PRACTICAL IDEAS ON:

Evaluating Student Groups ...
Peer Education ... Youth Futures ...
JSC Training ... Portuguese schools ...

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CONNECT
12 Brooke Street
Northcote 3070
Victoria Australia
Endlessly Exciting and Dangerously Powerful

Lyn Loger sent us an article down the wire, which contained the following quotation from Possession by A S Byatt:

"Everything connects and connects, all the time. And I suppose one studies, I study, literature because all these connections seem both endlessly exciting and then in some sense dangerously powerful - as though we hold a clue to the true nature of things."

"Is this how you see Connect?" she asked.

About the same time I was asked how it was that I was still motivated about the production of Connect after almost 13 years.

The answers to both questions are, I guess, similar and related. The area of student participation is one of surprise, excitement, danger and power. As Eliot Wigginton from Foxfire pointed out on his first visit here in 1990 (in a related context): "You're never really sure, once you begin the adventure together, where it's going to wind up... (but) it is much more interesting intellectually. I don't have any intention of living the rest of my life in repetition!"

Who could have predicted a letter in the mail from Fremantle with a delightful article and picture about 'Young Mums in the Classroom'? And who could have foreseen the growth of other aspects of peer education and peer mediation?

In a climate of increased student retention for (perhaps) uncertain ends, of economic despair and family tensions for many, proposals that include and value young people's contributions towards solutions to these problems, and which recognise young people as responsible and active participants are important. In this context for example, there's been increased attention recently to ideas of training young people as mediators in school and family crises, and Connect is beginning, in this issue, to explore these ideas.

Next Issue

Articles are promised on a Council of Peer Educators in North Carlton in Victoria, on young people and local government, and on students publishing class.

What are you finding 'endlessly exciting' and 'powerfully dangerous'? Won't you tell us about it?

Next deadline: end of July!

Roger Holdsworth

COVER

Students at the Junior School Council Training Day preparing action plans; see article on page 9. Photos: Wayne Bolton, Rosebank PS.
YOUNG MUMS IN THE CLASSROOM

Young mothers and their babies have been returning to the classroom to lead discussions with students about issues of young parenthood and the difficulties and responsibilities of having a baby. They want to dispel the ‘it can’t happen to me’ attitude.

The mothers range from 15 to 21 years of age, and think that if they can prevent even one teenage pregnancy, then the program has been worthwhile.

The volunteers are participants in the Adolescent Mothers Education Support Program at the Fremantle Education Centre in Western Australia. The Program provides an opportunity for the young mothers to complete their secondary education. Usually they are enrolled externally through Distance Education or TAFE, and are completing years 9 or 10, Tertiary Entrance Examinations or vocational courses.

Colleen Wannicke and Sue Walker developed the idea of a schools program, as they felt sex education lessons at school were inadequate. Teenagers are often more receptive to information coming from their own age group. The impact of seeing a fifteen year old with a child is far greater than the lessons learned from books or teachers.

Letters were sent to secondary schools in the Perth metropolitan area, and since then, the young women have had a positive response. They have been busy visiting both government and private schools and talking with young adolescents.

Many girls fail to take precautions - or otherwise decide to get pregnant to have someone special in their lives. The AMES participants are able to provide information on issues which are often not considered. These include the cost of keeping a baby, going it alone without the father’s support, the time involved in caring for a baby, coping with sick and crying babies, and staying at home when your friends are out at work or having a good time.

They also aim to reach young males and outline the implications of fatherhood to them, particularly the cost of maintaining a child until he or she reaches the age of sixteen.

For more information about the program, contact Margaret Buckman (AMES Coordinator) or Sue Walker (AMES participant and Coordinator of School Talks) at the Fremantle Education Centre on (09) 335 5444.
A VIDEO MADE BY YOUNG WOMEN ABOUT ISSUES THAT CAN LEAD TO AN UNPLANNED TEENAGE PREGNANCY

IT JUST HAPPENS!

It Just Happens is a video presented by year 10 girls from Bonbeach Campus of Patterson River Secondary College. It is the result of a project, initiated by the Chelsea Community Health Centre, about unplanned teenage pregnancy in which the girls discuss issues such as the pressures to have sex, why teenagers don't use contraception and the inequalities for women in using contraception or deciding to become sexually active.

Research shows that teenagers are becoming sexually active by the time they are 17. While the young women agreed with this, they also commented that contraception was not often used by this age group. They identified several reasons for this:

- unplanned sex;
- 'it couldn't happen to me';
- fear of losing boyfriend if they don't have sex;
- not able to talk to boyfriend about using a condom;
- too embarrassed to purchase contraception;
- alcohol/drug influences.

In discussing sexuality education, all students agreed that they received information about contraception. "That's all anyone talks to us about - dingers and the pill." However, for young women to use contraception, they require the necessary skills - firstly, to purchase their contraception, and secondly, to convince their partners to use it. This area is often lacking in sexuality education.

During this project, the young women video-interviewed a teenage mother, some year 10 boys and a nurse from a Family Planning Clinic. They discovered the inequalities for women using contraception and in deciding to become sexually active. The young women were constantly confronted with double standards. In the session with year 10 male students, we discussed the terminology used for males and females who are seen to be sexually active. For males, the terms were glowing: legends, heroes, studs. For females, the terms were derogatory: whores, tarts and sluts.

A young woman who makes a responsible decision to guard against pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases by carrying condoms is labelled as having low moral standards. "You would be called a slut," commented one student. "Boys would think you're looking for it." On the other hand, a young male who carries a condom is seen to be responsible, looking after himself and practising safe sex.

These double standards pose a dilemma for young women who are contemplating a sexual relationship. However, the young women were quick to mention that there was also pressure if their decision was not to have a sexual relationship. "You get called frigid or lesbians if you say no. Some boys would drop you if you said no." Dealing with peer pressure requires a great deal of self-confidence. As educators, we should be teaching skills that will help in decision making and communication, thus promoting self-confidence.

A teaching kit accompanies the 8 minute video. It would be best used in sexuality education classes as a discussion starter. It is meant for use in a comprehensive personal development framework and should not be used in isolation, but where issues such as communication, relationships, self-esteem, decision making and discrimination can also be discussed. It is aimed at years 9 to 12, but would also be suitable for years 7 and 8.

The video and kit is available for $30 from Chelsea Community Health Centre, 147 Nepean Highway, Aspendale 3195 (phone: (03) 580 5777 or fax: (03) 587 6262).

Sue Moulton

"It Just Happens"
Education for Democracy: 
School as a Learning Place for Life

by Virginia Estrocio

Since 1984, I have been the president of the Directive Board of a school situated in the north of Portugal. This pompous name means simply director of the school in some countries or headmaster in others. The reason for this specific label is the fact that I was elected from among my peers as the president of a group of colleagues who are responsible with me for the administrative and pedagogical management of the school. Having an elected director represents a major innovation and the laws which permit this are full of the spirit of common responsibility shared by all the persons who actively live in the same space—that is the school.

My school, or better, the school where I work, has at the moment 1,200 pupils, 134 teachers and 34 civil workers (administrative, social and auxiliary workers). When I first started this job I considered it a challenge. I knew that in spite of all the laws regarding elections at schools they were often mere words beautifully written on paper. The traditional conception of the idea of the director was there untouched in almost every mind. The old word rector which applied the directors of the old secondary schools was there and the idea of “chief” had still all the significance of authority and power of decision above all. Suddenly I felt that all my colleagues expected me to act like a queen in a kingdom. My “prestige” seemed to fall down as I tried to contact more often with the other teachers and when I invited some workers for discussions about the school life. After some months of uncertainty I proposed to the school some goals which I thought would allow us to live in community inside the school, where the rules of democracy were fully respected, on one hand, and would also permit us to gain the respect of the community around the school.

In this paper I will consider only the goals related to the inside community which are:

- to diminish my attention to the administrative functions
- to overvalue my relations with the staff
- to supervalue the relationship with the pupils

In what concerns the first one I can say that is not an easy one. The amount of administrative work of a school of this size is considerable. Beyond the preparation of all the processes related with the pupils, schools in Portugal have the obligation also to prepare the specific written material which allows the payment of the salaries of all the staff and workers. To diminish my attention to the administrative functions didn’t mean that I started to neglect them. On the contrary, what I did was to subordinate the administrative functions
to the pedagogical ones. This point of view allowed me to see more clearly what was more important to do at a certain time.

Instead of being the head of the school I tried to be the center of it. This sentence leads me to share some of the experiences regarding the second goal. As M. Bouchara says, (translating from the French): “to animate is often to know the everyday life of the school; to animate it is not necessarily to do things yourself but to find the right partners inside the school; to animate is to trust in the teams and commissions chosen; to animate is to have ideas and allow the others to have them too...to allow and encourage everybody to express their ideas and only afterwards to make decisions...” These procedures of doing authority are slower than deciding everything for yourself. At a certain point it seems that nothing functions at school because this or that important subject was not yet discussed. At the beginning, this situation made me very anxious and nervous but with time the fear began to disappear and I started to relax. At the end, I had to have the final decision, of course, but only after a democratic procedure where my opinion had the same value as the others.

Another aspect of my relationship with the teachers is related to the support that I felt obliged to give regarding pedagogical orientation. We have already accomplished many things in our school. This includes innovative projects like Regional Learning: “I know the town where I live in” / “My town is 700 years old”; like Integration of Local Handycraft at school: “Black Pottery and Linen”; like Integration of Disabled Pupils in normal schools: “Everybody is equal by law.” I wanted the staff to know that I valued all that they had already accomplished.

Finally, I wanted to make central to all we do, our relationships with children. If we consider as fundamental elements in education for democracy the development of the abilities to understand and participate in institutions and in social life in general, we see that the school is often not accomplishing its function regarding youth. Many psychologists and sociologists say that the concept of democracy can be learned like any other concept at school and that the education for democracy must be assumed by all institutions that deal with education including the schools. In my school we tried to do something to solve this problem or at least to diminish it. The learning of democracy was experienced in two levels:

- The educative practicum
- The acquisition of a social culture in order to allow the pupils to understand the community where they live and to become participative citizens.

In what regards participation, we see that there is a trend in society in general and in schools also to under-value the practicum of participation. Nobody tried to improve the mechanisms of active participation of youngsters either in the school life or in the construction of knowledge itself, reducing them to the mere role of non-
active consumers. We see also that in school life there are no spaces and no times for a significative participation of the pupils and those which exist (class delegates, pupils' representatives in the Direction Board and the pupils' associations) are not fully assumed by the pupils themselves nor by the school as a way of learning for a democratic life. In a recent enquiry in Portugal we could see that a great majority of the pupils from the 9th year did not know the possibilities allowed by law for them to participate in the school life. More than 80 percent of the pupils never had a small participation in a meeting or activity related with the pupils' association of their own school.

To learn how to be a citizen is to learn how to participate, so we started to give a greater importance to the pupils' opinions, and to hear them and their representatives frequently and at the same time to teach and to learn possible ways of participation in the classroom and in the school. These procedures had sometimes a reaction by some teachers who were not used to these practices, and even now this subject is not a calm one. We reached the conclusion that it takes time to create a new spirit inside the school, consequently we still regularly meet about this subject.

In what concerns the acquisition of a social culture which leads to critically examining the society, we see also that school often plays no significant part in this subject. When the school plays the role of legitimatizing the "official" culture, it often devalues local culture. Because of that we can observe a profound ignorance and lack of interest of youth towards society in general. In reflecting about pedagogical strategies of motivation for participation in life outside the school, we encourage our pupils and teachers to make visits to different institutions like hospitals, factories, prisons and military headquarters.

Afterwards we ask them to express their points of view about things that are right or wrong. The exploration of the natural environment is always a good motivation for participation in what concerns its preservation. Our neighborhood with a natural park makes possible some common projects. To fulfill these projects I try to encourage the teachers to work according to open methods—for example, project-work—and to provide for both teachers and pupils the learning of communication strategies necessary to achieve a more effective participation. Some examples might be to learn how to do dias, posters, write news, speak in public, and so forth.

As I said at the beginning, when I started this job it was a challenge. I am conscious that there is much more to be done. To change the idea of the director and to change the relationship between authority and pedagogic animation is a very faraway, but reachable target. At the same time I think we can not find set recipes or methods for such a transition. For me it is often a question of intuition and personality with forward and backward, good achievements and not so good ones.

In Portugal, schools intend to put in practice democratic values, at least at the level of the general targets. They point to a socialization of the pupils in the sense of making them responsible and independent citizens, of developing their spirit of criticism, of becoming capable of listening to others, of having initiative spirit, of becoming active adult partners in the future. This changing of our schools is difficult and what is possible to do has many limitations. But, if we can not change everything, we can at least create a different feeling, making visible what is a democratic experience, and act in the development of the pupils who attend the school to make possible a change at a medium and long term.

Virginia Estrecio is President of the public school in Vila Real, Portugal.

References

This was possible only after the revolution in 1974 in which we passed from a dictatorial government to a democratic one.

How do you know if your Student Representative Council (in a secondary school) or Junior School Council (in a primary school) is working successfully?

To answer that question, you need to have some idea of what is possible - a vision, that is, of what an SRC or JSC can and should do. You also need to work out some way of monitoring what the SRC/JSC has done and matching its work against that vision.

One aspect of that evaluation of success is simply to look at what the SRC/JSC has worked on over a period of time - perhaps for the past twelve months. In talking with various groups of students, the following patterns have emerged:

There are three ways in which student groups appear to work:

1. They do things themselves - they organise activities, most often of a social or fund-raising nature, or internal to the organisation of the group.

2. They ask others to do things - they discuss an issue, decide that something should happen and approach staff, the Principal, the School Council etc and ask for action.

3. They share decisions - student representatives take part in a broader decision-making body which receives student proposals and then share in a decision, usually on larger, more complex or policy matters.

An effective SRC/JSC should see itself operating in all of these three modes, and should recognise which is appropriate to a particular issue. It should be asking: “How is a decision to be made on this matter? Who has the power to make such a decision?” It might be necessary for the SRC/JSC to draw up a decision-making map of the school, showing what other groups exist, who is on them, what decision they make.

Secondly, we can list some of the common topics that student groups work on. In order of increasing complexity (and, unfortunately, decreasing frequency), I hear of:

- fund-raising: students raise money for charities, for the school, for the student group or for specific projects;
- social: students organise social activities for other students within the school;
- uniforms: students discuss, survey, decide and approach others about uniform details, policies and changes;
- facilities: students discuss existing and possible school facilities (canteen, library, shade areas, classrooms, computers, books etc) and work for improvements and changes to these or to student access to them (this is often linked to fund-raising efforts);
- environment: students develop and implement programs around the school and in their community about environmental issues (that usually, but not always, go beyond cleaning up the yard);
- rules: students discuss, survey, decide and approach others about changes to school rules and other policies (eg discipline);
- advocacy: students advocate for changes on behalf of specific students or groups of students;
- curriculum: students discuss, survey, decide and approach others about matters of teaching and learning (eg assessment, subjects, teaching/learning approaches) at levels of policy, programs or practices.

We can now put these two observations together to form a sort of chart:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>fund raising</th>
<th>social</th>
<th>uniform</th>
<th>facilities</th>
<th>environment</th>
<th>rules</th>
<th>advocacy</th>
<th>curriculm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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This could be a useful chart to monitor what an SRC or JSC has achieved. At the end of a year (or a term) the group could list everything they’ve worked on - successfully or unsuccessfully - and mark it in on the appropriate place on the chart. If an issue has been worked on in different ways, it could be listed in more than one row. Alternatively, the group could write details of all their issues on pieces of paper - the size of the paper giving some indication of the amount of time taken up on working on this issue in that particular way. These big and small pieces of paper can then be stuck in the appropriate square on the chart.

Look at the picture this reveals: What do we notice? What’s the pattern? Do all the activities group in one place? Are there empty squares? Why is this? (For example, it might be that all curriculum issues naturally have to be worked on in a ‘sharing decisions’ mode.)

In taking a student group through this exercise, I usually finish by pointing out that there’s nothing wrong with working on fund-raising and social issues, but that there’s room for concern if a group only works on these and if they work on them in isolation from other areas. After all, what is a school on about - raising money and having social?

If the SRC/JSC is an important part of the school, how come it’s not working on the areas that are central to what schools are about?

We can recognise that the organisation of fund-raising and socials provides valuable experiences in joint action and decision making. But the very effort of doing these activities can take up all the time allocated to the SRC/JSC. (This time commitment is another issue: When do these bodies meet? For how long? Is there any way of building their work into the school curriculum?) One way of getting round this could be to set up social and fund-raising subcommittees or working groups within the SRC/JSC. These bodies would then continue to organise these activities, thus freeing the whole group to get on with other, broader matters.

But in some schools, it’s almost as if walls are built across the above chart. “The SRC is not allowed to jump over this wall!” And despite other schools’ statements about the broad role of the SRC/JSC in the decision-making structure and processes of that school, perhaps it’s the students themselves who continue to behave as if the walls are still there!

Roger Holdsworth
In August 1990, the Northern Suburbs Dispute Settlement Centre received funding from the Victorian Youth Homelessness Taskforce in Preston for a pilot program in resolving family disputes.

The purpose of the pilot program was to provide a safe and neutral setting for young people and their parents to resolve their disputes through mediation. This would attempt to prevent children and young people becoming homeless and/or provide the opportunity for reconciliation within the family.

Within this program, we decided to train young people between the ages of 18 and 25 years to be mediators. From 70 written applications, 19 young people were selected, and completed the three-month training.

After their initial training, the mediators spent between 100 and 200 hours practising in role plays. Tony Love, from the LaTrobe University Psychology Department, allowed the use of facilities there, and most mediators were able to view themselves on video and thus pick up their strengths and weaknesses. Each trainee mediator worked with an experienced mediator, and outside ‘actors’ were employed as disputants.

Gazetted Procedure

After the course, the trainees were tested and given feedback on their performance. If successful, their names were sent to the Attorney General’s Department for inclusion in the Government Gazette.

People initially said that the young mediators would not be reliable, that they’d never stick out the training and that most would drop out. In fact, we didn’t lose one!

Co-Mediation Model

We use a co-mediation model, trying to match the mediators and disputants as best we can. We have a range of mediators, aged from 19 to 62 years. Within this variation of ages, we also have a diverse cultural mix and are able to match ethnic groups. For example, we have Italian-speaking mediators, so it is possible to choose them if the disputants speak only Italian.

In the co-mediation model, mediators work in pairs. We select a young mediator and an older mediator to work together. This way, each of the parties feels more comfortable during the session.

Donna Ritchie, a young mediator, says that her presence is a comfort to teenagers who would otherwise be reluctant to unburden themselves in a roomful of adults. She says that most parents don’t resent her role. “We don’t give advice or judge people,” she says. “We just help people get on the same wavelength. Often people never really get the chance to sit down and talk.”

Types of Disputes

The Dispute Settlement Centre mediates across a broad range of parent and young people disputes from ‘hassles’ with homework, to conflicts resulting in young people leaving home. Problems can arise from:

- a young person’s need for independence;
- issues such as curfews, socialising and ‘groundings’;
- misunderstandings over the need for or the lack of privacy;
- differing cultural expectations;
- difficulties facing step-families in determining their new roles and responsibilities.

Parents have complained that their children are:

- rude, uncooperative and lazy;
- using filthy language to abuse and threaten their parents;
- smoking marijuana inside their house;
- regular underage drinkers;
- defying curfews or groundings to sneak out to pubs and clubs;
- refusing to tidy ‘disgusting’ bedrooms for months;
- mixing with dangerous friends;
- stealing items from the family home.
WHY DOES IT WORK?

It works because people only use the service if they wish to. We do not force anyone to come to mediation. It is up to those individuals to decide for themselves if they can see some benefit in trying mediation. That’s why it works: people come to help themselves. They are prepared and ready to do something about their problem. It is an empowering process to all concerned.

Diane Moloney  
Parent/Youth Project Worker  
Northern Suburbs Dispute Settlement Centre  
430 High Street, Preston 3072  
Phone: (03) 470 6344.

ENTHUSIASM AND COMMITMENT

The willingness of the team of mediators, combined with the commitment that everyone has given to the new project, has been overwhelming. The time, energy and hard work that the group has given has made the project a success. The mediators are prepared to be flexible, so it is not unusual to find a mediation being held on Saturday or Sunday. Interestingly, mediations have been held on Mother’s or Father’s Day!

WHO USES THE SERVICE?

People from all socio-economic backgrounds use mediation. We are preventing young people from leaving home, and sometimes young people who have already left home actually return after discussions have taken place in a mediation session. We see people who often come in a very depressed state. They are often fed up and at a loss about what to do. We are able to talk to them and prepare them for what could be achieved through mediation.

AT THE MOMENT ...

While we are not in a position to train more young people to be mediators at the moment, we currently have a keen and committed group who are kept extremely busy. However, because there appear to be more mother/daughter or mother/parent disputes, we have some excellent young male mediators who would like to be doing more mediations than they are presently doing.
(1) INTRODUCTION:
Mediators welcome and explain rules.

(2) STATEMENT:
Each have their say without interruptions. Mediators read back to check we've all got the picture.

(3) AGENDA:
Main issues/concerns listed on the board.
(4) **EXPLORATION:**

All these issues/concerns fully discussed.

(5) **PRIVATE SESSIONS:**

Each party speaks with mediators privately - on their own (confidential).

(6) **NEGOTIATION:**

Discussing options and negotiating for the future (making offers).

(7) **AGREEMENT:**

Voluntary agreements made by both parties and written up.

*Northern Suburbs Dispute Settlement Centre*

*430 High Street, Preston*

*Phone: (03) 470 6344*
The first training day for 1992 for students from Junior School Councils in the Preston/Reservoir area of Melbourne was held at the Waterdale School Support Centre on May 21st. Approximately 70 students and their teachers from twelve schools attended, and began a year-long process of planning issues for action at their schools.

After a welcome from Graeme Goudie (Manager of the School Support Centre), the students were led in a quick ‘getting-to-know-you’ activity by Christine Edwards of Preston East Primary School. Carmel Brown, DSP Consultant, then interviewed students from Preston West and Preston North East Primary Schools about their involvement with Junior School Councils. The students emphasised how they could influence action within their schools. These interviews led to a general discussion on the roles of Junior School Councillors, in which some very interesting ideas were exchanged. Another fun activity then preceded morning tea.

After the break, we explored the avenues by which JSCs could make a difference when a major issue was identified within a school. A problem was posed: an unsafe playground with dangerous equipment, a dirty sandpit, an unattractive environment etc. What could a JSC do?

Mixed school groups were formed to discuss and decide on possible action plans. A reporter, recorder and time-keeper were chosen by students from within each group, in order to make them operate effectively.

The working groups reported on their discussions to the whole group. Here are some of the ideas:
Group 1:

**Problem:** The playground is a mess. Loose wood on the equipment. The grass has got holes in it. The ladder on the slide is broken. Graffiti: Broken glass in the sand.

**Action:** Check to see if there is money in the school to repair equipment. See the Buildings and Grounds Committee. Make the equipment safe. Let no-one on it until it is safe. Graffiti: Insure the school. See the cleaners. Ask who is responsible: have the responsible kids organise a clean-up. Do it. Continue to keep improving the school neighbourhood. Walls around the school.

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**ADVENTURE PLAY GROUND.**

Remove the sand from the sandpit. Replace the old sand with new sand, and the cleaner can put the cover over night or other students.

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**Group 2:**

Organise a working bee. How will we do this?

1. Advertise in the newsletter or bulletin: “JSCs are having a working bee - come and help us. Volunteers needed.”
2. Ask the JSC to talk to the School Council.
3. JSCs can put notices and posters up.
4. JSCs can make a list of the tools needed - check with the cleaners; conduct a survey.
5. JSCs organise a special lunch for the workers.
6. Fundraising for things to put where needed eg sand, lawn seed.
7. JSCs in charge of the playground: make a committee, draw up a roster to care for the playground. They will check:
   - vandalism
   - teenagers coming in
   - littering
   - check the screws on equipment
   - treat it with care
   - graffiti
Group 3:
1. Ban the playground and board it off temporarily.
2. Plan a working bee around the glass and sand.
3. Talk to the Senior Council.
4. Fundraiser: fete, spelling bee, baby competition (guess the teacher), disco.
5. Put ad in the school newspaper for a ladder.
6. Have the working bee.
8. Fixed playground - thanks to everybody.

Group 4:
1. Talk to the Senior School Council.
2. Point to the glass in the sand-pits, ants and bullants etc, broken equipment.
3. Get new ideas.
4. Work out how much money is needed.
5. Fundraising ideas: lollies in a jar, disco, chocolates, snowballs, an a-thon.
7. Talk to the parents' council and the City Council.
8. Security around the school.

Group 5:
A concept map:
JSC reports to:
- teachers and children
  - get ideas from grades
- Senior School Council
  - school watch
  - working bee
    - posters in shops/on posts
    - families: who can help?
      - unemployed
      - experts in gardening
  - fundraising
    - discos
    - food store
    - sports clinic
    - fete
    - donations for a stall

Group 6:
Repair the adventure playground - the slide and the ladder. Talk to the Buildings and Grounds Committee members: "It's not safe. It's urgent." The working bee. Use money from fund-raising to help with the cost.

Turn the grass over and plant some seeds. Talk to the senior School Council. Get help from the gardeners/teachers/parents/other students. Have a working bee.

Remove the sand from the sandpit. Replace the old sand with new sand. The cleaner or other students can put a cover over it at night.

Fund-raising: skip-a-thon, chocolate drive, disco, sports races, pizza day and ice-cream. Talk to the senior School Council.

Group 7:
1. Talk to Junior School Council
2. Talk to the Principal.
3. Talk to the school's cleaner.
4. Organise a clean-up day:
   - newsletter - working bee
   - roster classes to clean up yard
   - JSC reps give a talk to the grades
5. Paint a mural over the graffiti:
   - children do it
   - classes in turns
   - talk to the art teacher about the design
6. Fund-raising to buy paint:
   - have a disco (50 cents)
   - have a fete
   - competitions (jelly beans, colouring, sport)
   - talk to the parents' group.
Group 8:

Write a letter to the Senior School Council about the playground.

Show the Principal that the playground is unsafe.

Discuss the playground equipment in class meetings. Warn the children that to play on the play equipment is unsafe.

Start to raise money to fix the playground: disco (50 cents), sell icy poles (20 cents), drinks ($1). Garage sale for the school.

Fill up the holes in the ground with dirt and plant seeds. Buy screws and bolts for the playground. Buy a rope ladder.

Have a family day and show them the ground.

Have a working bee. Have a tree planting day with the Preston Council.

Tell the children not to play on the grass until it grows.

Finally, it was suggested that each school group should identify an issue at their own school and follow it through with an action plan in 1992. Further training days will be held in August and November and Junior School Councils will report progress on their action plans at these days.

Meanwhile, one of the schools (Rosebank Primary School) has undertaken to produce a JSC News to link these schools together. The first issue is out, collecting information from the JSCs about their action plans, and a future issue will give summaries of each school’s plans. For more information, contact Steven Milenkoski, President of Rosebank JSC, or Mr Wayne Bolton (Rosebank PS, Ramleh Road, Reservoir 3073 - phone (03) 460 6427).

Therese West
Preston South Primary School
Hotham Street, Preston 3072
ROSEBANK CREATES NEWS

For the past two years, grade 5/6 at Rosebank Primary School (in Reservoir, Victoria) has been responsible for the school’s newsletter.

To us it means selecting the articles relevant for the weekly production to help the school’s communication with the parents. At the beginning of each year, the students and class teacher make a list of the areas (articles) we think are important - like an ‘important dates’ area (for up-coming events), Principal’s report, grade reports, children’s stories, activity pages and lots more. Each student then selects an area they want to write each week. It is then up to the students to write and type the report during our language time. A person that does the Principal’s Report must talk to the Principal before writing the report.

After producing the newsletter for this long, our teacher felt that we could also tackle a newsletter for all Junior School Councils (in the area) as we realised our action plan is about better communication between our JSC and the students in our school, and secondly about better communication between local schools.

Our teacher went to an evaluation meeting about the JSC in-service recently and came back with support from other schools who were interested in combining to help develop good communication between schools and especially JSCs. Another outcome of the meeting was that the JSC in-services would actually have a clearer focus for all groups for the rest of 1992.

The JSC at Rosebank decided at their following meeting to accept the challenge and produce a JSC Newsletter.

Our first challenge was to decide a timeline to ensure we had time to type, edit, add graphics etc to each newsletter.

We had to remember not to be too ambitious with our first effort considering we also must produce our weekly newsletter and many other jobs.

To help develop our skills in the JSC, we decided our ‘Action Plan’ for 1992 will be communication at two levels: 1) within our school; and 2) between schools. We needed to talk and educate the children within our school about the role of the JSC, its value and what it does for the children. Secondly, the communication between the schools means that all the great ideas of JSCs can be promoted. These may include Action Plans, ways of raising money, problems Councils have, various suggestions and lots more. We would expect more areas to be added as more JSCs become aware of the value of such a newsletter.

The production of the JSC newsletter began with three areas being identified for our first release:
1) front page - explaining what’s what;
2) second page - timeline of events;
3) third - information sheet to be returned to us.

While we have ten people on the Council, each group had at least three people working on each page. This included a discussion about what goes on each page, the type of graphics etc.

After each group’s first attempt, we came back together to discuss each page. During this stage, we discussed layout, spelling, graphics, wording of items etc.

Each group went back and this process was continued until everyone was happy with each page, including our grumpy teacher.

Finally our secretary and his assistant made a list of schools to be included on our mailing list. We begged for stamps from the office and posted our first newsletter, hoping for schools’ Action Plans to be returned to us by June 12th.

Rosebank Primary School
Kamileh Rd, Reservoir 3073
Phone: (03) 460 6427

ROSEBANK TIMES

IMPORTANT DATES 22/5/92
May
20th- interschool Sports Round 5
1st- Parents and Friends meeting
3rd- Cross Country
9th- Interschool Sports Round 6
16th- Drama Birthday Holiday

PRINCIPAL’S REPORT

May’s weather has been a very busy week or so. We have had a lot of environmental practices which we have enjoyed very much. We also had a playground accident at school which highlighted the need for us to have emergency numbers. If we cannot contact you and we do not have emergency number, in some situations we have no choice but to call an ambulance. The school does not get billed for ambulance service, you do. Another concern we have is that we rang a doctor who refused to attend. Please be sure that your doctor is going to give your children reliable service.

Because the doctor would not attend, we had no choice about calling an ambulance. We checked our records and I can see that many families need to update the emergency information that we have. Please send this to school as soon as possible.

Thankyou to all the parents and children who have enjoyed the family maths night. I had a great night, I hope you had a lot of fun. We will run another night later in term 3 with the focus on younger children and maths and perhaps special activities for the older children. Thankyou to Mrs. Tarr for providing the child minders and a very big thankyou to Bill Olimitatis for organizing the lovely supper.

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THE YOUTH FUTURES COUNCIL

In October 1991, about 100 people from around Australia met at Coolum on Queensland’s Sunshine Coast to talk and do something about Curriculum Futures in Queensland education. This event was part of a much larger process - the ‘New World New Mind’ conferencing process, which is still continuing. The people at the workshop were from all around Australia - teachers, consultants, futurists, trade unionists, industry leaders, business people and others. They included in their number 35 young people from around Queensland.

The New World New Mind process is innovative in many ways. The issues that it has focused on are of interest to all people - morals and ethics, the economy, the environment, quality of life, Australia’s place in the world. The process has involved people from many walks of life in all its steps, right down to the implementation of ideas arising from the process.

One of the many ideas that came out of the Conference was the Youth Futures Council - an organisation composed of and run entirely by young people. Fittingly enough, the idea was suggested by the Executive Officer of the Ministerial Consultative Council on Curriculum (the organisation responsible for New World New Mind), Murray Bladwell.

The guiding purpose of the Youth Futures Council is to empower young people in order to enrich decision-making and action processes within society. Since the Coolum Workshop, an interim Youth Futures Council consisting of five young people from the Workshop has been creating foundations for the full Council to be formed this year.

The formation of the Council has support from many quarters. In particular, a reference group has been formed to assist the Council and to appoint Councillors. The Council is also well supported by sponsors - BP Australia, Panazz Desktop Publishing, the Brisbane Education Centre and TEAM Professional Services (a consulting firm) have all agreed to sponsor the Council, and other organisations are currently considering sponsorship proposals.

So far most of the Council’s activity has been directed towards setting up an organisational structure. The exceptions to this have been the preparation of a paper entitled ‘Issues Affecting the Future of Young Australians’, involvement of two of the interim Councillors in the Editorial Advisory Group preparing publications from the New World New Mind Conference, and the submission of an Issues Paper to the Queensland Government’s Youth Policy Project.

Over the next few months, this will change as the Council makes a more direct contribution to society. Projects the Council will be involved in include the convening of forums, participation in the Youth Policy development and providing a youth viewpoint to assist organisations.

The full Queensland Council will consist of 15 to 18 young people, with the intention of eventually establishing similar councils in other states. This is not many in a voluntary organisation. One of the Council’s most important assets will be its associated Youth Futures Network. This Network will consist of all those interested in helping achieve the Council’s purpose - a much larger number than those in the Council itself.

The Network is the Council’s strength. What a small group of people cannot achieve may be simple for hundreds or thousands. The Council is also the Network’s strength, encouraging, stimulating and coordinating activity by members of the Network.

It is through the Network that most of the Council’s direct contributions will be made. Network members with ideas for projects they would like to carry out can contact the Council with their ideas, receiving suggestions, advice and, most importantly, contact with other members of the Network who may be interested in helping with your project. This may mean other people who live close to you or perhaps someone in another state with a particular interest in your project area.

To take an example, suppose you were a student who wished to reduce damage to the environment caused by Australia’s way of life. There are many things you might do. One could be to organise local recycling facilities, encourage schools and businesses to use these facilities and to promote the value of recycling. This could be done with the aid of a few other people living nearby with an interest in the environment.

On the other hand, you might decide to form a state-wide school environment council which would produce materials raising environmental awareness in schools, encouraging recycling and other pollution-reducing actions in the communities around schools. This would involve people from all over the state - students, teachers, people with environmental, organisational and publishing know-how and possibly lobbying for financial support and recognition by governmental and other bodies.
The point is that you do not have to be all these things - environmental expert, student, lobbyist and publisher - for the idea to be a success. You only need to be one person with limited knowledge and an idea. The Council can put you in contact with other people to bring your idea to fruition.

Another possible example could be that of a parent in a small town dependent on its existence on beef production. Most young people in the town go on to get jobs related to beef production, yet receive little or no training to prepare them for this. Apprenticeship schemes are unsuitable for many of the occupations and no local colleges or TAFE's exist to cater for this obvious but long overlooked or ignored need. A possible solution to this problem could involve programs in nearby schools oriented to local industry and setting up links with TAFE or other colleges to provide a course suitable for prospective meat industry workers, possibly using older and more experienced local people as instructors.

This sort of idea would be great for the town if it could be properly implemented. All it needs is contact with the right sort of people.

Another major area of activity for the Youth Futures Council will be encouraging and organising youth representation in public and private sector decision-making bodies. As mentioned, two Councillors are already involved in an advisory role to an organisation that reports to the Queensland Minister for Education. Other organisations have expressed interest in the idea of youth representation on company boards, management committees and various review groups.

In addition to this direct representation by young people in decision-making bodies, the Council hopes to stimulate debate and raise awareness amongst people on issues of concern for the future. This will be done through the convening of forums and publication of papers to stimulate thought. These activities will involve all people, not just young people, as young people and adults working in partnership towards a better future.

The Council is currently South-East Queensland based, but will expand to encompass the rest of Queensland and eventually other states (and other countries). Having Network membership around Australia gives us a huge start in forming Councils in other states. No matter where in Australia or overseas you live, we would like to hear from you and have you become part of the Network.

The most important thing for the Council is to allow people, especially young people, to make a positive contribution to our society, through direct action and input to decision making, within a larger context that guides and coordinates these achievements, whilst being changed by them. The more people involved, the better!

Michael Nielsen
AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION FOR ADOLESCENT HEALTH (AAAH)

NATIONAL CONFERENCE 1992
Melbourne, 18th-20th November

Workers and young people involved in the adolescent health field are invited to attend the forthcoming national conference of the Australian Association for Adolescent Health (AAAH), to be held in Melbourne from 18 - 20 November 1992.

“Participants will be able to obtain a national perspective of adolescent health needs and issues, and look at innovative models of health service delivery,” says Dot Campbell, Chairperson of the Conference organising committee.

“A feature of the Conference will be the opportunity for participants to meet in ‘industry’ groups, where they can discuss issues and models in areas of mutual interest.”

INVITATION TO YOUNG PEOPLE TO PRESENT WORKSHOPS, PANELS ETC

“Within the program structure, which includes Australian and overseas speakers, panel discussions and workshops, we are keen to include the views and experiences of young people - both from the point of view of observers and as presenters,” says Dot.

Individual young people, groups of young people, or projects involving young people, who would like to share their experiences of adolescent health or adolescent health service delivery at the Conference, are urged to contact Andrew Gray (Phone (03) 489 4968) as soon as possible.

The organisers would also welcome expressions of interest from all individuals or groups who would like to present papers or workshops at the conference.

For further information, or to request registration forms, please contact:

AAAH Conference
PO Box 268
Clifton Hill VIC 3068

or phone Andrew Gray on (03) 489 4968.
The following Foxfire publications are now available at a once-only sale price!

**FOXFIRE: 25 YEARS**


This is the most recently available book from and about Foxfire. Its editors include students who visited Australia in 1990 and 1991. There are interviews with Wigginton, early Foxfire students and community members. This is a dynamic illustration of the classroom approaches underlying the Foxfire approach to teaching and learning.

**SPECIAL PRICE: $20 (WAS $30)**


This came out just before Christmas 1990 and was a best-seller in the US. Put together, in the Foxfire style, by students (including those visiting in 1991), it is a handsome, hard-cover volume which illustrates the Foxfire approach, as well as being a great gift. Limited numbers of copies are available!

**SPECIAL PRICE: $20 (Normally $30)**

**FOXFIRE 9**, edited by Eliot Wigginton, Doubleday.

The ninth and most recent collection of articles from the Foxfire classes at Rabun County School - an essential illustration of what students can produce. Limited numbers of copies are available.

**SPECIAL PRICE: $20 (Normally $30)**

Also still available at regular prices - limited copies of:

**SOMETIMES A SHINING MOMENT**


Wigginton outlines the history of Foxfire, its philosophy, underlying approaches and details of his classes, lesson by lesson.

An inspiring and informative book with tons (oops tonnes) of ideas.

**$25**

**All prices include packaging and postage.**

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**ALL NOW AVAILABLE FROM CONNECT: ORDER FORM ON THE BACK PAGE.**

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**NEWS & REVIEWS:**

**A YOUTH BILL OF RIGHTS?**

The Resistance group will be launching a Youth Bill of Rights at their National Conference (Melbourne, July 4th - 6th 1992). It is intended to include statements about environmental protection, economic justice and democratic rights - a statement "by and for young people about the world, its problems and the challenge before this generation".

Resistance invites all young people to contribute to the bill of rights. "We want it to reflect the needs and interests of all young people." Suggestions should be sent to the Resistance National Office, PO Box 515, Broadway NSW 2007 - phone (02) 690 1230.

Jorge Jorquera

Connect June 1992

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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:

Rosebank Times (Rosebank PS, Vic) 28/5/92
JSC News (C/o Rosebank PS, Vic) No 1, 1992

OTHER PUBLICATIONS:

Options (Youth Bureau, Canberra, ACT) April/May 1992
Collective Notes (COSHG, Vic) Nos 72, 73; May, June 1992
Democracy and Education (Athens, Ohio, USA) Vol 6 No 4 Summer 1992
NIE Update (ANPA, USA) Vol 18 No 1, Winter 1992
National Coalition News (NCACS, USA) Vol 16 No 4 Winter 1992
Curriculum Perspectives (ACSA) Vol 12 No 1, April 1992
SCIP Newsletter (Red Cross, Vic) 18 May '92

JSC REGISTER UPDATE

We are hoping to present a major update to the list of active Junior School Councils (in Victorian primary schools) in a future issue of Connect. For the moment, however, the following schools have contacted us and asked to be added to the list (see Connect 71, December 1991):

Eastmoor PS, Leo Street, East Bentleigh 3165. Contact: Daniel Casey (Secretary).
Watsonia North PS, Sharps Road, Watsonia 3087. Contact: Anne Davies.
Preston East PS, Sylvester Grove, Preston 3072. Contact: Christine Edward (teacher), Brenda Longmaid (Principal).
Koonung Heights PS, Belmore Road, Box Hill 3128. Contact: Sue Beard (teacher).

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.)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description/Pages/Cost</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>371</td>
<td>&quot;Issues Influencing the Future of Young Australians&quot; and other Youth Futures Council documents (Q) (11 pp; $1.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>372</td>
<td>Testimony of Dr Arthur Pearl re New Careers Legislation (California, USA), Feb 22, 1990 (8 pp; $0.80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>373</td>
<td>Our Junior School Councils by JSCs from Lalor Park, Greenbrook, Lalor West and Meadow Glen Primary Schools (similar to insert in Connect 72, Dec 1991) (12 pp; $1.20)</td>
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