In this issue: stories about Students Swamping, Publishing, Networking, Mediating, Supporting
In This Issue

Two important meetings/conferences loom in November. Both should be of interest to Connect readers.

On November 8th, Connect is co-sponsoring with the Victorian Country Education Project, a full-day meeting of teachers who might be interested to take part in training courses or form an active network of practising teachers along the lines suggested by recent visits of personnel from Foxfire. Details of this meeting are on page 17 of this issue - please copy this page for school noticeboards etc. This issue of Connect contains a substantial background section drawn from materials of the Foxfire Teacher Outreach Program - which supports several such courses and networks in the US, and is keen to develop a supportive relationship with Australian teachers.

The articles on the Nathalia book Times Have Changed, and the Sherbrooke Swamp Project, illustrate two very different approaches based on these principles.

And the principles aren’t new to us! Long before the Foxfire visits, we have been documenting and supporting many such examples of student participation in Australian schools. What Foxfire brings is a formalisation of these familiar principles, an attention to academic rigour, and the possibilities for wider linkages and support.

As mentioned in previous issues, we have a mass of material around the Foxfire project for sale or loan or browsing - and a lot of this will be available on Nov. 8th.

Possible network arrangements could be linked with on-going post-graduate training for teachers in this area, and discussions are underway about such courses. If you are interested to pursue a M.Ed. in this way, this will also be discussed on the 8th.

The other important event is the Second National Child Poverty and Education Conference to be held in Melbourne from 13th - 15th November. Connect is particularly interested to encourage presentations by students or about student participation approaches in this area - a perspective that is, so far, lacking in the program. Perhaps you’ve been studying child poverty; perhaps you’ve made a video or audio tape; perhaps you’d like to talk about your community research. There are many possibilities for offering a workshop or discussion group.

And the Conference would also like to publish a daily ‘paper’ put together by students. If you’re already doing that at school, here’s a chance to work in a wider setting.

Contact Connect if you’re interested in any of these. More details of the Conference are contained on page 25 of this issue.

Next Issue

Deadline for the December issue (#72 - 12 years!) is November 15th. We’d hope to include material coming out of the two events mentioned above, plus further information about Northern Access Television ... and the 1991 Junior School Council Register - the listing of primary schools with JSCs. To be in it - let us know details of your JSC by November 15th.

Roger Holdsworth

Connect October 1991
TIMES HAVE CHANGED

By: Nathalia Secondary College Students, together with Lyn Loger and Linda Gallus

Remember the Nathalia Barmah Forest Book that secondary students from Nathalia (Victoria) wrote about in February of this year? (Connect 67)

Well, it turned into *Times Have Changed* - an A4, soft cover, 84-page book launched this August. It follows the *Foxfire* philosophy which is about (in part) students researching and publishing their own books.

Sixty students from the Nathalia Secondary College were involved in production of this book, and there was also input in the form of poetry and drawings from community members and other students from the primary and secondary schools.

By June 1991 (12 months after we started) we had reached the stage where we invited Roger Holdsworth to come up and help us with design and layout. We had so much information all over the place on these computer disks!

We had employed six of us on the book committee to do work experience on the book, two per week. We'd worked like crazy, typing everything up, but it was everywhere! We can certainly tell you what not to do when writing a book.

In the July holidays, we were still at school, still designing pages. Have a listen in: "I'll never finish this! ... How did you do that? ... I'm never eating chocolates again! ... Where's the food? ... Who's picking up the order from the Milk Bar this time? - no fish for me...Whose turn to sell raffle tickets down the street? (We raffled a painting donated to us by Mrs Gallus, to help with the printing costs.) ... Oh no! I've lost a whole page!"

And so the days passed in a sort of ordered chaos.

But we made it. Here's Michelle and Mrs Loger to tell you their versions. Mind you, we all have our own versions, but these two were the ones printed:

HARD WORK, BUT FUN

When the students agreed to the teachers' suggestion about making a book, I didn't know anything about it. I started off as a photography student just taking photos for the book. I was just told to take photos of buildings around Nathalia. It wasn't until later that I found out what I was taking photos for.

But this year I chose Writers' Workshop as one of my electives and I'm glad I did now. Mrs Loger, our teacher, told our class that we had to form a committee. She said that the book would involve a lot of commitment. The students then nominated other students for positions on the committee, except I nominated myself for President and all the other students agreed. At that time I didn't think there would be that much work for the book. Ever since the first day to the last day of being President, it has been hard work, but also fun.

I didn't realise how hard it was to teach a class until now. I have had to organise an activity for each person every lesson, and believe me some of the students didn't like what they were told to do, but I had to push them and tell them it would all be worthwhile at the end of this long journey.

I have attended many different kids of meetings, updating everyone on how the book has been going, with Vice President Kylie Holyman coming along to support me. Many thanks to teachers, parents, students and all the people who were interviewed, who have helped the students complete this book.

Michelle James
WE MADE IT

Today we're putting the book together, with the help of Roger Holdsworth from Connect magazine. With only the help from Roger? No! If ever there was a community effort, here's this book to prove it.

The number of students, parents, teachers and community members who have helped us is staggering. We can't list them all, but they will recognise, by the skills they taught us, or by the way they made rough patches smooth, how they were an essential part of this book.

The process has been as much a celebration of community as are the stories of the people here.

Let me tell you how it all started.

Last year (1990), a Foxfire workshop was run in Nathalia by Eliot Wigginton from the USA, and Chris and Lee, two of his students, told us how they wrote and published their own books.

The timing was right; we were ready for such an idea and strong student participation was already a characteristic of this schools.

We received a grant of $1435 from the Statewide Initiatives Committee (of the Victorian Country Education Project), set up a student-run committee to administer the grant, and off we set!

"Change in a rural community" was our theme.

We had three electives working on this: The Barmah Forest Elective with Kathy McDonald, the Photography Elective with Linda Gallus and the Writers' Workshop Elective with Lyn Loger.

We went into the community we went to interview people and take photographs. John Brennan, a professional photographer, came and spent a day with us in the flooded Barmah Forest. Mick Kelsall, author of A Riverman's Story, came and spent time with us, wrote us stories and suggested people we should interview.

Interviews? We ended up with too many people that we wanted to interview. There are whole books to be written from the wealth of our community. There's the drovers' lives, so many war experiences, the voices of women who haven't been heard, an amazing richness of material. We couldn't cover it all.

Roger came and spent a day helping to organise our ideas.

Mick sent us a donation of $100. Then he died. Reality set in. With his loss, many of the students recognised the preciousness of what we were doing. They decided to dedicate the book to his memory.

At the end of 1990, we invited all the people we had interviewed along for a big exhibition of what we had achieved and gave them small Christmas boxes to show our appreciation.

Time for a rest.

This year? It's been amazing. The book evolved, and evolved is the right word to choose, to its present form.

We were published in Connect magazine.

The Gulf War led to students putting in a section on War, because Marc Gemmill had recently been a student here.

Linda Gallus and Bela Angyal (sculptor) started up Life Drawing Classes at the school.

Next we were invited over to Tasmania. Great excitement; we have so much to talk about now.

Then Julie Taylor, the Regional Children's Librarian, offered us a donation of $250 to help us with the printing of our book. She had earlier arranged for author Morag Loh to visit our school and talk on interviewing skills.

That's how it has been all year - people reaching out and offering a hand. It says a lot for these students that they have generated this enthusiasm, on other people's part, to join in and assist them with their goal.

It says a lot for this school too, with the flexible way it is run, that students have been able to develop as they have. Thanks to Geoff Durham, Acting Principal last year, and Stan Lowe, Principal this year.

So, with a Statewide Initiative Grant, stacks of help from the Country Education project (through Gordon Dowell) and Eliot's Foxfire experience as an inspiration, we have made it.

Kathy McDonald's love of the environment, Linda Gallus' love of photography and my love of writing, caught us together for this adventure. But it was the students who made the journey and it was the people interviewed who helped create what this book it - a celebration of community.

I hope it's only the first of such books to come out of Nathalia.

Lyn Loger
Here's where we come from:

If you would like one of our books, they cost $15 plus $2 postage. Write to Nathalia Secondary College, PO Box 42, Nathalia 3638.

Is it really that good? We thought so. The response we got at the launch was tremendous.

We had 277 copies of the book printed, but we can reprint if we get more orders. We've nearly sold all the books already, paid all our debts and will have money left over for another student project to begin.

What will it be? We don't know yet. We're producing a calendar right now, using some of the dozens of photographs Mrs Gallus' students produced. Roger suggested this idea last year - now we're doing it.

Here are some of the drawings of the students, put together in the book into one design. The students come from primary and secondary schools.

Here's an old photo we were loaned and a photo of a grave that we took ourselves. We have people contacting us now with stories and photos as Mr Barrass did.
TIMES HAVE CHANGED
BOOK LAUNCH

We would like to invite you to the
"Times Have Changed"
book launch to be held in the Dancok's room on the
Friday 16th August 1991 at 1.30pm.
There will be displays around the room which can be viewed.
Afternoon tea will be served at 2.30pm after the launch.
We would love to have you come.
If you would like any more information, please ring the school 9.00am-3.30pm 662331
( Please ask for Mrs Loger)
After hours  662208 (ask for Kylie)
691281 (ask for Michelle)

"Times Have Changed"
Nathalia and Barmah book Committee

R.S.V.P    10th August 1991
THE LAUNCH

We found the launch without much difficulty - Nathalia's not a big town. If we'd expected a few people in a room saying nice things about students, our illusions were quickly shattered.

For a start, the launch was in the town sporting centre - in the gymnasiun. It was packed! The whole town - plus some - must have been there.

The students from the book ran the whole show. Not a teacher in evidence up front. They introduced the launch, explained their roles in the book, talked about great moments and potential disasters and then invited all those interviewed and those who'd helped to come forward an accept a copy.

They've obviously been chairing celebrations all their lives! They negotiated around those who wanted to make speeches and read poems, covered for those not present and made everyone who'd been touched by this project so proud to be there.

Well done.

*Times Have Changed* is a great book, the result of a great process and, hopefully, a great model for Nathalia and other schools to follow. Thanks for letting me be a small part of it.

Roger Holdsworth

FOLLOW UP

Since production of the book, there have been several further exciting events.

In June, we travelled to Wangaratta to meet with students from Bright Secondary College who are starting a similar project. There we had a workshop with Eliot Wigginton from *Foxfire* and with Robbie and Scott who came from America with him. Here's Eliot talking at that workshop:

SHEPPARTON SCHOOL SUPPORT CENTRE
WORKSHOP

We've been asked to run workshops on how we made the book. We've been to Shepparton School Support Centre for a workshop organised through John Howley as part of the Disadvantaged Schools Program. Nathalia Secondary College students spoke to staff and students from three Shepparton schools, and ran workshops on how to begin planning for a project such as ours. Next term we're going to Apollo Bay for another workshop and then to Tasmania for more workshops.

By the time we have finished all these workshops, we will really have a reasonable sort of 'how-to' manual put together. And we also have to teach Mrs Loger and Mrs Gallus how to use the 'Publish It' software properly.
We were nominated through the Ministry of Education for the Curriculum Innovation Award. This shows us going to Benalla for the Regional Finals:

We were thrilled to hear that we'd won the Regional Finals. So it's off to the Rialto for the State Finals on 30th October.

Times Have Changed Book Committee
Nathalia Secondary College
PO Box 42, Nathalia 3638
THE FOXFIRE APPROACH: PERSPECTIVES AND CORE PRACTICES

**Perspectives**

This revision of what was entitled “Nine Core Practices” reflects the latest in our collective thinking about the principles and practices characteristic of the approach to instruction we pursue. The principles and practices are not scriptural; they are not oracular. They come from reflections and discussions on the results of classroom instruction. In time, we will refine them again to reflect the best of our thinking.

This approach to instruction is one of several promising approaches, some of which share many of the same principles. We’ve found that as each of us explores this approach in our classrooms, we broaden the base of experience from which we all work, often engaging other, resonant approaches and strategies. The approach never becomes a “recipe” for any teaching situation, nor a one-best-way teaching methodology that can be grasped through one-shot, in-service programs or teacher “handbooks.”

In the contexts in which most of us work, few of us will be able to say that our instruction manifests all of these “core practices.” Being able to assert that is not the point. The point is to constantly review our instructional practices to find ways to engage each core practice. For when that happens, we and our students experience the most elegant and powerful results this approach can deliver.

The goal of schooling—and of this approach to instruction—is a more effective and humane democratic society. Individual development through schooling is a means to that goal. Often given rhetorical approval while being ignored in practice, that goal should infuse every teaching strategy and classroom activity.

As students become more thoughtful participants in their own education, our goal must be to help them become increasingly able and willing to guide their own learning, fearlessly, for the rest of their lives. Through constant evaluation of experience, and examination and application of the curriculum, they approach a state of independence, of responsible behavior, and even, in the best of all worlds, of something called wisdom.

**Core Practices**

1) All the work teachers and students do together must flow from student desire, student concerns. It must be infused from the beginning with student choice, design, revision, execution, reflection and evaluation. Teachers, of course, are still responsible for assessing and ministering to their students’ developmental needs.

Most problems that arise during classroom activities must be solved in collaboration with students. When one asks, “Here’s a situation that just came up. I don’t know what to do about it. What should I do?” the teacher turns that question back to the class to wrestle with and solve, rather than simply answering it. Students are trusted continually, and all are led to the point where they embrace responsibility.

2) Therefore, the role of the teacher must be that of collaborator and team leader and guide rather than boss. The teacher monitors the academic and social growth of every student, leading each into new areas of understanding and competence.

And the teacher’s attitude toward students, toward the work of the class, and toward the content area being taught must model the attitudes expected of students—attitudes and values required to function thoughtfully and responsibly in a democratic society.

3) The academic integrity of the work must be absolutely clear. Each teacher should embrace state- or local-mandated skill content lists as “givens” to be engaged by the class, accomplish them to the level of mastery in the course of executing the class’s plan, but go far beyond their normally narrow confines to discover the value and potential inherent in the content area being taught and its connections to other disciplines.

4) The work is characterized by student action, rather than passive receipt of processed information. Rather than students doing what they already know how to do, all must be led continually into new work and unfamiliar territory. Once skills are “won,” they must be reapplied to new problems in new ways.

Because in such classrooms students are always...
operating at the very edge of their competence, it must also be made clear to them that the consequence of mistakes is not failure, but positive, constructive scrutiny of those mistakes by the rest of the class in an atmosphere where students will never be embarrassed.

5) A constant feature of the process is its emphasis on peer teaching, small group work and teamwork. Every student in the room is not only included, but needed, and in the end, each student can identify his or her specific stamp upon the effort. In a classroom thus structured, discipline tends to take care of itself and ceases to be an issue.

6) Connections between the classroom work and surrounding communities and the real world outside the classroom are clear. The content of all courses is connected to the world in which the students live. For many students, the process will engage them for the first time in identifying and characterizing the communities in which they reside.

Whenever students research larger issues like changing climate patterns, or acid rain, or prejudice, or AIDS, they must "bring them home," identifying attitudes about and illustrations and implications of those issues in their own environments.

7) There must be an audience beyond the teacher for student work. It may be another individual, or a small group, or the community, but it must be an audience the students want to serve, or engage, or impress. The audience, in turn, must affirm that the work is important and is needed and is worth doing—and it should, indeed, be all of those.

8) As the year progresses, new activities should spiral gracefully out of the old, incorporating lessons learned from past experiences, building on skills and understandings that can now be amplified. Rather than a finished product being regarded as the conclusion of a series of activities, it should be regarded as the starting point for a new series.

The questions that should characterize each moment of closure or completion should be, "Now what? What do we know now, and know how to do now, that we didn't know when we started out together? How can we use those skills and that information in some new, more complex and interesting ways? What's next?"

9) As teachers, we must acknowledge the worth of aesthetic experience, model that attitude in our interactions with students, and resist the momentum of policies and practices that deprive students of the chance to use their imaginations. We should help students produce work that is aesthetically satisfying, and help them derive the principles we employ to create beautiful work.

Because they provide the greatest sense of completeness, of the whole, of richness—the most powerful experiences are aesthetic. From those experiences we develop our capacities to appreciate, to refine, to express, to enjoy, to break out of restrictive, unproductive modes of thought.

10) Reflection— some conscious, thoughtful time to stand apart from the work itself—is an essential activity that must take place at key points throughout the work. It is the activity that evokes insights and nurtures revisions in our plans. It is also the activity we are least accustomed to doing, and therefore the activity we will have to be the most rigorous in including, and for which we will have to help students develop skills.

11) The work must include unstintingly honest, ongoing evaluation for skills and content, and changes in student attitude. A variety of strategies should be employed, in combination with pre-and post-testing, ranging from simple tests of recall of simple facts through much more complex instruments involving student participation in the creation of demonstrations that answer the teacher challenge, "In what ways will you prove to me at the end of this program that you have mastered the objectives it has been designed to serve?"

Students should be trained to monitor their own progress and devise their own remediation plans, and they should be brought to the point where they can understand that the progress of each student is the concern of every student in the room.

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The issue is introduced with the following statement: "Back when the Foxfire approach was first being articulated, three primary elements were identified as critical to the real success of a classroom undertaking:

* students were actively involved in it, from the ground up - ie it was 'hands on';
* it was connected in a significant way to the community (broadly defined) or had a real audience 'out there';
* it was not done just for fun or to make the students feel good, but was academically sound - that is, it directly engaged the curriculum requirements and either met or exceeded them."

The following three pages introduced articles in Hands On grouped to illustrate these three elements.

Articles in this issue of Hands On provide practical illustration of this approach to education - at primary, middle and senior levels. A 'mini-magazine' within this issue also outlines the development of the Eastern Kentucky Teachers Network. "Taken together with the analyses of individual classroom activities, the articles in the centre section provide not only a comprehensive view of a beginning teachers' network but also a sense of the dynamics between individual teacher and network - and the consequences for both."
The work is hands on...

I never realized how much the students had internalized the idea of group decision making and planning. Until the morning of the revolt!

—Karen Adkins

The students looked at each other, and then they looked at me suspiciously (especially the ones I had taught the year before). Then I said, “OK, how do you want to learn these skills and how can we make our learning memorable?” Suspicious glances really flew about the room then! One student who had signed up for the class for the second year finally said, “Same as last year.”

—Diane Mitchell

[My students] first tried to write [their funding proposal] as a group on the chalk board. It basically came out, “We want to write a book, and we need money.” I would not accept this. But they said, “We can’t do this. We don’t know what to say. You do it.” One student added, “You’re the teacher. That’s your job.”

—Maggie Cox

The work is characterized by student action, rather than passive receipt of processed information.

Rather than students doing what they already know how to do, all must be led continually into new work and unfamiliar territory. Once skills are “won,” they must be reapplied to new problems in new ways.

Because in such classrooms students are always operating at the very edge of their competence, it must also be made clear to them that the consequence of mistakes is not failure, but positive, constructive scrutiny of those mistakes by the rest of the class in an atmosphere where students will never be embarrassed.

Okie Thompson (video operator), Charles Endicott (with camera), and Leo Endicott document local flora and fauna for their David School science class.

Photo: Susan Walker
Connections between the classroom work and surrounding communities and the real world outside the classroom are clear.

The content of all courses is connected to the world in which the students live. For many students, the process will engage them for the first time in identifying and characterizing the communities in which they reside.

Whenever students research larger issues like changing climate patterns, or acid rain, or prejudice, or AIDS, they must "bring them home," identifying attitudes about and illustrations and implications of those issues in their own environments.

When, after eight years of teaching, I finally had sense enough to ask the children why they didn't like their reading book, their answers jumped out like grasshoppers: "I don't know any of those people." "These people don't live like us." "They don't look like us either." "They are so rich." "It's boring." "It doesn't have good stories." "It tells about places far away and not here."

—Linda Oxendine

Students who teachers had said would not write for anything began literally filling up boxes with their work.... Their enthusiasm was contagious. Soon parents, as well as brothers, sisters, and friends, wanted to share their stories.... As a side benefit I began developing a special relationship with the TMH and peer tutors' parents. The communication miracle spread outside our classroom into our area.

—Marti Wilson

These young people began the semester expecting to read about Kentucky and about people who were important in Kentucky.... As they began to realize how Eastern Kentucky had been ignored [in their history text], they became at first confused, then outraged. They asked, "How come Floyd County never gets a mention?" "What about coal mining? Doesn't that count as part of Kentucky's economy?"

—Kathy Hanon
...and has academic integrity.

Over the course of the year, the students had grown from dictating lists on the chalkboard to letting their ambitions soar high enough to want to make a class video to send to their first-grade friends in all the states that had responded to them over the year.

—Judy Bryson

We did so many things throughout the year; we covered all mandated objectives; we made decisions and choices about how, where and when we wanted to learn; we became team workers and leaders and took on responsibilities; we even became a little proud of ourselves as a class and as individuals.

—Norma Eversole

I've understood that we are supposed to teach certain values (i.e. honesty, equality, cooperation, democracy), but they are not built into the system as it is. Schooling has been set up for competitive learning, which values the person who can achieve, whatever the cost—
a value that has little to do with honesty, equality, etc.

—Melva Sue Priddy-Howard

The academic integrity of the work must be absolutely clear.

Each teacher should embrace state- or local-mandated skill content lists as “givens” to be engaged by the class, accomplish them to the level of mastery in the course of executing the class’s plan, but go far beyond their normally narrow confines to discover the value and potential inherent in the content area being taught and its connections to other disciplines.

Martti Wilson's students talk about their work as a Headwaters Television crew from Appalshop records them at Berea. Such presentations help students reflect on and process what they've learned.

Photo: Al Edwards.
A TEACHER NETWORK?

THE NEXT STEPS

After two visits from staff and students from Foxfire, we need to consider what the implications are for Australian schools of this approach to learning. One proposal has been to establish one or more networks of practising teachers to learn together, to explore what a hands-on, democratic, community-based and academically sound teaching approach might mean.

What is distinctive about Foxfire? Does it differ from what we've called 'student participation'? Are these approaches already in operation in Australia? What further challenges exist?

If a Network were formed, what would it entail? What commitment would be expected of teachers? What training could be provided? Are there possibilities for linking such a Network to postgraduate courses for practising teachers?

As background to such questions, the following information is drawn from two papers published by the Foxfire Teacher Outreach Program and from informal notes from the Program's coordinator. These ideas will be discussed further at the Teacher Network meeting on November 8th. Full copies of the Foxfire papers will be sent to all people registering to attend this meeting.

FOXFIRE TEACHER OUTREACH

Foxfire Background

In 1966, during his first year of teaching ninth and tenth grade English in a 250 pupil high school in the Appalachian Mountains of Northeast Georgia, USA, Eliot Wigginton helped his students found a quarterly magazine that they named Foxfire. The magazine struggled for years to stay afloat. In 1972, a selection of articles from the magazine was published in book form by Doubleday. The Foxfire Book has long since passed three million copies in print. The following years saw publication of eight additional volumes from Doubleday and four from E P Dutton. All royalties from the sale of these books go to the Foxfire Fund to fund other activities it now sponsors within Rabun County High School and the surrounding community.

The specific work of Foxfire, begun before any of its current students were born, is based on philosophical theories that are as old as education itself. What makes Foxfire so triumphantly unique, however, is that rather than being a proposal for a program that might exist in a public school, Foxfire does exist. It stands as one example of a style of education that has the power to change students' lives towards intellectual competence and civic responsibility.

The education philosophy that guides the instruction (see "The Foxfire Approach: Perspectives and Core Practices") evolved during the experience of publishing the Foxfire magazine and books. That experience confirmed that students learn more efficiently when they have a genuine voice in planning what happens in their classrooms, when the learning prepares them for situations they see as relevant to the real world, when they produce a product that will be valued by a real audience outside the classroom, and when the state-mandated academic agenda is engaged in a meaningful way, not just through teacher-initiated coverage of the material.

At core, the Foxfire approach is a style of teaching which demands student mastery of the academic agenda through its use in the creation of real work in the real world. Articulated in theory by educational philosophers for over a hundred years, and implemented sporadically here and there, Foxfire has put it into practice with dramatic success. It is a style of education that is democratic, intensely collaborative, problem solving, project centred, community based, and academically rigorous. At minimum, it produces students who are at least competent in the basic skills; at best, it produces those creative, problem solving individuals most in
demand by corporations, institutions, and by society itself.

Requests from teachers for information on the Foxfire magazine project, general and specific aspects (eg "How do you keep the students on task?", "How did you get this funded?"), began early in the program and have grown steadily throughout the last two decades. Publication of the Foxfire books, Sometimes a Shining Moment, and presentations by Foxfire staff have all led to requests by schools, organisations, colleges and universities for presentations, workshops and formal education courses on how to use the Foxfire approach to instruction. Substantial grant funding led to the formation of Foxfire's Teacher Outreach program.

Teacher Outreach

In 1985, Doubleday published Sometimes a Shining Moment: The Foxfire Experience, Eliot Wigginton's attempt to explain the Foxfire approach to other teachers, with specific advice to those who might want to attempt the approach in their own classrooms. In 1986, Foxfire was offered a major five-year grant to institute a more organised effort to help teachers improve the quality of learning in their classrooms and address directly the issue of literacy development.

The Teacher Outreach program decided to confine its initial work to five distinct, intriguing areas of the USA. They were drawn to each through fascinating challenges each offered: a dropout rate of over 50% in the Kentucky mountains, for example, and the possibility of an urban demonstration project in Atlanta. In each region, the plan was to initiate a series of graduate-level courses for practising public school teachers, K-12, through a college or university that had a school of education that was well-respected by regional professionals. The purpose of the course would be to explore the approach with teachers, relate it to both historical antecedents and the current reform movement, examine with teachers their specific state-mandated educational goals, and then help them design activities for their classes that would meet those goals squarely and in a fashion consistent with the Foxfire approach. The course, as described in the February 1989 Harvard Education Review article "Foxfire Grows Up", was designed to be a distinctive experience: throughout the course, the approach would be modelled.

All too aware that teachers frequently "don't get it", or "can't really do it" after a one or two week course, a second part of the plan was to provide continuing guidance and encouragement for those teachers who elected to actually try with their students the educational practices they had just studied. To accomplish this, Foxfire Teacher Outreach encouraged the course participants to form a network, and hired a coordinator at each location to help nurture a strong regional network of trained teachers. Network teachers would not only be practitioners of the philosophy and mutually supportive colleagues, but would also collaborate to test and refine the approach in diverse environments, creating materials for teachers nationally that would be both useful and trustworthy.

Teacher Outreach 1991

The Teacher Outreach initiative now includes ten fully-functioning networks of teachers in eight states in the US, with three additional affiliate groups working towards network status. Within each of these networks, member teachers are testing and refining the pedagogy in diverse public and private school environments, grades K-12, across the curriculum.

Five networks have full-time coordinators; the other five have part-time coordinators, with duties at their respective institutions. As the teacher networks have grown and developed, they have become more closely associated with one another, sharing ideas and resources, collaborating on projects, and planning for the day when the networks will function in affiliation as a working consortium of practising teachers.

The coordinators, teachers, and their students have taken increasing responsibility for the Foxfire courses now taught throughout the USA - helping both to plan and teach them. In many of the 19 courses taught in the summer of 1990 (15 Level 1 and 4 Level 2), Foxfire staff members participated for only a day or two, if at all. There is a large amount of cross-network participation: coordinators and teachers from several networks will participate in the teaching of each course - accredited courses for practising teachers taught by teams of practising teachers and current students.

Beginning in September 1990, network coordinators started meeting quarterly to discuss overall Teacher Outreach business and their own individual network concerns.

LINKING WITH FOXFIRE TEACHER OUTREACH

The Teacher Outreach Program suggests several ways to participate and contribute:

* subscription to the more-or-less quarterly journal for teachers, Hands On;
* enrol a cadre of colleagues in one of the courses/workshops for teachers and agree to counsel each other over rough spots, or work out arrangements for support by a nearby Foxfire network;
establish computer link-ups with other Foxfire-type teachers;
* start your own network of Foxfire-inspired colleagues, without affiliating with Foxfire Teacher Outreach (but it is noted that use of the name Foxfire is legally restricted to those networks and initiatives approved by Teacher Outreach);
* connect with a nearby network - attend meetings etc;
* visit classrooms of Foxfire-trained teachers;
* submit to Hands On case studies of your own efforts to implement Foxfire-style instruction in your own classroom;
* participate in any open activities sponsored by networks or Teacher Outreach;
* use the course guides in appropriate courses.

Many of these ideas are specifically appropriate to US-based teachers, thought Connect plays a similar role in publication of case studies and servicing networks in Australia.

Teacher Outreach goes on to outline the process of forming a Foxfire-affiliated network. This usually begins in one of three ways:

1. Teacher Outreach responds to a request to conduct a course for teachers at a college or university, with the understanding that the institution is committed to helping start a network;
2. a delegation of teachers comes from one region to a Foxfire course in another region, then returns to take the process from there;
3. Teacher Outreach makes an introductory presentation for a group of interested teachers who, if interest is high enough, arrange for the full course to be offered in their area, or send a group to one of the other courses.

A course or a workshop, however, is only the beginning. A system of support for individual teachers as they begin to implement the approach in their classes has to be arranged. These have been formalised into a set of guidelines that cover areas of:

A. provisions for offering the Foxfire course, or staff development workshops, for teachers at least once a year;
B. provisions for an on-going system of support for teachers participating in the courses and workshops as they implement the approach in their classes;
C. expectations of the network;
D. benefits to networks.

POSSIBILITIES IN AUSTRALIA

Informal discussion with the Foxfire Teacher Outreach Program has suggested that a formally affiliated network might not be the most appropriate direction to go. Issues of distance, time and cost, and of relation to cultural and educational conditions means that a more 'independent' status might be needed.

However, pedagogical connections between Australian developments and the Foxfire networks - with some kind of programmatic, systematic, predictable pattern, does seem to make sense. They have suggested that the following possibilities should be explored:

* regular correspondence between groups;
* a sequence of visits between teachers, preferably with pairs of teachers from each country - week or fortnight long exchanges;
* student-initiated programs of information exchange dealing with substantive curricular matters - US/Australian policies/politics/practices, Persian Gulf/Middle East - via video, audio, newspapers, clippings exchange;
* cultural view swaps - US students doing a unit on Australia and vice versa;
* student group visits, probably following a year of information exchanges like the above;
* involving interested Australian teachers in one of our Level 1 courses (June-August), perhaps in Seattle;
* a group of US Foxfire trained teachers go to Australia to conduct a two-week workshop for interested teachers;
* a conference, in Australia, of Foxfire teachers around whole language learning, cooperative learning, new curriculum approaches etc.

All of these possibilities would have continuing spin-offs which would maintain the momentum.

So, where do we go? The meeting on November 8th will be important to gauge interest in and commitment to taking these possibilities further. See you there.

Roger Holdsworth

Page 16 Connect October 1991
If you are a classroom teacher who wants to work with others to develop exciting, rigorous, democratic, participatory, community-linked, hands-on approaches ... this is an

INVITATION

TO THE FIRST MEETING OF A TEACHER NETWORK

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 8th 1991

10.00 am - 4.00 pm
(Registration 9.30 am)

The Meat Market Craft Centre, Courtney Street, North Melbourne

Following the two visits (1990-91) by Eliot Wigginton, staff and students from the US-based Foxfire program, we are exploring possibilities for the development of one or more teacher networks to support rigorous, democratic, community-linked and hands-on classroom practices. Foxfire supports several such Networks in the USA which explore, document and develop such practices.

This is an opportunity to build on those visits and to establish a Network that fits Australian needs and conditions.

Program:

Morning: Background to the concept of a Network
          Sharing information about current classroom practices
          What characterises the Foxfire approach to teaching?
          Video: Shining Moments

Afternoon: What does a Network mean?
           What commitment is required?
           Possibilities for academic liaison and credit
           A 1992 Foxfire visit - what sort?

RSVP: By Monday November 4th to: (03) 489 9052 or (03) 329 5677.
      All those registering will be sent further pre-Network reading.

For Victorian teachers attending from further than 100 km from Melbourne, support for accommodation and travel may be available through the Victorian Country Education Project. Contact: (03) 329 5677.

Sponsored by Connect and the Victorian Country Education Project.
— *Foxfire VIDEO Available*

**Shining Moments**: The Foxfire Approach to Teaching

"[This teaching method is one] that has my full support, primarily because the students are asked to become so fully involved in planning, with their teachers, how the instructional objectives will be accomplished. When students are active participants in planning what goes on inside their classrooms, and when they are engaged as active problem solvers in the creation of projects that are valued and valuable, everyone wins. Especially the future."

—Dr. Werner Rogers, Georgia State Superintendent of Education, excerpted from *Shining Moments*

THE Foxfire approach to instruction is one that demands close collaboration among students and teachers as they design together their classroom activities. *Shining Moments: The Foxfire Approach to Teaching* examines that process at work in a number of Georgia classrooms that run the gamut of grade and ability levels, in addition to the Rabun County Foxfire program. The teachers featured in *Shining Moments* talk frankly about their apprehensions, challenges, and, most of all, their students' often surprising accomplishments as they all engage a more student-centered learning approach.

The Georgia teachers (and their students) include:

- Rosie Dockery, first grade, Enota Elementary, Gainesville
- Sandy Jones, special ed, Hightower Trail Elementary, Conyers
- Ed Palombo, E.T. Booth Middle School, Woodstock
- Allison Mardis, Central Gwinnett High School, Lawrenceville
- Susan Galante, Campbell High School, Smyrna

Principals Susan Brinson (Hightower Trail) and Shirley Whitaker (Enota Elementary) add their perspectives and reflections on the impact of the Foxfire approach at their schools.

**FIRST** aired on Georgia Public Television in honor of Foxfire's twenty-fifth birthday, *Shining Moments* is now available for purchase by interested individuals and institutions.

The fifty-five minute version is especially appropriate for those who want a more detailed familiarity with the Foxfire approach. The ten-minute version is suitable for teacher inservices and other groups interested in a briefer overview of the approach.

- *Shining Moments*, 55 minutes: $29.95 ($19.95 for Network members, Associates)
- *Shining Moments*, 10 minutes: $9.95

These videos are available from *Shining Moments*, The Foxfire Fund Inc., PO Box B, Rabun Gap, GA 30568 USA. Phone: (404) 746 5828. They are US format videos.

Australian-format copies of these videos are available for loan from Connect (one-hour version only: $5 to cover postage) or from the Victorian Country Education Project, 416 King Street, West Melbourne 3003 - phone: (03) 329 5677 (both one-hour and ten-minute versions).

*Shining Moments* was directed by Carol Fisk and produced by Georgia Public Television, in cooperation with The Foxfire Fund, Inc. Copyright ©1991, The Foxfire Fund, Inc. The production of this video was made possible through a generous grant from The Coca-Cola Foundation. Photo: Foxfire teacher Mike Cook's video students participate in a student workshop at Winder Barrow High School. Photo: Al Edwards.
Since our last article in Connect, a lot has been happening down in the swamp. Thanks to the Office of Youth Affairs, we managed to receive a Youth Victoria Grant which we’ve used to complete the physical environment of the swamp. Here’s what we’ve done:

DIGGING THE SWAMP AND THE BOG

When we first started to dig the swamp, we got a bobcat to dig it out. (That was last year.) We had to dig out the right shape by hand and then dig out the ledges to tuck the liner under. After we had dug out the swamp, we had to dig out the bog. We had to dig all the dirt out and then put it back in when we had lined it.

Glenn Barry, year 8
THE FENCING

We've had to put up a fence around the swamp to keep people from going in where they're not supposed to, and to stop the primaries from playing near the water and falling in. There was a lot of work involved in putting up a 100 metre fence.

First we had to ring some fencing companies and get a quote on how much it would cost us. The best quote we found was for $2725. After we got the quote, we had to dig a trench for the fence which had to be one foot deep, and it had to go for 100m around the swamp. So to help us dig the trench, we got the whole school to help.

After we finally dug it out, we had to get the fencing company to come up and put some poles in for the fencing. After they put the poles in, we separated the class into groups of three. In our separate groups, everybody had their own job to do. The first person in the group had to clean down the poles, the second had to pre-treat the poles with a mixture of turps and vinegar, and the third person painted the poles black. Then we had to wait for the company to put the fencing up.

When they had completed putting up the fence, we spent two weeks filling the trench back in with dirt.

David Holmes, year 9

BOARDWALK CONSTRUCTION

This adventure began when students dug holes for the stumps, and cemented them in place. Then we put the bearers across them. We completed the final touches by building the boardwalk from 6x1 treated pine. The overall effect is great - it looks 'unplanned'. This work took us quite a long time, but it was excellent work and fun for the students involved.

Damian Donohue, year 10

GREENHOUSE

My job was to find out how much a greenhouse would cost. So David and I rang up the greenhouse place and found out how much a greenhouse cost. I asked the man to send us some pamphlets which have now arrived in the mail. We're still not sure what kind of greenhouse we're going to get. Our latest idea is to build a greenhouse ourselves using solar sheeting. This could last longer than a polyhouse. (We once had one at school, but it got blown down by strong winds.)

Kathryn Harvey, year 10
PUTTING IN THE LINER

We got an 18 metre x 9 metre roll of polythene from a dam lining company. This cost us $170. Firstly we lined the swamp with newspaper so that any roots or rocks could not puncture the liner. Then we spread the liner over the swamp. People had to take their shows off to flatten the liner down. After we filled up the swamp, we used scissors to trim back the liner, and then folded the edges into a ledge we'd dug. We shovelled soil over the edge of the liner so that the plastic didn't show through.

Jarrod Shelton, year 8

PLANTING WITH PRIMARIES

On the 16th May, the Prep to Grade 3 students helped to plant about 100 plants in the swamp. There are about 15 different species of plants, including four kinds of Eucalypts. They had a great time, and each kid can name their own plant. The plants we chose (all endemic to our area) are: Mountain Ash, Manna gum, Messmate, Grey gum, Cinnamon wattle, Austral mulberry, blanketeaf, Christmas bush, Banyala, Pomaderris, Prickly currant bush, Yellow Hakea, Correa, Musk Daisy bush, Snowy daisy bush.

Ben Crosser, year 9
This year the swamp workshop has been so busy establishing the swamp environment - bridge, boardwalks, paths etc - that we haven't had much time to study the wetlands environment. We have, however, developed skills in design, landscaping, working with people in the community, horticulture, submission-writing, fundraising - and the list goes on! We've also nearly finished building our dome greenhouse (with the help of Paul, one of our parents).

Other groups in the school have already begun to use the swamp in their studies. Here are some examples:

ANIMAL STUDIES

Students have been studying the natural history and ecology of tortoises and have been preparing a hibernation area on the edge of the swamp. Three long-necked tortoises have been released into the swamp since May. DATAELECTRONICS have donated a datalogger which the group will be using to record water temperature in order to predict the onset of breeding in the tortoise population.

BIOLOGY

VCE students have been carrying out research on Swamp gums in the wetland enclosure.

DANCE

The Dance group have choreographed a piece called 'Aira en Swamp' which they intend to publicly perform on the boardwalks during finer weather.

PRIMING THE SWAMP

We've just started a workshop in which older 'swamp kids' have joined Prep to Grade 3 kids. Together, we've been recording the growth of our swamp plants, studying microscopic critters, tortoises, visiting wetland areas (eg Coolart) and generally maintaining the swamp. During term 4, we're off to French Island together on a bike-riding and collecting trip.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE

Students have been liaising with DC&E staff to revegetate a local creek and have organised permits to collect local plant material for propagation here at school (in our new greenhouse). A swamp student has been conducting a weed eradication program within the school and local creek reserve, and has been conducting classes on techniques in Environmental Science.

We've just begin work on our

SWAMP EDUCATION CENTRE

which will be a small mud-brick construction within the wetlands enclosure. It will contain 15-20 aquaria (for our breeding program) and facilities for seed storage, small-group work, photography and video areas. We'll also be able to keep our datalogger and computer here.

We intend that this resource will not only aid school-based research, but will be used as a focus for running educational programs for people outside the school community (school groups, local residents, community groups).

Science students are currently exploring the idea of running the lighting and aquarium pumps using solar power. Several students are currently participating in the Solar Car Challenge, and are gaining insight into the technical side of achieving this. The idea of using the Swamp Ed. Centre as a focus for alternative energy technologies is building momentum.

Between now and the end of the year, we'll be:

* finishing the excavations for the slab;
* working with a building inspector from the Shire who has offered to help us draw up plans for approval by the Council;
* making mudbricks during weekends (a parent has offered the use of a rammer, and another has offered her mud!);
* starting up a fund-raising campaign for building materials.

One thing we've all learnt since the Swamp Project began is that things take time. But we're pretty pleased with how things are going, especially since we didn't have a clue about how to build a swamp when we started.

We'd greatly appreciate any enquiries about our project. You can contact us at the school on (03) 755 2007, or write to us at:

Sherbrooke Community School;
311 Mt Dandenong Tourist Road
Sassafras 3787
PEER MEDIATORS: INTERVENE TO RECONCILE

A program that trains students to help others resolve conflicts.

Peer Mediators began as a strategy to reduce conflict in the school yard and classrooms. Students needed help in developing conflict resolution skills and strategies to overcome problems relating to relationships and sexist and racist harassment. In some cases these skills and assistance to overcome conflicts were not being dealt with appropriately in classrooms or at home.

Specific problems which result in conflicts, as I see them, include racist attitudes and ignorances between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, family conflicts and peer attitudes which often stem from home and the community and which can be compounded at school.

A student-based counselling group has proved a good approach. Interested students are equipped with basic counselling skills, familiarised with harassment policies and grievance procedures. Community agencies existing within the town seemed a solid starting point. Videos, role-playing and discussions which deal with exploring how sexist and racist behaviours affect people in the short and long term, help students become more empathetic with their peer problems.

THE BEGINNING: 1989

Towards the end of 1989, a small group of senior students expressed concerns regarding conflicts occurring in the yard, together with sexist and racist attitudes of some parents, students and teachers. Pam, Alison, Beverly, Trudi, Kylie and Letianna wanted to change this. So we went about organising a lunchtime group to collect information and opinions. We held discussions, carried out interviews on video and surveyed students in pastoral care sessions.

Collecting opinions and relevant information to use as a guide to assess the level of harassment was difficult to collate and interpret. Involving community workers and student counsellors to carry out short-term workshop sessions in conflict resolution and sexual harassment, provided us with a starting point to begin to identify the types of harassment and grievance procedures which could be used to assist students. One of our first projects was to develop, write and print a magazine entitled "Developing Peace Between Nations". It was aimed at students to read and discuss in pastoral care sessions, but essentially provided us with some knowledge and experience in identifying racist behaviour while discussing related issues.

The small group of senior students went along to Thuruna Bay with year 8 students to carry out a half-day anti-racism workshop. Leaders divided the 80 students into groups of ten where they discussed racist attitudes, role played games and encouraged students to develop a short skit which expressed their understanding of the Effects of Racism or Racism in the School Yard. These were presented and discussed.

The Peer Mediators developed and adopted the peace panda logo while taking on the motto 'interact to reconcile'. They believed these reflected the group's philosophy of stepping in to help with conflict in order to bring about friendship.
DEVELOPING THE PROGRAM: 1990

Throughout 1990, we tried to involve a broader range of voluntary and teacher recommended students from year 8 to year 11, always encouraging representatives from all sections of the school. We've encouraged Aboriginal girls and boys, non-Aboriginal girls and boys and any other minority groups in order to encourage equity. In 1990, we had 15 students attend Wednesday lunchtime sessions regularly. During the second to fourth terms, we organised and attended workshops by Lifeline counsellors, Family and Community Services, youth workers and student counsellors. We watched videos in order to raise our awareness of racism and sexism issues. We discussed ignorances and invited speakers eg Aboriginal Education Resources Teachers, the Principal and the Anti-Racism Project Officer.

THE TRAINING CAMP 1990

The first annual training camp was a very valuable experience for myself and certainly an all round success for the Peer Mediators.

Eric Bray (the AERT), 16 students and I worked well as a team throughout the three days, developing democratic decision making, while learning the role, responsibility and skills of a counsellor. Lifeline assisted in analysing problems, modeling, counselling, while emphasising the importance of communication skills, body language, listening, reflecting words and picking up emotion. Students played a number of exercises to encourage group dynamics and individual leadership. I took the opportunity to allow the students first-hand experience in racism by playing the "challenging racism" game. They then reflected on and discussed their experience.

"Challenging racism can be related to the rules of life. The advantaged are given everything and can dominate the lives of the disadvantaged. The disadvantaged need to be given a lot but they never get it. If you are disadvantaged in our society, you are rejected and are made to wait while the advantaged are served and that needs to change." (Hayley, year 8)

"If you are advantaged or white in Australia and have money, you can have and do what you want. People who are racially harassed/discriminated against are isolated, cornered, lonely, bored, scared, interrogated, in trouble, confused, not getting anywhere and feel useless." (Tony, year 10)

"It taught us how some people are well off and are treated differently to poor people and how in society there are different sets of rules for different people judged on their financial situation or cultural background." (Melissa, year 9)

The students said that the most valuable sessions included the following:

A discussion by a youth worker, where students participated in working through a conflict while learning about mandatory reporting and the role of community agencies in helping people in need. The worker discussed teenage issues and his counselling experiences.

A Legal Studies teacher, Brenton Eden, broke students into small groups to work through the rights and responsibilities of a six month old child to a 16 year old person. This brought up a discussion on the role of the mediators in the school, while highlighting situations which were beyond the responsibility of the peer mediators.

The AERT's experience of racism in schools and the community proved to be a very open and positive experience for many students, encouraging them to discuss questions while working through ignorances.

Discussion of the anti-racism policy and grievance procedure, led by the Principal, Susan Hyde, outlined the responsibility of key people in the Education Department. Students felt that the policy needed to be written in easier and clearer terms for students and parents so they are aware they are infringing other people's rights. This has become one of our aims for 1991.

DEVELOPMENT IN 1991

Early in 1991 students reassembled and developed a constitution which outlined their aims in clearer terms. They nominated a chairperson, secretary etc. in order to achieve organised meeting procedures, and developed a timetable of activities eg the Peer Mediators will run training sessions for 'new' students.
I asked the Mediators to comment on their involvement, aspirations for the group and thoughts about harassment in schools:

"Some people are too stubborn to change. The group can try to 'stop' harassment by talking to certain groups of people and the whole school... make people aware of what they're doing and how it affects them. I would like to help others resolve conflicts, while developing my own self confidence."

"I know I need to change my own outlook about certain issues - to learn why people react differently, how racism and sexism affect people's attitudes... kids are not given a chance to work through their problems; they need to speak up for themselves, express their ideas without fear; we need a friendlier school... I feel proud to think I've helped someone and achieved change."

PEER MEDIATORS WORKING WITH OTHER STUDENTS

Essentially students experiencing conflict approach the peer mediators to seek help to resolve problems. The Mediators listen and discuss with students the options on hand, while making them aware of their rights - policies and laws which exist to help them as well as agencies they could approach if approaching a teacher or adult is impossible. Mediators always maintain the mandatory reporting policy while attempting to maintain confidentiality.

CONCLUSION

Everybody experiences racism and sexism at some time in their lives. It's very evident in the school yard. Schools are an ideal place to address these issues and the Peer Mediator Program represents a real opportunity to deal with these major social problems at an early stage. I hope that our pioneering efforts will encourage other schools to adopt this strategy for the growth of their students.

Concetta Caruso
Port Augusta High School
South Australia

SECOND NATIONAL CHILD POVERTY AND EDUCATION CONFERENCE

This Conference will be held at Melbourne University from 13th-15th November 1991. It aims to build on the first conference (Adelaide, 1989), promote a broader understanding of the educational issues relating to child poverty and share positive information on action taken.

Connect is interested to promote and support presentations by students who have been studying issues of poverty through workshops, seminars etc. There is also the possibility for a group of students to produce a daily 'newspaper' for the Conference. Contact Connect for more details.

As one of the executive, I am writing on behalf of the Melton Secondary College Student Senate. I am pleased to say that the MSC Student Senate is making an effort to help our school to become environmentally friendly.

We have undertaken two tasks to help the environment. The first was the introduction of white paper re-cycling bins in all staff rooms, as well as brown cardboard boxes in classrooms for the students' left-over paper.

The second task was the abolition of polystyrene cups from the school canteen. These cups were extremely harmful to the environment as they are not biodegradable and contain the infamous CFCs. These cups were replaced by unbleached brown paper bags.

We accomplished both of these tasks through the Student Senate and the MSC School Council. The Student Senate wrote a submission which our School Council student representative put forward to a meeting. She told the School Council the advantages and how much each endeavour would cost. She also explained where the funds would come from. The School Council was very agreeable with each idea and we were granted their permission to commence our plans.

Some of the MSC Student Senate's ideas to help our school must first go to the School Council for approval. This is so we can receive three different viewpoints: the teachers', the students' and the parents'. Therefore each new idea is structured on three different opinions, which turns into a stable asset to the school.

Karen Sutherland
The Peer Support Program is based on the principle that at every level and in every age group in society, people absorb information and values from each other. If Peer Support is used to transmit sound ideas, it can be a useful educational tool.

Peer Support and positive peer influence is introduced into a school community through the training of volunteer senior students to act as group leaders to a number of year 7 students. The Program trains senior students to assist junior students. It develops a feeling of caring in the school community and reinforces a positive school environment by providing more personal contact between younger and older students.

The Program gives senior students the opportunity to exercise their leadership skills and provides them with responsibility. For junior students, a safe and friendly environment is provided where they can develop their own individuality.

Selected volunteer students from year 11 are trained to act as group leaders for junior students. In most cases, a girl and a boy are selected to lead the group, and attention is paid to combining a strong leader and a weaker leader.

The group leaders' training course includes communication, relationships, social and peer pressures on adolescents, and exercises in self awareness. It also includes training in discussion group techniques and knowledge about the overall needs of year 7 students. Peer Support programs are held weekly and scheduled in normal class time. The program continues with the same leader and group the following year, when they graduate to year 12 and year 8 respectively.

The Peer Support Syllabus used by group leaders includes a variety of living skill relationships, personal and social responsibility, peer group pressure, assertiveness training and personal goals. The program is structured and each session has been practised by group leaders so that they are totally familiar with the exercises they give their group and can feel confident and comfortable in their role as group leader. The exercises include learning, listening, role playing activities (which help empathise dealing with the feelings of others) and self awareness games.

Discussion on relevant issues such as job opportunities, job selection, ways of coping with unemployment, using time effectively, ways of developing stable and viable lifestyles, and the importance of good health are included. Students are asked to involve their parents in some of the issues under discussion to increase parental involvement in the school and to improve intra-family communication. Written or verbal replies from parents are encouraged concerning some of the issues introduced and provide a valuable dimension to group interaction.

While the junior student groups are led by a senior student, the teachers trained for the Peer Support Program are on hand to monitor and evaluate the groups' activities.

BACKGROUND

The Peer Support Foundation Victoria Ltd subscribes closely to the program originally developed by Elizabeth Campbell, founder of the Peer Support Foundation. She originally established the program in New South Wales in 1971 in response to the death of a student from a heroin overdose. At that time, she was working with the State Department of Health. In the next three years, the program spread to 30 schools.

When government funding ceased, local Rotary Clubs continued to support the initiative. In 1983, the Peer Support Foundation was registered in NSW as a non-profit company with the purpose of raising funds to provide training personnel and an infrastructure to help schools to introduce and maintain the program. Peer Support in Victoria was piloted in several Bendigo schools in 1986. During that year, Victorian teacher training workshops were organised through the NSW group. The Balwyn Rotary Club was the financier of the first year of
operation of a permanent Victorian office for the Peer Support Foundation Victoria Ltd.

Last year, the Elizabeth Campbell Peer Support Program was taken to the USA, Canada and England. Rotary International have provided financial and organisational support to help launch and maintain the program in Australia and New Zealand.

AIMS OF THE PROGRAM

1. To help secondary students to develop self confidence and self-esteem and the ability to resist harmful peer group pressure.

2. To provide family sized groups of support to all students in the first year of post-primary school.

3. To develop leadership and communication skills for year 10/11 students who act as discussion facilitators and special friends for year 7 students in groups of six or seven.

4. To help senior students as much as the juniors by giving them responsibility and usefulness at a critical period in their development.

5. To provide a safe and friendly environment where young people can clarify their goals.

6. To improve communication between teachers and students, older and younger students, and parents.

7. To guide young secondary school students away from drug and alcohol experimentation, truancy and vandalism, and many other types of anti-social behaviour.

8. To provide resources, consultation and the facilitation of networking benefits to all participants in the peer support movement.

IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAM

Initial Preparation

The first step is making contact with the school Principal. A general staff is arranged to explain the aims and processes of the program. Following staff support, a call is made for teachers willing to be trained in the scheme and to act as coordinators and student trainers.

Teacher Training

Volunteer teachers attend a two-day workshop to learn how to train senior students. This workshop introduces them to the core activities and concepts of peer support. Experience and practical details of planning and running the program are emphasised. A ratio of one teacher per ten senior students is advised. It is also recommended that teachers consider whether one or two leaders per group is advisable.

Student Training and Program Introduction

Senior students are taught the activities in the Program during a two or three day period such as an end of year camp. Year 7s are grouped for weekly peer support activities.

It is strongly recommended that the peer support session is included in the regular timetable. Where this is not possible, a grid system of timetabling is often employed to ensure that students miss a maximum of only two classes in the same subject per term.
It is suggested that known friends are not included in the same group, that students are mixed from feeder schools and that younger siblings or their friends are not supervised by a senior student.

**Evaluation and Modification**

Each school is unique, with differing needs of both staff and students. As experience develops, the program will need modification and enrichment to suit the particular school environment. Teachers must be aware of the need to monitor student leaders' performances and to provide regular problem solving meetings on a once-a-week basis. This is particularly important as adults supervise group activities.

Formal evaluation with questionnaires circulated to all groups and persons affected by the program should be arranged and group decisions made as to adjustments required. Parents should be involved in this process as well as in the initial promotion of the scheme.

**PEER SUPPORT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

The Peer Support Foundation also runs its program at the primary school level, where grade 5 and 6 students generally assume the role of group leaders to grade 3 students. Although activities and training differ from those practised at the secondary level, the aims and objectives are basically the same. A supportive environment, where younger students can develop their confidence, their individuality and their strength to resist harmful peer pressure is still one of the fundamental aims.

Though it is estimated that 30 primary schools in Victoria are running peer support programs, many more are expected to join the program which is still in its early stages.

**THE FUTURE OF PEER SUPPORT**

In Victoria, more than 200 schools are running Peer Support Programs. These schools include both state and private schools in approximately equal numbers to their overall ratio. Throughout all of Australia and New Zealand, over 2000 schools are running programs. It is also hoped that the United States, Canada and England will run the Program after their strong show of interest in the idea. In addition to the Peer Support Program, the Peer Support Foundation Victoria Ltd also runs Super Study programs for senior students, leadership programs and staff inservices to share knowledge of their programs with the teaching community.

Funding of the Peer Support Foundation Victoria Ltd comes from Rotary Clubs and philanthropic trusts. As it is a non-profit organisation, it relies on public support to maintain its services. Rotary clubs typically sponsor local teachers' costs for training, thus making the Program accessible to schools. Peer Support Foundation's Executive Director Ted Stephens believes that, provided funding is available, a firm commitment will be made to introduce Peer Support to more primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in 1992.

Danny Wade

*The Peer Support Foundation can be contacted at 46 Taylor Street, Ashburton 3147 (PO Box 17, Ashburton 3147) Phone: (03) 885 8956.*

**THE PEER SUPPORT FOUNDATION VICTORIA LIMITED**

(A Company limited by guarantee - incorporated in Victoria)
NEWS AND REVIEWS

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY: STUDENT FORUM

On World Environment Day (5th June 1991), the City of Berwick hosted an Environment Forum for over 100 representatives from seven local secondary schools. The aim of the day was to raise young people's awareness of the environment and its related issues, to disseminate environmental information and to establish local action environmental groups.

The day was hosted by representatives from the Environment Conscious Organisation, a young people's environmental action group and had speakers representing a variety of organisations.

From information provided by the speakers and from working groups, a number of recommendations were made by the students. These related to local issues for the City of Berwick, the participants' schools and broader recommendations of a global nature. These have since been passed on to relevant groups for comment and action.

Since the forum, there have continued to be pleasing results. ECO has received a new flux of members and is continuing its work. In 1990, they made and sold through local markets a range of environmentally friendly cleaning products. Their next project is the designing and implementation of an environmental audit of local schools. One of the schools participating has now formed its own environmental action group and is undertaking work improving the school environmentally; two other schools are looking to establish similar groups.

A full report on the forum and further information on ECO can be obtained from the City of Berwick Youth Services Section on (03) 705 5220.

THE NEW RULES

A workshop/meeting was held late during the Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA) 'Liberating the Curriculum' Conference, in Adelaide in July 1991, to support student views and opinions on the running, management and presentation of the Conference.

Many students present agreed that more emphasis should be placed on student participation and student requirements, since the Conference's outcomes immediately reflect back onto us.

A number of pupils in our schools are unaware of the Conference itself and this is a major factor affecting the liberation of the curriculum. There is also misunderstanding of details involved in the Conference, as well as some language problems in comprehension of certain terms.

So here are some suggestions for 'New Rules' for the conduct of such Conferences:

THE NINE COMMANDMENTS

1. Thou shalt actively work to get as many students to the Conference as possible. This includes: subsidising fares and costs, direct and personal contact with students and networks, telling students more about the conference in advance and media coverage aimed at students.
2. Thou shalt refer to students as students and not as 'kids', 'youngsters', 'children' etc.
3. Thou shalt take an active responsibility to address questions of language; presenters shall be more conscious of including students.
4. Thou shalt plan a pre-conference meeting for students (and perhaps parents) in order to provide information about the language and issues of the conference.
5. Thou shalt include topics that cover the interests of all students.
6. There shall be more papers relating specifically to students. This includes: students presenting papers; a keynote speaker who is a student.
7. There shall be better facilities for conference members. This includes: bins, heating, music, photocopying, resources for newspaper students etc.
8. Keynote speakers shall make time to speak to students after their papers, especially student conference reporters.
9. There shall be a person responsible for supporting and making contact with students, who will be available to answer questions they may have.

After all, we are the students. How the curriculum is liberated depends on our schooling lives and therefore the future.

Donna Martin
Liberte reporter
BROADMEADOWS HISTORY

Are students who study History really involved in researching and writing history? 

Glimpses of the Past is a history of Broadmeadows High School and its community. It also provides glimpses of young historians at work - at real work, for its production is the outcome of the 1990 work of two year 9 classes at Broadmeadows Secondary College in Melbourne. The introduction to the book outlines some of the process:

"The articles in this publication were contributed by my 9A class and Peter Lewis' 9C class. It was intended to provide a 'real' purpose and sense of audience for the students' work, and to promote a sense of responsibility, decision making and planning as important aspects of students' learning. The students were involved in the project at all levels, from choosing topics to setting out the final layout. This included such skills as locating and using primary sources, interviewing, taking notes, planning, drafting, revising and redrafting pieces of writing, word processing, proofreading, finding and choosing illustrative material."

It was noted that a history class had begun a similar project in 1979. They had gathered many of the resources together, interviewed past students and staff and had begin writing chapters. These, in turn, acted as models for the 1990 students for their own pieces of writing.

As Darryn Kruse, Humanities Coordinator at Broadmeadows and editor of the book, notes at the end of the Introduction:

"It is gratifying to see this publication finally completed. It is the culmination of more than just the thoughts and efforts of the students whose work appears herein; it is the product of a new approach to history developed at the school over the last few years. It is an example of what can be achieved when we leave our textbooks behind and ask students to experience history - to be historians."

Copies of Glimpses of the Past are available from Broadmeadows Secondary College, Blair Street, Broadmeadows 3047 for $3 plus $1 postage. Contact Darryn Kruse at the school on (03) 301 2333.

THE CURLIP

The Curlip is a journal published by students at Orbost Secondary College containing their research on the local area. As the introduction notes, students of Geography, History and Australian Studies at Orbost have produced a number of excellent projects in the past few years. This first issue of The Curlip, supported by the Victorian Country Education Project, features some of these.

There are articles on farming at Jarrahmond, the Orbost blacksmiths and an analysis of an Anzac diary. Plans are underway for future articles on erosion on the Marlo Plains, changes at Cape Conran, the history of the butter factory, a history of transport in the local area and a report on the First World War database.

Orbost's Year 12 Business Studies course took up the project this year and examined issues involved with editing and publishing existing documents into this magazine.

To get a copy of The Curlip, contact Paul Dawson, Social Education Coordinator at Orbost Secondary College, PO Box 270, Orbost 3888.
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:

Glimpses of the Past (Broadmeadows HS, Vic) 1991
Spotlight (Broadmeadows SC, Vic) Edition 1, 1991
Times Have Changed (Nathalia SC, Vic) 1991

OVERSEAS STUDENT PUBLICATIONS:

Foxfire (Rabun Gap, Georgia, USA) Vol 24 No 2 (#92) Summer 1990

OTHER PUBLICATIONS:

Options (Youth Bureau, Canberra, ACT) August, September 1991
Communication Research Trends (UK) Vol 11, Nos 2, 3 (1991)
Collective Notes (COSHG, Vic) No 65, September 1991
Network News (Surry Hills, NSW) Sept 1991
SCIP Newsletter (SCIP, Red Cross, Vic) No 15, September 1991
Snowy River Area Literacy Fair - Report (CEP, Vic) 3-4 June 1991
Curriculum Perspectives (ACSA) Vol 11 No 3, September 1991
Handbook: Bicentennial Youth Foundation (Leichhardt, NSW)
Yakka (Aust Red Cross, Vic) Spring 1991
Voiceworks (Express Media Power Workshops, Vic) No 7, July 1991
National Coalition News (NCACS, USA) Vol 16 No 1, Spring 1991
Report on City of Berwick Environmental Forum for Young People (City of Berwick, Vic) 5 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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