.

WORKSHOPS: SOME IDEAS

IDENTIFYING THE ISSUES

What's the main issue in which you're interested? Write it in a box in the middle of the page:

Which chapter of the Youth Agenda includes this (use the contents check–list [4] as a guide):

What particular topics in this issue interest you? Write these under your first issue:

Look at the chapter of the Youth Agenda that you have chosen. Are there sections of this chapter about your topics? Write down their pages:

Is your issue connected to other issues? How? Write these above your first issue:

Start reading the sections you've picked out.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Are the key issues that affect you and other young people adequately described in the Youth Agenda?

Of the issues in the Youth Agenda, which do you consider are the most important or least important ones for the State Government to concentrate on? For example, if you had a limited amount of money, which chapters/issues would you spend it on – to make most effect on the situation of young people? Within that chapter, again with limited money, what would you support?

What parts of the Youth Agenda need more development and detail?

Are there issues that affect you and other young people that aren't in the Agenda?

LOOKING FOR ANSWERS

"Very few young people know their rights when dealing with police." (Youth Agenda, page 86)

Do you think this is true? Why?

If it's true, why does it happen?

If young people don't know their rights, what does this cause?

How could young people get to know their rights?

Read the Youth Agenda, pages 85 and 86, for more details.
IDENTIFYING ISSUES IN YOUR AREA

What's our area? In many cases, this will be straightforward — our suburb, our town, our region. But it might also be an area of interest — a broad issue (Housing, Education ...), a topic (alcohol and drug abuse ...) or a group of young people (young Kooris, students ...). In all cases, the point of this section of the Guide is to provide some ideas for working out what are the particular issues of concern in your area.

DISCUSSING LOCAL ISSUES

There is information on pages 2 and 3 of this Guide about how to organise various types of forums. Some of this is particularly relevant to forums for discussing local issues. There is more information on this in the following pages.

If you have a meeting with a large group, you might need some sort of formal meeting procedures to keep in order.

7. Small Group Processes.

ADULTS PRESENT?

What do you do with the adults who will be present at forums? They should neither be passive observers nor dominate discussions. If they are sufficiently skilled at not intruding, they can be the group writers (see below). Or they can form a special interest group — with special topics: "What is our role as support workers?" "What are our local issues?"

RECORDING VIEWS AND ISSUES

It is important that young people's responses — the information, views, opinions, reactions — be recorded accurately, and in the words and voices of participants. There is a strong temptation for youth workers and other group leaders to 'polish' and re-interpret responses in a more formal language, especially if these are being used in a formal report. Resist this — participants need to see that what is emerging from a consultation is an accurate account of their views, in their words. In fact, the comments will probably have more power and be more effective if recorded and conveyed in this form.

Participants should also have the opportunity to consider and decide on how results will be presented, and this can be a useful section of the consultation: "Now we've decided what we want to say, and to whom, what is the most effective way to say it?"

8. Reporting Back to Groups.

RESEARCHING LOCAL ISSUES

Working out what issues are important in an area, and what young people think about them, may not be possible just at a meeting or workshop. What about the young people who didn't hear about the meeting, or couldn't attend?

Some participants may be interested to carry out a research project to find out other views in the area. This could be done as a school project, as a youth group activity, or as an individual activity.

9. Some ideas on carrying out local research.

This research could also find out about what is already happening in the area — the positive things as well as the gaps. Add local knowledge to the Agenda — about programs in place at the moment, plans for new programs, past attempts. Ask: "How do we find this out?"

This might involve participants in drawing up their first action plan: to find out information locally — who to ask, by when, how the information will be recorded and reported, what other research might be necessary. Such a survey of local knowledge can also highlight the need to publicise existing information to other young people about local initiatives and to record the experiences of previous action taken.

EMPLOY

All this research, surveying and organising discussions takes a lot of time. Who is available to do it? A local youth worker or a school class might be able to assist, but some groups have also received funding to employ a casual worker — usually a young person associated with the group — to carry out these jobs. Such a young person can sometimes find it easier to get open and honest answers from other young people in interviews. But they also need to be trained and supported to do this.
SOME IDEAS FOR QUESTIONS

Sometimes it is best not to start by simply asking: "what local issues concern young people?" Here's how one group approached this. They asked forum participants to write answers to these questions, and then discussed them in small groups:

*Imagine yourself in five years time. What will you be doing with your life?*

*What do you need to do between now and then to make that picture come true?*

*What are the most important things in your life at the moment?*

*What are your greatest concerns about your future?*

*List the issues that you think are the most important for young people in 1991.*

CASE STUDY 3:

WERRIBEE GROWTH CORRIDOR

The Werribee Youth Council is made up of student representatives from all seven secondary schools in Werribee. It was asked to find a way for young people to discuss planning issues for the growth corridor – employment, recreation, transport, housing and so on.

The Council decided that the most efficient way to gather opinions was through a series of surveys. Draft questionnaires were prepared by the Youth Council and tested. Times were arranged to survey groups of year 11 students.

In each school, the Youth Council member chaired a meeting which introduced the project to students and gave them information about young people in the area. Each student then completed a questionnaire. This was followed by small group discussions on the area, led by a Youth Council member or teacher. Comments were recorded and put together with the completed questionnaires.

In addition, unemployed young people were interviewed in the CES by a casual worker employed by the City of Werribee. Locally employed young people were also encouraged to take part in the consultation by their employers, who distributed the questionnaires.

The information from the surveys and discussions was coded and entered into a computer, so that figures, tables and graphs could be produced. A draft report was prepared.

After discussion, the final report of the consultation was printed and presented by the Youth Council to the Werribee Council and to the Social Planning Working Group (of Community Services Victoria). This report will be part of the Council's formal response to the Department of Planning and Urban Growth.

10. Questionnaire and report.

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CASE STUDY 2:

MELTON STUDENT FORUM

To start their research and action project on local issues, about 80 Australian Studies students from the three Government secondary colleges in Melton met in a Student Forum. As part of the activities of that day, they developed lists of local issues that affect young people.

The students started by marking the location of their homes on maps of the area, then clustered themselves into neighbourhood groups. Each group was given a large sheet of paper and asked to discuss and draw a 'typical Melton young person'. This caricature could also contain statements to describe the person.

Around this person, the students were then asked to write things that the person was interested in or concerned about. This led, in turn, to a list of the issues that face young people in Melton. Each group had to decide on the two most important issues – what they are concerned about, what they would like to change or improve, what they thought needed to be done.

Reporting back to the whole Forum involved showing the picture, and naming the two issues. This then led to the final session – "what are we going to do?" – in which the groups started to develop ideas for possible research and action projects on these local issues.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What are the issues affecting young people in their local area? What do they think of schools, transport, health, housing, recreation and other services in the area?

What would young people like to see happen in their local area to respond to their needs?

Are there local issues which are relevant to young people, which aren't contained in the Youth Agenda? These could be big issues (missing chapters) or smaller issues (missing topics in existing chapters).

What are the services, programs or facilities available to young people in the local area? Are these accessible and appropriate to the needs of young people?

What barriers exist in the local community to restrict young people's access to the goods and services they need?

How aware are young people of what is available? Why?

Are there sufficient opportunities for young people to live rewarding and enjoyable lives? Where are the gaps?

Concentrate on the good things about your area as well as the desirable changes. Perhaps you could have a sheet which asked:

"If you had anything you could wish for in this area:
* What things would you definitely keep?
* What things would you change?"

CASE STUDY 4:

Students from Ballarat schools held a Youth Issues Forum to define locally relevant issues. After an introduction to the Youth Agenda, the students divided into small workshop groups, each with the same sheet of questions. Teachers and youth workers met in a separate group.

In three half-hour sessions during the morning, they discussed different aspects of local issues. The membership of the groups changed for each session, so that students met, mixed and shared ideas with different people.

Session 1: Identifying the Issues

Issues – the things that matter, the things that are important in a person’s life. They may cause concerns; they may need a decision to be made; they may involve choices.

We are interested in finding out what is important to young people. It is one thing for planners to decide what they think young people need. It is another to actually ask and listen to the answers.

These questions are intended to get you started on thinking about what the main issues in your life are.

BALLARAT YOUTH ISSUES FORUM

Session 2: Getting Information To Young People

We are living in an age when information is available to us in greater quantities than ever before. However, knowing how to get information which is exactly what you want, what you need, is much harder. There are services in the community to provide help with a whole range of things. Finding out about them can be pretty hard.

Session 3: Strategies: Taking Control – Working out what can be done

We now know about the issues which face young people. We want to know now about what can be done about these things and who should do it.

In each session, a sheet of questions led the participants to develop and share their individual lists of issues, information needs and action strategies. In the fourth session of the morning, back in a large group, the small groups reported on discussions and action proposals.

11. Workshop sheets.
TAKING ACTION AROUND THE AGENDA

Once we have worked out what issues are important to us, that's just the start! Now we have to plan for action.

That might be local action, around needs we have identified, or action to support or change the issues and goals that the Government has identified in the Youth Agenda.

When you have a list of proposals for action, and these have been agreed to by the group, it is useful to write each down on a separate sheet of paper and to sort the proposals into four piles:

Pile 1: actions we can do ourselves;

Pile 2: actions we ask others to do;

Pile 3: actions where we share responsibility with others;

Pile 4: things we can't do anything about.

DECIDING ON ACTION

How do we decide on what action to take? First we have to have some rules or criteria to judge the proposed action by. These might be things like: "it doesn't cost much" or "it meets our goals" or "it is possible without big conflicts". Here's one way that a group did that:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Activity Game</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of proposed action:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What it will achieve:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria list:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* it will appeal to young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* it will meet our objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* we can run it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* our parents will agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* we can afford it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>etc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Secondly, when they'd worked out what the criteria were, a sheet like this was drawn up for each proposal. The person suggesting the proposal gave it a mark from 1 to 5 on each of the criteria, passed it to other people and, at the end, all the marks were added up.

This was used to work out which proposals had a high priority but, more usefully, it led to changes to the proposals to make them more workable.

Thirdly, we need to see how our priorities fit with those of the Government (e.g. by looking at the Agenda). If they fit well, we can work out how to plan local action to achieve results; if they don't, we can work out ways to suggest changes to the Government.

ACTION PLANNING

The first step in taking any action is planning it - working out what you want and how to get it. Planning has to look at: what, why, how, who, when. An action planner is helpful to organise exactly what you have to do, how you're going to do it (the steps), who is responsible and the timing of the steps. An example of an action planner is included on page 11.

More details are available on the steps you will need to go through to plan action and to make sure it happens in the following resources:

13. Action planning check list.

When you are planning action, remember to think about what local action you can take but which ties in with wider issues (use the Youth Agenda for information about this); be realistic about what you can achieve, both locally and wider (if you ask others to act, there might be many pressures on them - you are one voice among many); work out who will support you; and plan the publicity you can get - tell others what is happening.

Having clear plans, knowing the steps involved, getting the resources you need, calling on others for support - these are the clues to making it happen.
WHAT ACTION?

Here are some ideas for action you could take on the issues in the Agenda or on your local issues:

* Develop plans for local services that are needed – apply for funding to start them;

* Use information from the Agenda to argue for changes to local services;

* Write to the Minister for Youth Affairs, other Ministers and Government Departments in response to the Agenda;

* Write to the Youth Policy Development Council (YPDC) and/or contacts its members to express your views;

14. Membership of the YPDC.

* Form a deputation to your local Member of Parliament, a Minister or a Department;

* Ask to be part of a planning committee for the development of programs;

* Contact the local press and other media about your plans – put out a press release.

Remember that change is a slow process. Keep following up your ideas and asking what is happening.

SUPPORT

Who will help you to take action? Who will stand up in a group and support your ideas and proposals? It will help to have a group of people committed to the idea – not just one person.

Identify who are the important opinion-makers in your community. Visit them to discuss the proposal and ask for their support. It might also be helpful if someone else is willing to propose your idea, so that all the attention doesn't fall on you. This is called lobbying or networking.

Use the Youth Agenda to support your proposals. If you can show that what you're suggesting is in line with Government priorities, you have increased your chances of achieving it.

If you need funding for your proposal, identify who could possibly provide this. The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (address on page 12) has a Youth Funding Guide available to give you some ideas on this.

CASE STUDY 5:

NORTH EAST REGION TRAINING DAY

Six Youth Resource and Activity Centres have been set up across Victoria's North East Region. When it became evident that the young people were struggling to establish local committees for these Centres, a Youth Centre Committee Training Day was organised.

This day brought together 50 young people (aged 14 to 18 years) from across the Region – it also provided an opportunity to consult with them on aspects of the Youth Agenda.

The 2-hour session on the Youth Agenda was held in the evening of a day of information exchange and training workshops.

The participants were divided into four workshop groups according to their geographic areas. Each group was assisted by an adult leader whose role it was to help the young people articulate their discussion points and prepare reports for presentation to the Minister.

The Workshop groups were given a list of the Youth Agenda chapter headings and were asked to come to an agreement about choosing one heading that was important to them. They were then asked to analyse it using the following questions:

"What are the local issues?"
"What would we like to see happen?"
"What can we do ourselves?"
"What can the Government do?"

Each group produced a list of points under these headings and then elected two young people who represented their views at a deputation with the Minister for Youth Affairs a few days later.

The workshop notes were also sent to the Office of Youth Affairs. Some of the issues from them (on the need for young people to have information about employment strategies) were drawn to the attention of the appropriate Government Departments.

15. Program, workshop notes and report.
RESOURCES FOR DECIDING ON ACTION

Here are some ideas for worksheets to use in action planning workshops:

AN ACTION PLAN

(This is just one possible example – invent your own to suit your needs.)

Name of plan:

Who's in the group:

What we want to achieve:

Start date:
Panic date:
Finish date:

Steps: | Who will do them: | When they will be done:

The steps involved:

1
2
3
4

What resources we will need (materials, equipment, money):

Who will help us:

How we will know what happened:

GETTING ACTION IDEAS

Write down a list of what you like about this town:

Write a list of the problems in this town:

Pick the main problem:

Write down some solutions to this problem:

We know what the problem is – that's P; we know what some solutions are – they're S. So:

\[ P + X = S \]

What is X?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What should happen about the issues that we've identified?

What is already happening in local communities about these issues?

What can we do ourselves in our local communities to improve the access of young people to services and facilities?

What can the Government do to assist young people?

Who should be responsible for taking action? Who should we be asking? Which is the most appropriate level of Government?

How can we work with Government to change and improve things in this area?

Are young people recognised for the contributions they make in the community? How can the image of young people be improved?

The Youth Agenda Resource Kit
FOLLOWING UP

Having ideas, planning and taking action, or asking for something to happen is just the start not the end. We need to follow up ideas, plans, action and requests.

If we have organised a consultation to get ideas, or organised to do something, we need to check how well it went and what was achieved. What did we learn about how to organise things? How would we do it better next time?

If we have planned and taken action, we need to tell others about it:

* We need to let people know who are directly affected – to make sure we have others involved in the action and to avoid any potential trouble points.

* Publicity for what we're doing is valuable – local papers are particularly interested in local news.

* We need to make sure that we tell the Government what we're doing. Contact the Office of Youth Affairs with news of any discussions, decisions, proposals and action that relates to the Youth Agenda and its issues.

If we have asked others to take action, we need to follow up our proposals and requests to them. What has happened to our suggestions? Have they been considered? Where? What was the result? Can we be part of the next stage – of sharing in the implementation of action?

WHERE TO BE HEARD

There are many different ways of responding to the Agenda and to local issues of importance. Government Departments provide advice directly to their Ministers; formal advisory committees have representatives from government and community bodies; community organisations present views from their fields of interest.

You can contact:

* local youth workers through local councils and some community agencies;

* the Youth Policy Development Council – an advisory body set up by the Minister, with a majority membership of young people. (Contact through the Chairperson on (03) 417 6122.)

* the Office of Youth Affairs – the Victorian government department (see below);

* the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria – the peak non-government body which can put you in contact with other representative, action and advocacy groups. (Suite 1, 250 Gore Street, Fitzroy 3065 – phone (03) 419 9122)

Other Government departments and agencies can also be contacted directly.

16. List of department and agency contacts.

The Victorian Government also supports action by young people on issues identified locally and in the Youth Agenda, through the annual allocation of Youth Victoria Grants. Your responses to the Agenda will help determine priorities for the allocation of these grants.

SUPPORT

The Office of Youth Affairs can assist groups wishing to meet to discuss the Youth Agenda or their local issues, and to plan action arising from that, through:

* small grants (up to $250) to help meet the costs of meetings; contact the OYA for guidelines and further details;

* attendance by staff from the Office of Youth Affairs at discussions or forums – to provide information and to take your comments, recommendations and proposals back to the Government;

* providing more detail about the content and aims of the Youth Agenda;

* links with local and regional workers who can help you with setting up meetings and forums;

* links with State Government Departments and their contact officers;

* copies of the Youth Agenda (or chapters of it) and other support materials such as this kit and its associated materials.

Contact:

Office of Youth Affairs
Ministry of Ethnic, Municipal and Community Affairs
4th floor, 500 Bourke Street
Melbourne 3000

Phone: (03) 602 8300
Fax: (03) 602 8700

Connect: The Youth Agenda Resource Kit
ROLE OF THE SCO

SCOs have played an important role in advising, inspiring and training JSC members and teachers. The section later in this booklet on Skill Workshops provides a specific example of this. Because teachers are obliged to attend these workshops (for reasons of legal liability and supervision, amongst others), there has been a strong professional development component to SCOs’ support roles on JSCs. Many SCOs have found that this attendance and subsequently development of teachers has meant that, even if not originally committed to student participation, these teachers have subsequently become strong advocates of it. The SCOs have also brought information to JSCs and their support teachers about structures and processes (for example, supplying a constitution if required), helped individual schools to develop JSCs, and have documented and disseminated information about particular examples of JSCs.

It should be noted that few other consultants or groups are consistently supporting the development of Junior School Councils. The growth in and commitment to such participation has been largely the result of the Program’s work. It is now widely regarded that it is the particular responsibility of SCDP Networks for convening and organising training (of students and teachers) in this area.

SOME QUESTIONS, ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

What is the most appropriate way for students to share in decision making in primary schools?

Should primary school students be members of School Council?

How can we provide time and support for primary school teachers who work with JSCs?

How can we develop links between student representation and participation and democratic community processes?

How can we increase the autonomy of students both in their learning and in their organisations?

FURTHER READING

If you wish to read further about Junior School Councils and similar structures in primary schools, Connect has published three specific issues entirely dedicated to documenting development and training of JSCs: Connect 35 (October 1985), 61 (February 1990) and 62 (April 1990).
SECTION 3

STUDENT NETWORKS, WORKSHOPS AND FORUMS

School Community Development Program Networks have organised student meetings, workshops and forums for a variety of reasons. These have been both issue-based and skill-based, and have either included schools from one network or from several networks.

They have:

* provided training for students around specific issues or in skills required in their participation;
* inspired students (and other community members) to begin, develop and improve participation;
* challenged students and others to go beyond the constraints of current practices;
* provided an opportunity for students from several schools to meet together in order to discuss, debate and decide on student perspectives on educational issues;
* provided information and advice efficiently to a number of schools;
* enabled students to have an external audience to whom they can present information and for whom they can reflect on their own progress.

Different models for these networks, workshops and forums have developed in response to differing needs, conditions and preferences. Some involve only one school, but many bring students together from schools across an SCDP Network or from several Networks.

There are benefits from small, intimate groups where students can feel unthreatened and can work intensively around common problems. But there are also benefits from larger workshops which can offer a diversity and dynamic which might not otherwise be possible. Larger numbers present a wider range of student experiences, the experience of other schools and systems of operation, different needs of a wider range of students/schools, a greater range of development, a wider range of teacher expertise and also introduce students (and teachers) to new and different environments.

In addition, larger numbers have increased the access of such activities to SSC and Regional personnel, consequently raising the profile of student participation at these levels.

For example, the three SCDP Networks in the City of Preston agreed there was a considerable advantage working together and sharing the range of differing but complementary skills each brought to the project. This largely developed because of their geographical proximity, similar client needs and shared network priorities and approaches. This was further extended in collaborative work with the Northcote, Clifton Hill and North Carlton Networks. The cooperation of these six Networks meant that common activities could be developed efficiently, approaches could be ‘trialed’ at one workshop and then modified for a second presentation, and that the
number of support personnel available for activities could be substantially increased.

On the other hand, working within one Network may be most appropriate to other circumstances for the same geographical, need and philosophical reasons. It may also be appropriate to strengthen links and developments within that Network. The Gisborne Network organised its workshops within its own area and liaised with the Municipal Recreation Officer. Similarly, the Eaglehawk Network has involved quite a number of schools because of their close proximity and similar characteristics and needs.

In all their forms, student networks, workshops and forums have certain things in common. They share a clear focus; a commitment to the promotion of philosophies, ideas and issues; training in skills required to achieve effective results; development of self confidence and student directed learning; encouragement of shared ideas, feelings and experiences; a commitment to activity-based approaches; and the modelling of group learning practices.

Issues explored have included topics such as: Student Democracy; Local Government (a part of the democratic process); Equal Opportunity; Environmental Concerns; Curriculum and the role of Student Democracy.

The approaches and processes employed in these networks and forums vary greatly. This reflects differing geography, clientele, facilitators, the skills and interests brought to bear, and needs at schools' and students' particular stages of development. The examples provided here from the the Preston/Preston East/Reservoir and Northcote/Clifton Hill/North Carlton Networks, and from the Gisborne, Eaglehawk and Shepparton Networks reflect some of this diversity in location of forum activity, types of forum activity, types of workshop, and approaches used.

**ROLE OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY OFFICER**

Where SCDP Networks have identified student participation as one of their priorities, the School Community Officers have often taken the lead in initiating projects. The first step, in many cases, has been the development of workshops and forums where students can discuss their initiatives and learn more about procedures and processes. They have worked closely with other local and regional personnel in doing this.

The work that SCOs do in initiating and organising these workshops and forums can be broadly summarised under the following headings. In these, the officer has been either directly responsible for carrying out these tasks, or of otherwise ensuring that the area was attended to:

- Liaison with schools
- Assessment of needs
- Formation of a planning group (formal or informal) - in some cases this may have only met once and then the SCO liaised with each of the members.
- Lengthy development and planning of the day's activities, workshops etc.
- Establishing timelines
- Preparing publicity for schools, Region, SSC, local press
- Organising guests and special facilitators
- Organising venue/catering/transport etc
- Documentation
- Appropriate evaluation
- Providing resources, making submissions for funds and negotiating for personnel.

In addition, the SCO has been advisor, consultant, support person, resourcer, co-ordinator, communicator, a focus person, optimist (encourager and inspirer). The job is not a simple one!
ISSUE AND SKILL BASED WORKSHOPS

What topics are covered at workshops and forums for students?

There are almost as many different topics as there have been workshops, but some common themes and issues keep emerging. Most frequently, workshops are concerned with the skills students need for effective participation - whether that be on SRCs, JSCs, School Councils, in classrooms or in other areas of education. In addition, workshops have focused around specific educational issues such as VCE, District Provision, equal opportunity and assessment.

ISSUE BASED WORKSHOPS

Several Networks have chosen to develop workshops around issues that involve links between Local Government and student groups. This issue was chosen because it extends the idea of classroom and school democracy into the real world of local government. By so doing it uses a practical example at the local community level. The issue of local government also acts as a bridge to the understanding of state, federal and international political systems and the role students can play now and in the future.

Preston, East Preston and Reservoir SCDP Networks worked together to develop student workshops around this issue in conjunction with municipal representatives and the Parliamentary Pack, a resource available in all schools (see your library). This enabled students to question local representatives about the roles they performed and so to reflect on the relation of this work to their own forms of representation.

In Gisborne, the SCO developed an activity for JSC students from that Network and enlisted the assistance of the Municipal Recreation Officer and the Network's teachers who had responsibility for supporting Junior School Councils. The following newspaper articles describe the activity in more detail:

Connect August 1991
Combined junior council meets

Students from the seven primary schools in the Gisborne Shire last Thursday took part in a combined Gisborne Schools' Junior Council meeting, held in the meeting room at the Gisborne Shire offices.

The meeting was organised by the Gisborne Network School Community Development Program and the schools taking part were: Bulleenarook, Gisborne, Macedon, Mount Macedon, New Gisborne and St. Brigid's Primary schools and Rose-Triple R school.

School Community Officer, Helen Jerome, explained that there were two main objectives:

1. To enable students throughout the Shire to work together and share ideas about what is happening in their school.
2. To help students gain more of an understanding of local government and how they can be involved in what is happening in the shire.

The meeting took the form of a workshop and will encourage students to learn from each other's strengths, successes and weaknesses and how they can become more involved in decision making within their school.

Many schools have junior school councils and some of those attending are members of junior school council.

"The meeting of working together of students from different schools will also be a start of schools working more closely on a variety of different projects," explained Helen Jerome.

The students brought with them ideas on what their school's junior council does well, things it can improve on and suggestions as to what the shire council can do for children.

Among the suggestions and problems raised were: car parking outside schools, school canteens, the need for more bus shelters, need for zebra crossings, more play equipment and new bike paths.

There was strong support for a junior youth club and regular junior discos.

The students will now go back to their schools and report on the day's discussions. It is planned to hold a follow up meeting in October or November.

At this second meeting the group will work further on developing school action plans and how to make a school-junior council more effective, as well as following up issues raised with the Shire Council.

Students attending were:

Gisborne: Robin Vessey, Brooke Parkinson, Melissa Clarke, Karen Young.

Bulleenarook: Rebecca Mallaby, Melissa Camilleri, Glen Manton, Daniel McCaskill.

St Brigid's: Adam Isely, Beth Levelle, Ryan Egan, Royelle Davison.

Triple R: Craig Byrne, Michael Muehlhein, Leanne Dalby, Mark Bethell.

Gisborne: Robin Vessey, Brooke Parkinson, Melissa Clarke, Karen Young.
Gisborne junior council meets

About 20 representatives of primary school junior councils recently attended a half-day activity at the Sporting Association Clubrooms in Gisborne and the Shire Offices.

The program had been arranged by the Gisborne School community officer Helen Jerome, the Gisborne Shire Recreation Officer Craig Midgley and curriculum consultant from the Ministry of Education and Brian Hallett the curriculum consultant from the Ministry of Education and was coordinated by the Gisborne Network of the School Community Development Program.

This was a follow-up from an Education Week activity held in September in which representatives from primary school junior councils met and discussed issues of concern in their own schools and the wider community.

The recent activity involved students discussing the outcomes of the last meeting and learning about meeting procedures and the operation of the Shire Council.

Students then walked to the shire offices, following the Jacksons Creek Path and completing activities along the way. At the Shire Offices the students met local councillors and were entertained to morning tea.

At the resumption of the Council meeting, students sat in the public gallery and watched their local representatives discuss business matters.

Shire President, Cr Bennett, then suspended business and welcomed members of the junior council to the chamber.

Councillors took up several issues that had been raised by the students at the Education Week meeting in September. Among them was the provision of a level crossing in the centre of Gisborne. A representative of the Shire, Mr Gilbert, explained the options available to the Council.

Councillors and students also observed a video on skateboarding following a request before Council to install a skateboard ramp in the Macedon area.

The students' visit was completed by Cr Harbison moving a motion to congratulate the students on their work in the junior councils in their schools.

TELEGRAPH Tuesday November 22 1988
SKILL BASED WORKSHOPS

In addition to the specific educational issues tackled, sessions and workshops have been developed to assist the operation of student councils to be more effective. Most frequently, both issue and skill sessions have operated on the same days.

The areas covered in such Skill-Based Workshops include:

- Meeting Procedure (Rules, Constitutions, Office Bearers)
- How to Promote the SRC/JSC At Your School
- How To Be A Good Representative
- Making It All Happen (How to Implement Decisions Made By the SRC/JSC)
- How to Design And Conduct Surveys (How to compile results, how does this apply to the curriculum and what do we do with the results?)

The following description of training days for Junior School Councils is taken from Connect's documentation of the days run by the Preston/East Preston/Reservoir and the North Carlton/Clifton Hill/Northcote Networks:

JSC TRAINING DAYS

Training days for students on Junior School Councils were first offered within these Networks in 1988 as a response to requests from the schools for support. Over the next two years, understanding of how to structure and implement training sessions developed. The process of planning, implementing and (most importantly) reflecting upon what happened as a small group was equally essential to our improved understanding.

The training sessions all operated as half-day sessions. The timing varied slightly, but it was soon discovered that a session that ran longer than half a day was both too long for the students and too disruptive to the schools.

The programs were constructed at meetings of the School Community Development Officers and other consultants, following a process of gathering information about previous days from teachers and from students.

This feedback process involved firstly reviewing previous suggestions from training days. The evaluation sheet comments from students and teachers were used to assist reflection on the success or otherwise of activities, on the structure and pacing of the days, and on requests for the next stage of training required. Thus, for example, following the screening of the video 'Seen and Heard', many comments requested more information on surveys - when were they appropriate? how do you do a survey? and so on.

We then discussed possible programs with teachers and students in schools. The SCDOs regularly visited schools in their networks, discussed the previous training days and gathered ideas and reactions relevant to the next one. Meetings were called for JSC support teachers in the networks to discuss proposals for the next training day. Generally these were not well attended, partly due to being held after school as a 'extra' duty, and partly due to teachers feeling they were adequately consulted and involved informally.

Several planning meetings of SCDOs and consultants were held before each training day. These moved from reviewing the previous day and setting outlines for the next sessions, to more detailed planning of programs. Specific tasks were allocated between and following meetings, both in relation to program construction and to implementation of decisions leading up to the training day. For example, it was important to think through the program and list such matters as name tags, provision of drinks etc, then share these tasks among the organisers.

In planning the training programs, the following principles emerged:

- The program should involve students as actively as possible - even straight information presentation should be as practical and as active as possible;
- Students should all be treated as competent and valued people and the program activities should build upon this sense of competence for all students;
- The program activities should encourage students to make presentations to the group as a whole;
- Activities should stress co-operation rather than competition and should not allow discrimination on the basis of gender, background etc.

(More details of activities are included in the article in Connect 61.)
In developing these days, SCOs from Preston, Preston East, Reservoir, Northcote, Clifton Hill and North Carlton Networks made contact with and utilised the assistance of the following people: Roger Holdsworth (consultant), Julie Hamston (Curriculum consultant), Joe Corbett (Ed Psych Consultant), Graeme Kent (SCO Ballarat - for artwork), Bronwyn Halls (Cartoonist), School Councillors, secondary students from an SRC, media students for documentation, teachers as facilitators, the Mayor of Preston and Graham Goudie (SSC Manager); and the following resources: Playback Theatre, the Preston Council Chambers (venue), the School Support Centre (venue), the “Seen and Heard” video, the Parliamentary Pack, Reverse Garbage, Connect magazine and prior documentation on student participation.

CAMPS

Similar activities can be and have been held in different settings and venues, adapting programs to suit local needs. The South Barwon Network utilised a Student Leadership Camp for students from Years 5-8. The following description of the camp is taken from the Barwon-South Western Regional News:

Student leadership in South Barwon Network

Student leadership is an important focus for the South Barwon Network of Schools. Nine network schools are resourced by the School Community Development Program.

School representatives comprise of parents, teachers and students who meet monthly as a committee to plan and develop initiatives with their School Community Education Officer, Jennifer Kamp.

The South Barwon Student Leadership Program aims to:
- develop students' leadership and communication skills;
- assist students in developing confidence, self-worth and responsibility for their own learning;
- enable students to develop skills to solve student problems;
- provide opportunities for leadership;
- reinforce the links between the Network school communities.

The network committee plans activities which involve and benefit the greatest number of students across the schools.

Student Leadership Initiatives for 1989 included:

The Student Leadership Camp.

Girls and boys from years 5-8 participated in the camp at Wyana, Queenscliff. The camp was implemented in two stages with consultant John Hines, sponsored by the Institute of Education Administration (IEA).

Stage one involved the student planning team and their teachers meeting regularly during term one to discuss activities, funding and publicising the camp at school, resourcing materials, and the designing of a program.

Stage two commenced with the camp program in term two. Highlights included activities such as the Blind Tentmakers, Jelly Roll and the Punished Drum. Every student was given the opportunity to “stand up front.”

Elizabeth Cameron from Grovedale West Primary said, “I liked the initiative activities, the night hike, the campfire and the mixture between the primary students and post primary school students.”

“T liked participating as a teacher/leader and found the experience invaluable to myself and the students,” reported Ron Miller, Grovedale West Primary School.

Several year 10 Network students also participated in the camp and produced a video recording which was shown at a follow-up family barbeque evening held at South Barwon Secondary College.

Individual School Visits

Skills learnt at the camp were reinforced and introduced to a wider group of students through visits to the network schools, by John Hines and the School Community Officer. The students participated in fun team activities. They discussed the good points about their schools and how they could take responsibility for changing other things through their student councils.

The South Barwon Student Network

Representative students from Belmont HS, South Barwon SC, Grovedale SC, Oberon HS, Queenscliff HS and Matthew Flinders Girls HS meet monthly to exchange ideas and gain a wide range of skills and experiences relating to communication, personal development and self-confidence.

The South Barwon Student Network conceived and planned the Student Forum ‘Your Future - Your Choice’ to target 100 students from their respective schools. Their aims were to:
- develop students' awareness of local issues and environmental problems;
- develop positive attitudes towards society and problem solving;
- make friends.

Grovedale West Student Council planning the Network Student Leadership Camp.

Tasks included organisation of a venue, booking guest speakers, catering, budgeting, submission writing, preparation of programs, evaluation summaries and publicity.

The students gained hands on experience working as a team and sharing responsibilities.

Lisa Schneider, Treasurer of the Student Network said, “I have put classroom learnings into practice and have gained enough self confidence to approach and speak confidently to many people.”

The success of the forum was reflected in participating students’ responses.

“The best thing about the forum was learning about our rights and responsibilities.”

“I enjoyed meeting people and learning about organisations in the community.”

“The best thing was learning about our environment.”

Attendance at regional forums organised by the Student Working Party and convenor, Raylene Dodds, provided students in the network schools with further opportunities to develop leadership skills and share ideas.

The students also developed an awareness of local government procedures through their regular contact with the City of South Barwon Youth Officer. The officer assisted with planning for the camp, the student forum and attended all student network meetings during 1989.

Connect August 1991
STUDENT NETWORKS

It is important that students have structures within schools that are their own, where they feel secure in discussing student perspectives on issues and where they can advise and direct their representatives on decision-making bodies. Similarly, student networks have developed as important forums to enable students to meet between schools, to consider educational issues on a larger scale, to come to shared perspectives and to advise and direct representatives on district and regional bodies.

This form of network has grown naturally from the work of SCOs in their local SCDP Networks. An example of the links between student forums and workshops and student networks in the South Barwon Network was provided in the previous section of this booklet.

The following are examples of two very different forms of student network:

STUDENTS OF SHEPPARTON (SOS) DISTRICT

Students of Shepparton is a representative group of District Students, formed in 1986. It has the following aims:

- To be the representative group of District Students.
- To act as an exchange of information between District SRCs.
- To discuss and take action on issues concerning District students eg assist in planning and organising inservices on Student Participation and planning information evenings for the School Community.
- To keep SRCs informed about educational issues.

The group has membership from Shepparton and Mooroopna Post Primary Schools, including non-government schools. These include Wangarai Park Secondary College, North Shepparton Secondary College, Shepparton High School, Notre Dame College, Shepparton South Secondary College, Mooroopna Secondary College and Goulburn
Valley Grammar School.

SOS attempts to support and establish effective student government in its member schools through its representatives from school-based SRCS. At the time of its establishment, SOS became a "model" student government organisation from which schools could replicate its role and function within their own SRCS. It has become a contact and resource point, and a "clearing house" for dissemination of information and swapping of ideas.

It has developed workable and achievable goals for itself and its participating schools.

Each school must elect two permanent members to SOS. The students must be interested in the improvement of education and their schools. Students must not be studying for Year 12, but should have close contact with the SRC.

Member schools report their activities and any issues affecting students at regular monthly SOS meetings, the venues of which rotate among member schools. An agenda of items to be discussed is drawn up for each meeting, decisions made and action taken. The group relies very much on the contribution of each member school for strategies, ideas for resolving issues and collective decision making.

The School Community Officer and the Curriculum Consultant from the local School Support Centre work with the SOS group on a continual basis in an advisory and guiding capacity, assisting with some of the administrative work, supervision, transport arrangements and ensuring smooth running of the group.

SOS tackles issues such as promoting greater participation and involvement of students in school policy decisions, changes to assessment and reporting procedures and accreditation. In practical areas, SOS assists schools and youth groups with any financial assistance from monies raised by the group and endorses, by means of letter or personal representation, any recommendations or suggestions made by students which benefit the educational prospects and equal access for students. Representatives on SOS gain various skills as part of their participation, including leadership skills, organisational skills, communication and public speaking, and responsibility in voicing and reporting the views of other students in their meetings with other student networks across the region.

In the past, SOS has taken part in organising a district conference for local students involved in student government who hold executive positions in SRCS. These conferences assist students in becoming familiar with meeting procedures, communication, negotiation skills and the roles of student representatives.

SOS provides district students with an avenue to ensure that their voices and ideas for improving education are heard at higher decision-making levels. It encourages students, through their SRCS' membership on SOS, to raise issues of concern and be willing to work together with teachers and parents to benefit the educational outcomes of all students.
EAGLEHAWK YOUTH COUNCIL

The Eaglehawk Youth Council consists of 18 student representatives, two from each of the seven primary schools in the Eaglehawk SCDP Network (chosen from the year 6 students), and two from each of years 7 and 8 at Eaglehawk Secondary College.

Meetings of the Youth Council are held monthly at the Eaglehawk Town Hall Council Chambers, and the Councillors and Officers from the Eaglehawk Borough Council act as advisers to the Youth Council's Executive Committee (Youth Mayor, Youth Town Clerk and Youth Engineer). In the week prior to the monthly meetings, informal meetings to discuss agenda items are held over lunchtime in schools on a rotational basis.

The Youth Council also parallels the Borough Council in its allocation of 'portfolios'. There are nine of these, each held by a primary school or secondary school year level, in the areas of Health and Community Services, Leisure Services, Environment and Planning, Community Celebrations, Road Safety, Student Participation, School/Community Relations, Future Directions and Inter-School Activities.

For example, the Student Participation Portfolio involves responsibility for matters such as the School Community Network, student decision making on school curriculum matters, student participation on various committees etc.

The Eaglehawk Network's SCO has played an important role in setting up and maintaining the Youth Council as a voice for students in the Borough, as a linkage between students and local government, and as a means for students to learn about community decision-making structures.

SOME QUESTIONS, ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

What form of student network is most appropriate to the needs, experience, geographic location etc of our area?

How can we make links between student organisations and School Councils?

How can we challenge student networks to go beyond discussions of fund-raising and social organisation?

How can students be represented on decision-making bodies at district and regional levels?

FURTHER READING

If you want more information about student networks:

Take A Part (Ministry of Education, Victoria, 1985) was written by students for students, and contains information about student network development and function.

Student Participation in the Barwon-South Western Region is a resource kit for schools in that region, and includes information about students networks there.

Various issues of Connect have described the operation of student networks throughout Victoria.
THE FUTURE

The Victorian Ministry of Education has policy commitments to the active participation of students in all aspects of their education.

School Community Officers play a vital role in many areas in keeping that commitment alive in practice, and in keeping all members of the school community aware that a true partnership of students, teachers and parents is possible and beneficial to our schools.

Their experience also reminds us that participation needs to be resourced and supported if it is to be maintained.

Where is student participation going in the 1990s? The challenge, in the light of diminishing resources, is to ensure that that support continues to exist - support for classrooms that are based on student participation in curriculum decision making and action; support for student organisations that enable students to participate in discussion, debate, decision and direction; support for student participation in the formal decision-making forums that shape educational institutions and programs.

The School Community Development Program has developed a wealth of experience through its continuing cycle of practice and reflection. The 1990s must be a time when that wealth continues and grows.

SOME QUESTIONS, ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

What has been learnt from the SCDP and other programs about support needs for student participation?

What resources are needed and available to support student participation?

How can local support for student participation be continued as programs develop and change?

How can we encourage additional support personnel for student participation?

How can support for student participation be built into School Support Centres?

How can we make sure that we share information with all members of the school community - parents, teachers, students, administrators, consultants - so that they understand that student participation is vital to schools’ curriculum?

How can we develop, implement and resource a state-wide policy and program on student participation?

RESOURCES

Useful resources have been cited throughout this booklet. Most are readily available in Victoria:

One for All and The STC Book - contact the STC Group C/o VSTA, 112 Trenerry Crescent, Abbotsford 3067
Negotiating the Curriculum - available commercially
Into Practice - Education Shop, school libraries or School Support Centres
Implementing Ministerial Paper Number 6 - Education Shop, school libraries and/or School Support Centres
Tutoring, Students Publishing and Students and Radio - should be in school libraries, or contact Connect
Children as Teachers, Children Teach Children, New Roles for Youth - may still be available commercially; check public libraries
Take a Part - every Victorian secondary school received one; check also School Support Centres and the Education Shop
Credit and Support - School Support Centres

SRC Pamphlets - Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Suite 1, 250 Gore Street, Fitzroy 3065. Phone: (03) 419 9122. ($5 for a complete set)

Seen and Heard (video) - Education Shop; School Support Centres; other video resources are available from these sources

Moving In - Queenscliff High School, King Street, Queenscliff 3225

Student Participation in Barwon-South Western Region - from the Regional Office

The Hitchhiker’s Guide to Student Government - from Charles Kingston, 1 Gladstone Street, Bathurst NSW 2795 - costs about $10

Connect (Newsletter of Youth Participation in Education) - 12 Brooke Street, Northcote 3070. Phone (03) 489 9052. ($10 p.a. for 6 issues - back copies available for $2 each)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following SCDP Networks provided information that was used in compiling this report:

**Clifton Hill (Elise Peart):** Spensley Street PS, Gold Street PS, Victoria Park PS, Fitzroy PS, North Fitzroy PS, Merri PS, Fitzroy SC (JSCs, Forums and Workshops, Student Networks)

**Corio (Bridget Woodford):** Corio PS, Corio South PS, Corio West PS, Norlane PS, Rosewall PS, Norlane HS, Corio North HS, Corio SC, North Shore PS (SRCs, Student Networks)

**Eaglehawk (Gary Thorn):** Long Gully PS, California Gully PS, Eaglehawk PS, Eaglehawk North PS, Specimen Hill PS, Comet Hill PS, Eaglehawk SC, St Iborius PS (Forums and Workshops, Youth Councils)

**Emerald (Ashley Burnett):** Cockatoo PS, Emerald SC, Emerald PS, Gembrook PS, Macclesfield PS, Menzies Creek PS, Selby PS (Cross-Age Tutoring)

**Footscray/Yarraville (David Jay):** Footscray HS, Footscray PS, Yarraville PS, Yarraville West PS, Kingsville PS (SRCs, JSCs, Forums and Workshops)

**Gisborne (Helen Jerome):** Gisborne PS, Bullengarook PS, Macedon PS, Mt Macedon PS, Gisborne SC (SRCs, Forums and Workshops)

**Irymple (Paula Bruce):** Cardross PS, Irymple PS, Irymple South PS, Nichols Point PS, Irymple SC (Inter-school Curriculum Links)

**Keilor (Carol Castano):** Keilor PS, Keilor Downs PS, Calder Rise PS, Taylors Lake PS, Mary McKillop PS, Kealba SC, Keilor Downs SC (SRCs, JSCs)

**Knox (Jan Dwyer):** Fairhills HS, Fairfords PS, Knoxfield PS, Knox Gardens PS, Scoresby Heights PS, Scoresby SC, St Jude the Apostle (JSCs, Forums and Workshops)

**Melton (Liz Moody):** Melton PS, Wedge Park PS, Coburn PS, St Catherine’s PS, Wilson Park SC, Kurunjang SC, Melton SC, Melton South PS, Melton West PS (Negotiated Curriculum, Inter-School Curriculum Links)

**Mirboo North (Stav Kostarakis):** Mirboo North PS, Mirboo North SC, Boolarra PS, Boolarra South PS, Budgeree PS, Thorpdale PS, Mardon South PS, Narracan PS (Cross-Age Tutoring, SRCs, JSCs)

**North Carlton (Ruth Modulan):** Princes Hill SC, Princes Hill PS, Baltara Special School, Carlton North PS, Carlton PS, Brunswick South PS (JSCs, Workshops and Forums)

**Northcote (Leigh Cook/Maria Axarlis):** Northcote PS, Wales Street PS, Westgarth PS, Thornbury PS, Fairfield PS, Fairfield North PS, Croxton Special School, Northcote HS, Thornbury SC, Penders Grove PS, Alphington PS, Darebin Parklands SC, St Mary’s PS, St Joseph’s PS (JSCs, Workshops and Forums)

**Preston (Mark McAuliffe):** Preston South PS, Bell PS, Preston West PS, Newlands PS, Newlands SC, Preston Girls SC, Preston SC (Inter-school Curriculum Links, JSCs, Forums and Workshops, Youth Councils)

**Preston East (Lidia Horvat):** Preston East TS, Preston East HS, Preston East PS, Preston North East PS, Cowervile PS, Preston SDS (Inter-school Curriculum Links, JSCs, Forums and Workshops, Youth Councils)

**Reservoir (Margaret Brown):** Preston PS, East Reservoir PS, Reservoir SC, Kingsbury PS, Kingsbury SC, Rosebank PS (Inter-school Curriculum Links, JSCs, Forums and Workshops, Youth Councils)

**Shepparton (Dominic Nardi):** Wanganui Park SC, Shepparton HS, Shepparton South SC, North Shepparton SC, Moorooroo SC, Wilmot Road PS, Moorooroo Park PS (Student Network)

**South Barwon (Jennifer Kamp):** Bellaire PS, Grovedale West PS, Mandana PS, Montpellier PS, Oberon PS, Belmont HS, Grovedale SC, Oberon SC (Forums and Workshops, Student Network, Youth Council)

**Traralgon (Faye Wise):** Traralgon PS, Grey Street PS, Stockdale Road PS, Kosciusko PS, Liddiard Road PS, Traralgon East PS, St Michael’s, Traralgon Heights SC, Traralgon HS, Traralgon South PS (SRCs, JSCs)

**Wangaratta (Peter Barnes):** Wangaratta SC, Appin Park PS, Wangaratta West PS, Yarrunga PS, Wangaratta SDS (SRCs, JSCs, Forums and Workshops, Student Network)

**West Heidelberg (Julie Walton):** Bellfield PS, Heidelberg Heights PS, Banksia SC, Heidelberg West PS, Olympic Village PS, St Pius X PS (Inter-School Curriculum Links)

*Connect August 1991*
NAT TO AIR AGAIN

Northern Access Television will be broadcasting again in the northern Melbourne suburbs of Preston, Reservoir and West Heidelberg from September 2nd to 15th (see the article in Connect 68). Some of the programs put to air last year will be repeated, but new programs have also been made by schools in the area. Tune into Channel 31 (UHF band - near Channel 28) to see examples of student participation in production and content. Enquiries to Mark McAuliffe on (03) 354 2513 or Rick Thompson on (03) 460 6922.

FOXFIRE MATERIALS

On their recent visit, staff and students from the Foxfire project brought much valuable material. There will be a full run-down in the next issue of Connect, however the following should whet the appetite:

Shining Moments: a 1-hour video on the Foxfire approach to teaching. Connect has a copy for loan - $5 to cover postage (loans for a week or less please; call us with requests). The Victorian Country Education Project also has a 10-minute version of this video - (03) 329 5677.

Hands On: the latest issue of the Foxfire teachers' magazine contains extensive case studies from the various US networks.

Encore: a 'compilation of sociological studies' from a High School in Tacoma, Washington - examples of action/research by secondary students.

Sometimes a Shining Moment, Foxfire: 25 Years and A Foxfire Christmas: all should be available very shortly. Order forms on the rear page of this issue of Connect.

Also: interest and orders taken for You and Aunt Arie (the 'how-to-do-it' guide to student publishing of oral history and other magazines) and for Moments (Wigginton's first book on the Foxfire principles) - about $15 and $8 respectively (plus postage of $5 each).

Changing Schools

In addition to the material contained in this issue of Connect, the Victorian School Community Development Program has published a booklet of articles by and about the work of its School Community Offices. Changing Schools contains information about programs and projects: 'A Focus on Students', 'Parent empowerment and the curriculum', 'Transition', 'Networking' and 'Assisting Change'. Copies are available from the School Councils and Participation Unit, Victorian Ministry of Education and Training, GPO Box 4367, Melbourne 3001.

Young People's Incorporation Kit

There are many good reasons to incorporate an association - to protect members, to be able to receive grants and so on. However, the legal steps often appear complicated and mysterious. This kit is designed to be used by people who are not familiar with setting up and running their own organisation. Clear explanations, examples to follow and copies of standard forms are all included.

The kit has been produced by the Victorian Youth Advocacy Network with funding from the Victorian Law Foundation and the Legal Aid Commission of Victoria. Copies are available from the Victorian Youth Advocacy Network for $4 (plus postage). Contact them at 1st floor, 113 Queens Parade, Clifton Hill 3068; phone: (03) 481 1488.

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:

PATRON SUBSCRIBERS ($20 pa):

Daryl Nation (Moe, Vic)
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A S Gill (Jingili, NT)
Dr Les Mayes (Moonee Ponds, Vic)
Victoria Triggs (Alphington, Vic)
Bruce Wilson (Flemington, Vic)
Kerry Howard (Ballarat, Vic)
Bill Stringer (Parkville, Vic)
Local and 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:

Gippsland SRC Newsletter (Gippsland Regional Office, Vic) No 1, July '91
Liberte (ACSA Conference, Adelaide, SA) - daily conference newspaper
A Green Strategy for Schools (Adelaide, SA) - SCoffs/EYA
State Council of Students Annual Conference (Adelaide, SA) 1990 booklet

OVERSEAS STUDENT PUBLICATIONS:

Encore (Governor John R Rogers HS, Washington, USA) Vol 1, Spring 1990
Foxfire (Rabun Gap, Georgia, USA) Vol 24 No 1 (#91) Spring '90

OTHER PUBLICATIONS:

Collective Notes (COSHG, Vic) Nos 63, 64; July, August 1991
City Beat (City of Berwick, Vic) Autumn 1991
Young Leaders Program Report (City of Berwick, Vic) 1990
Schools Programs (City of Berwick, Vic) 1990
Young People’s Incorporation Kit (VYN, Vic)
AERO-Gramme (AERO, New York, USA) Summer 1991
Options (Youth Bureau, Canberra, ACT) June, July 1991
NIE Update (ANPA, USA) Vol 17 No 2; March/April/May 1991
Kids Contact (Freedom From Hunger, SA) No 4, Social Justice
Shining Moments: The Foxfire Approach to Teaching (Foxfire, USA) - video
Communication Research Trends (UK) Vol 11, No 1
Youth Power (Development Education Group, SA) No 10

Focus on the Learner: Senior Schooling Curriculum Framework (Dept. of Education, Q)
Lib Ed (UK) No 16, Summer 1991
Chalkface (Ministry of Education, Vic) Vol 11, No 1, Feb 1991
Network News (Surry Hills, NSW) June 1991
Hands On (Foxfire, USA) No 37/38, Fall/Winter 1990
Media 3 (Rusden, Vic) No 36, June 1991
SCIP Newsletter (SCIP, Red Cross, Vic) No 14, June 1991

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 list is available in Connect 46/47 - to October 1987.)

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