"I have learned to make up my mind...."

SPECIAL GIANT DOUBLE ISSUE!

• 2 JSC Network Reports
• 2 articles from Nathalia Secondary College
• 2 Guides to Local Government
• 2 Newspaper Productions
• 3 Magazines
• 7 Community/Alternative Schools

AND MORE!
This Issue

Difficult and sad times in Victoria!
This is brought home to readers of Connect with the news that Rosebank Primary School - a regular contributor of our Junior School Council articles - has been forced to close by the Victorian government. The JSC at Rosebank has produced a wonderful district JSC newsletter throughout 1992. A report from them is contained in the Preston/Reservoir Network article.

They’re not the only one - forced closures at many schools, including Northlands, Coburg North, Newlands, Ardoch-Windor, Flemington Morwell Height and many others, have hit hard for those attempting to support the active participation of students in their education. These schools will be missed.

Yet participation remains a hard concept. Once students have experienced a real grass-roots democratic approach to education, that spark is difficult to kill - even in difficult times.

Connect finishes its 13th year (and enters its 14th) re-pledging support and encouragement to real and meaningful student participation at all levels of education.

Connect was pleased to note that the plastics program at Cobden Technical School highlighted in the last issue of Connect (#76) has won the Victorian classroom Curriculum Innovations Award for 1992. In this issue, Nathalia Secondary College reports on how they used their 1991 award. Also reports from Nathalia on development of another magazine and on a unique literacy camp that has grown from and applies the same principles.

There are also reports in this issue of student publications from Bright, Shepparton Melton and the AAHH Conference.

This double issue allows Connect to include a special swag of reading to keep you enthused and energetic over the holiday season. It includes (as well as the above articles) a guide to local government for young people, accounts of small community/alternative schools, a trip to the Philippines and a report from on Junior School Councils in the Lalor/Epping and Preston/Reservoir areas. And more! Happy holidays; we hope to see you refreshed in '93!

Next Issue

What are the challenges for student participation in 1993? We hope to hear from you for the February issue - copy due by the end of January please!

Roger Holdsworth.

COVER

A dilemma from a Junior School Council Training Day evaluation exercise. Cartoon by Bronwyn Halls - as are cartoons on pages 19-24 and 31.
This is an article about a camp held at the Dharnya Centre in Northern Victoria over three days in October 1992.

It was a camp essentially about the celebration of the human spirit. After that, and inclusive of it, it was a camp made up of students with predominantly major learning problems.

There were 27 students in all, from five different secondary schools, who came together in the flooded Barmah forest, with their teachers and local artists.

The funding for this camp came from the North Central Country Education Project. Without their support, and the constant creative guidance provided by Gordon Dowell as CEP coordinator, this camp could not have happened.

The format of this article will swing backwards and forwards from beginning to end. It will present like the lanterns that the students made. In each lantern there was one candle flame lit, but the light that they threw together, defined a new space.

This article attempts to capture that experience.

Lyn Loger  
Nathalia Secondary College  
PO Box 42, Nathalia 3638  
Phone: (058) 662 331

THIS CAMP

I guess when there's no one else around  
It's quiet and shy  
and I guess there's a different atmosphere  
when the forest floor is dry.  
How beautiful anyway, to be in the bush  
and sitting here  
knowing no-one expects you  
to move fast, change to a higher gear.  
I love the emus  
and the rosellas  
and even the snakes because in this place  
I understand we all have what it takes.  
The fire lights up the imagination  
and the night  
and there's something about nobody having to be wrong or right.

Vera Hitchcock (student, Rochester SC)  
Jenni Fraine  
13.10.92

The Camp: this sign was flooded; we went over here by boat!  
Our camp could not have gone ahead without the help of Richard Houlihan, the Head Ranger, and his staff.
Beginnings

In 1990, Eliot Wigginton, a teacher from America, and his two students, Chris and Lee, visited Australia talking about their Foxfire books. These are books that Eliot’s students have successfully written over the past 25+ years in Rabun County High School, Georgia, USA.

They are based on three major principles:

1. The projects are fully student driven. Students are in charge of the finances, elect their own committees and set their own goals.

2. All work is reality based. The audience goes beyond the teacher to the community.

3. The work has academic integrity. It meets the skill requirements set by current educational practice.

After Eliot ran a workshop in Nathalia, students at Nathalia Secondary College set about writing their own book, using the above principles. The result was Times Have Changed, a book of interviews with members of the local community. The book won the local classroom section of the State Curriculum Innovation Awards.

The Foxfire principles have been again used this time, but in a different way; this time it’s for a Literacy Camp. Two other ideas have been added, which are relevant to students with literacy needs:

4. We all need to be larger than ourselves. Major learning problems tend to trap individuals within themselves; they work against this essential need.

5. When there is a celebration of the individual within the group, specific difficulties, shared by each member, can be worked through. Positives and negatives are then held in a correct focus, like the relationship that exists between sunshine and shadow.

First Faxed Information for Students:

From Nathalia Secondary College:

Six students can go from each school. At Nathalia we have six boys going. Each of these boys has had a hard time with English and/or Maths.

- One of the boys is very clever. He can understand a lot of things at year 12 level, but he is only now learning how to read and write. He is Stuart Robins. (He’s 14.)

- One of the boys only comes to school now and then because he is always getting into trouble. He would like to meet other boys like himself. He is Jeff Simmons. (He’s 15.)

We sent faxes to each other:

Hello Jason,

I am Jarrod Tyler from Rochester and I am our group leader. Some of the things we’d like to do are: bushwalking, torch hike, canoeing. Our group would like to organise a ‘Lantern Stalk’ which needs to be done at night. Would you like to have a disco on the last night? And we will be able to bring cassettes and a tape recorder.

If you want to contact us, our school number is 054 841 844 ... or you can ring me at home. See you on the 12th, 13th, 14th Jason.

Bye.

from Jarrod Tyler

Hello, my name is Miss Marion Fitton and I’m the teacher from Rochester Secondary College who will be coming to the camp at Dhamya.

We are all excited about the camp and the kids are looking forward to it. I’m happy to help run any of the activities you organise. I enjoy cooking, bushwalking, canoeing (I’m not very good at this though!) and fishing.

Bye.

Marion Fitton

PROPOSAL OF THE IDEA

To the Committee

I have a few ideas about this project and they are: We should have a whole day together at school because it would be good to talk to them to see what their problems are. I think it is a great opportunity to talk to people about this problem.

Year 10 student
Nathalia Secondary College - student leader
Support and Visitors

We had three adults - all successful people - come and talk to us about their learning difficulties.

Others we had read about in the paper, and we invited them. They couldn’t come but sent us messages:

Darryl Robb: is “an Australian inventor who failed to finish primary school because he couldn’t read or write properly”. Darryl sent us a tape about his difficulties and wanted to fly down and join us but time was against it.

Tim Fischer is the National Party leader. In the newspaper article, he “said he was rubbish by fellow students because of a speech impediment”.

Tim Fischer wrote to Jason Lummis:

Dear Jason

Please accept my best wishes in your role as camp leader for the camp next week and to all participants for a successful and enjoyable three days.

Unfortunately, society often judges people on their weaknesses, rather than their strengths. Minor learning difficulties, speech impediments and appearances can often overly influence the way people perceive others.

In my own case, I suffer from a minor speech impediment which I have worked hard to overcome throughout my school and working life. I am now very fortunate to be the Federal Leader of the National Party of Australia, which frequently involves making public speeches, at events ranging from small country town halls to major speeches in the Australian Parliament and, at times, overseas.

I wish your camp well and stress that whatever you want out of life is achievable through determination and persistence.

Yours sincerely

Tim Fischer MP
Jenni Fraine

We had Jenni Fraine, a community poet, come and write poems for each one of us.

“It was my dream to live being a writer.”
Interview with Jenni Fraine

How did I become a community poet?

I’ve just realised that one of your teachers here is Marion Fitton. We were at school together. A lot of my school mates became teachers; I did too. I loved Geography, but every school I went to I was given English.

I discovered poetry. For many years it was my dream to live being a writer, but poetry is a poor man’s activity - only a favoured few make it.

The last job I was in was a TAFE College, teaching poetry. Just before the TAFE contract ran out, I set up a stall at the Red Hill market, saying: ‘Here I am, I’m a poet’. A lot of people came up and asked for a poem and paid me for it and then invited me to festivals.

It was a series of life’s accidents, a natural progression.

Where Do I Get My Ideas From?

Inspiration is always there. I’ll show you by writing you a poem:

Jenni: What do you want a poem about?
Jason: The Murray.
Jenni: Do you want it to rhyme or not?
Jason: Yes.
Jenni: What was in your mind when you thought of the Murray?
Jason: The Bush.
Jenni: Would you normally think about it?
Jason: Sometimes.
Jenni: Where do you go to school?
Jason: Nathalia. I go water skiing on the Murray.
Jenni: You go water skiing on the Murray? If this is your poem, what would I put in it that would be satisfying for you?
Jason: How nice it is. It’s a pleasure to water ski in it. The animals. That’s about it.

THE MURRAY

Normally I just skim across the surface -it’s pleasure. The skis make a path; I study the birds and animals at leisure. Today suddenly we’re close to it and a kookaburra calls. Wattle bird answers, corellas spread the word, the music enthrals. The river brings us life, peace and a continuous thread I appreciate it with my heart, soul and head.

Jason Lunnis
Written by Jenni in 5 minutes

WILD HORSES

Wild horses could own me I would run with them, flaring my nostrils and charging away from danger. Wheeling as one they seem like birds of the earth, each of them keeping the others safe and being taken care of, in turn. I would love to own one, or a whole bunch, and stampede, beating a tattoo on the ground, vanishing into the bush, homeward-bound.

Julie Matthews
Jenni Fraine
13.10.92
My Thoughts of the Dharnya Camp

On Sunday I thought about the Dharnya camp. I tried to think what Dharnya is like. I thought that it was all trees and a place to stay but I was wrong about Dharnya. There is a lot more things about Dharnya that I didn’t think of.

Dharnya is a place where you can go to think and to forget about school or everything or everyone.

When I first came to Dharnya, it was on a boat. It is called the Kingfisher. I loved going on the boat and seeing everything.

And when I got to Dharnya I walked around the place to get to know it. And think it was so great. There is nothing wrong with this place; it is very peaceful. The trees, water, people, fires and everything around - it is so beautiful to see and do. I love the scenery. At nights you can hear noises.

There are a lot of things to do here. I can see people playing and they are happy they are here.

I have seen a bush before, but not like this, for the whole time I have been here I have not thought about school. That is a bad thing for me, because school is my life.

Back to the camp: there are a lot of games to play. And people are getting wet by the bucketful. At night the fire is going. You can stay out there, but you must get eaten alive by mosquitos, but so far I haven’t had bites. You look at the fire and you think a lot, and you think you can live here forever.

You walk around here and you see trees, water and flowers and you let your mood under, and the sun plays down on you and you feel great being here.

The trees in the water are old, but very beautiful. Dharnya is a great place to be in - it is calm. And you get your money’s worth. It is special to some people and it is beautiful, and it shows the animals, and protects them from everything in danger.

The people make me laugh and they make me happy.

Dharnya is a place where you can forget about your reading problem for a little while.
And that is a good thing too.

It is Thursday 13th, 1992. I have had a great three days at Dharnya.

Vera

Keeping In Touch

After the camp, we developed a newsletter. Would you like to contact us?
We want to have adults with some learning difficulties and students joining together to help each other.
We want students to support each other.

BAHARMAMAH

Newsletter Number 1 Volume 1

November 1992

This Newsletter is published for the members of the Literacy Groups and other interested students in the following schools:

St Mary’s, Nathalia
Nathalia Secondary College
Rochester Secondary College
St Augustine’s, Kyabram
Rushworth Secondary College

The name is a reminder of our 1992 camp at the Dharnya Centre at Barmah, and was suggested by Melissa Salau of Rushworth Secondary College.

Emblem or Logo: A collection of joined hands in a circle, suggested by Stuart of Nathalia Secondary College.

This Newsletter was agreed to at a meeting of Nathalia and Rushworth Secondary College students at Rushworth on Friday 9th November 1992.

We hope this newsletter will be published five times a year with the students from each school taking a turn to publish. Rushworth Secondary College is responsible for Volume 1 Number 1.

We hope to provide a forum where students can present news about: books, discos, news, videos, concerts, meetings, music, food, pen-friends, photographs, etc.

Letters to people: Melissa, Kate and Jodie would like to say hi to Jason, Troy, Danny, Jarrod, Bogger and Lin.

Best wishes from Melissa, Josie, Peter, Daryl, Talyah, Kate and Jeff. Question:

Who is doing Newsletter No. 2?
What does it mean to be homeless in Melton? What are the local issues that affect young people in the area? What action can students suggest?

In 1991, students from the three secondary colleges in Melton (on the western fringe of Melbourne) began studying issues of youth homelessness in their Australian Studies classes. The approach used was one of research and action. Instead of just learning about homelessness in their classes, the students investigated related issues in their local community, and designed and carried out mini-research projects to discover what was happening.

In 1992, this project has continued and has involved students from six classes.

Instead of producing a book of research reports (as in 1991 - see Educating Others; Educating Ourselves*), the classes decided to publish a newspaper reporting on the results of their investigations.

Three thousand copies of The Homeless Age have been distributed in the area through schools and community agencies. It is hoped that this publication will make local people more aware of issues associated with youth homelessness, and of student proposals for local developments.

Articles in The Homeless Age include reports on what younger students know about youth homelessness, on community services available in the area (including specific youth services), on underage drinking and smoking, on changes to the bus service, on the VCE, work, housing and volunteering.

Students wrote these reports based on their major pieces of research during the year. To fulfil the course’s ‘presentation’ work requirement, they had to appear before an editorial committee of students and teachers to argue how their article was relevant to a newspaper on youth homelessness, and why it deserved to be published. In many cases, the editors requested further clarification before accepting it.

A smaller group of students then spent a day putting the newspaper together - making decisions about how best to present the information, and commissioning cartoons and illustrations from other students.

Copies of The Homeless Age are available from the Melton schools - contact John Freyne or Lisa Fusinato at:

Wilson Park Secondary College
Wilson Road, Melton South 3338
Phone: (03) 743 4622

* Educating Others; Educating Ourselves - a collection of student research reports on local issues in relation to youth homelessness - and its companion report Youth Homelessness: A Curriculum Approach - The Melton Experience, are both available from the Small Business Management Group (contact: Margaret D’Cruze), Melton Secondary College, Coburns Road, Melton 3337. Phone: (03) 743 3322.
Cost: $10 plus $2 postage each;
$20 plus $3 postage for both.

A Helping Hand for the Homeless

How many people know of Melton services for youth homelessness?

Not many, says Dee Berg, Principal of Melton Secondary College, reporting her survey of young people:

"I asked them, 'What are you doing about youth homelessness?' And they said, 'We don't know what to do.'"

"We need more information about the services that are available. It's not enough just to have a service, you've got to let people know it exists."

The MELTON BUS SERVICE Improvements Welcomed

Melton’s youth have been working to get the improvements they had
asked for on the bus service. The bus service has been improved to
make it more convenient for residents. The improvements include
new timetables, more frequent services, and improved stops.

Connect October-December
We discovered in 1991 that Bright has a fascinating history, and we’ve now told others about it through our magazine, *Diamond Minutes*.

The idea all started when Roger Holdsworth came to our school in March 1991. He let us know about a method of finding out about our local history. He met with us (then in year 9) and suggested that we produce an oral history magazine.

We were sceptical of the idea at first because we had no idea of what was involved in making a magazine.

Later that year (1991), we took up the idea again and thought of subjects we could research. Some of the ideas that the students came up with were the history of local buildings - because we would like to know what was here before we were - and the gold rush years - as this forms a major part of our history. We were also very interested in the experiences of local residents in the formation of Bright and District.

To get us started, the Country Education Project gave us a large incentive of $1800 to fund the project.

We met in Wangaratta with students and teachers from Nathalia Secondary College who had just completed their own local history magazine. Along with Eliot Wigginton from the *Foxfire* magazine in America. They showed us some techniques in interviewing people and putting a magazine together. We were also warned of mistakes that can happen.

We purchased a small tape-recorder and our English teacher contacted people who she knew would be glad to help us with stories for our magazine.

We prepared questions to do with the topics we were talking about. For example, I interviewed Miss Price about the Bright School and asked her about the classes, teachers and uniforms when she was a secondary student from 1918 to 1920.

We did not know what to expect and went along to our interviews feeling nervous. Once you got talking, however, you relaxed and everything ran along smoothly. We didn’t need our questions after a while, because they have heaps of
information and kept talking all about their experiences and memories.

After the interviews, everyone then transcribed their own tapes, which took a long time because we had to edit them. We then wrote up the final copy and collected any necessary photos to go with the article.

Next, our Graphic Designer Jock Kennedy set to work laying out, and two students and their English teacher edited the final copies until they were perfect. Once they were, we had to check with our interviewees to make sure everything was correct, because when we transcribed the tapes, we may have made a mistake, or the person may have felt that they needed to add something that they had left out. Most of the interviewees were happy with the articles the way they were.

Now we have 400 copies of our Diamond Minutes magazine printed, and we may need many more printed as there is much demand from the local residents. Other schools have been very interested also. I think we may have started something here!

We hope to put the money from this magazine towards a computer, so that in future years, the students can do every part of producing a magazine, including the layout.

From our experience, we would definitely recommend other groups and schools to produce their own magazine. It is very educational for students to learn about the area they live in.

The only things we have to tell any person thinking about producing a magazine is that you have to be totally devoted to finishing the magazine, and you must set yourselves deadline dates, or else you'll never finish anything.

Many thanks to Mr Holdsworth for coming to our magazine launching and for giving us the idea in the first place.

We cannot possibly thank everybody individually, so to all the people who helped, advised and participated in the production of our magazine, a big thank-you to you all!

Tracey Stephens and Linda Western
Bright P-12 College
PO Box 30, Bright 3741
Phone: (057) 551 166

Copies of Diamond Minutes are available from the school (address above) for $7.95 plus $2.00 postage.
Following the success of Times Have Changed, we've started on another book at Nathalia Secondary College. It's called Living in the Past.

There are 20 students working on the book. We're up to using Publish It. Some people are well ahead; others are having trouble.

Last Monday, Mr McKenzie (Linda's dad) came to school and did some bush cooking for us. We had stew and scones. Here's the recipe for 20 people. It tasted great!

Stew (for 20)

- 4 kg stewing steak
- 3 tins mixed vegetables
- 3 kg washed potatoes
- 1 tin Gravy Boat
- 2 packets French Onion soup
- 3 large brown onions

Scones

- 2 kg self-raising flour
- 1 egg
- 1 litre milk
- 1 tub margarine (jam)

Organising the Book

Here is some information about how we are working on this book:

Timetable

Over the page is a clock timetable we've worked out as a way of checking we've done all the steps:

Page 11
Contents

This will be what’s on our contents page. We all chose our own subjects and then we organised them into chapters:

On the Move
Old time drovers - 8 pages
Rabbit plagues

The River
Paddleboats
Fishing Yarns - 6 pages
1974 Floods - 6 pages
Jennie Fraine

Barwo and Fashion
Barwo - 4 pages
Fashion - 7 pages

The Bush
Paddy King/Aboriginal middens - 4 pages
Bush Cooking
Charcoal Burners

Sports Clubs
Nathalia’s Best Football Club Recorder
Lachlan Magnusson - 3 pages
Picola Netball Club

Name and Organisation

We had five different suggestions for the title. We voted and Stuart Bell’s idea won.

This is our page by page diagram. Some people will need more than their four pages; some less.

Chapter Headings

Here’s the way we decide on chapter headings. Michelle and Karen set out different possibilities on the computer for us, and then we vote:

Paper and Design

Mr Sage (our computer teacher) came in and showed us what sort of colours we could use for the cover. We picked Kangaroo Grey for our colour. Leon Flanner (a student) organised us for this vote. The total price was $45 for 250 sheets. We had a range to choose from: Reindeer, Conqueror, Recycled. We chose Recycled to be environmentally friendly. We will also choose recycled white paper for printing.

Linda and Natalie are surveying everyone about the design for the cover. Stuart is working on borders for pages. Dawn, Michelle and Karen are in charge of overall costings for photos and for the finer details of Publish It presentation, size of headings, margins etc.

Neil Jackson is checking that the minutes of meetings are typed up.
Work Done So Far

This is what some of us have done for the book. It shows what we are working on and how we have gone about it. You'll have to get the book to see the full stories.

1974 Floods

Chris Davis and Shane Carter are working on the 1974 floods. They asked for information through the school newsletter:

HISTORY OF NATHALIA
1974 floods

Our class is doing a book on the history of Nathalia and I am looking for some stories or some photos of the 1974 floods. If you can help, please contact Chris Davis or Shane Carter at the school. (66 2331)

They also went on a cruise on the Barmah Lakes to see if they could find a willow tree called 'Bunny Digger' Willow. Lots of rabbits lived in the tree when the floods covered all their burrows. They lived off the leaves.

We paid for the trip for them with our money. They took the day off school so that they could go on the trip.

Today, me and Shane went for a boat ride on the Kingfisher. The driver and the ranger talked about birds, trees and the way the rivers build themselves up. Unfortunately, we didn't see the tree we were looking for, but it was very interesting and enjoyable. There were 29 people on the boat (one spare seat).

On Budg Creek, they had a floating toilet tied to a tree for anyone who wanted to go.

We used all the film, and took photos of birds, flooded areas, nests and swamps. I think the trip would be a good experience for anyone of any age.

Chris Davis

Fishing Stories

Dale and Peter have been working on funny fishing stories. Here's one of them:

In 1906, a young lady lost her ring down the sink. Amazingly, in 1942 (37 years later), a man was fishing and he caught a fish and sitting on the bottom of the fish was the lady's ring. He heard that it was one of his wife's friends, so he returned it as good as new.

by Mrs Coghlan

They also put an ad in our newsletter:

Parents & Friends: Sounds a Bit Fishy

The Local History Group would like to know if anybody out there would have some good fishing stories. If you have, could you please contact Dale James and Chris Baksh at school on 662 331 or send them to PO Box 42, Nathalia 3638.

Mrs Jepson, who lives at Barmah, did the drawings for the stories. Here's the one about the ring:
Aboriginal Middens

Chris has been doing an article on Aboriginal Middens. The middens (Aboriginal ovens) are on his grandfather’s place at Kotupna. His grandfather’s name is Clive Rathbone.

There are three middens on the property. The largest one is about 13 metres wide. The ash in it is so dense, it doesn’t grow grass around the ring. There are clumps like stones, but they are probably mud, used for cooking, that’s been fired in the ashes. One photo shows the deep water hole near the largest midden.

Four of us went with Mrs Loger out to the farming property. We took the morning off. We had a great morning tea of cakes, coffee scrolls and sandwiches. It’s not all hard work! Mr Rathbone had stacks more information. He’s going to photocopy it for us.

Charcoal Burners

Niki has been writing about his dad who is one of the last charcoal burners left in the Barmah Bush. We tried four times to go out there for an excursion, but we never made it. Too much rain each time we tried, and then the bush was flooded.

Old Time Drovers

I went with Peter around to Chief Hutchins’ place and Algie Daniels’ place. They’re neighbours. Algie breeds horses and has really small Shetland ponies that he uses for fair rides for children. Both Algie and Chief were drovers with Chief’s dad. They left school at 13 to go droving. Algie’s now 70 and Chief’s in his 50s.

Fashion in Nathalia

We broadened the idea so it followed national trends. Here are some of the findings. We interviewed some of the local ladies about fashion in their day. We discovered some very interesting facts about this topic. We also collected some photos from the Magnussons.

Picola Netball Club

I put this into the local newsletter to receive more ideas and help:

The LOCAL HISTORY GROUP would like to know if anybody out there would have some information or funny stories about Picola Netball Club. If you have, could you please contact Kathy Baksh on 662 331 or send to PO Box 42, Nathalia 3638

Mark Quarrell and Stuart Bell

We wanted to write something about Nathalia Football Club. Lockie Magnusson had so much information (30 pages, every goal and goal keeper recorded since 1956) that we thought it would be better to teach him how to use a computer so he could write his own book. Mr Sage lent him one from the school. We’ve been out a few times, but it’s hard to keep organising teachers to run us out and pick us up again.

So we decided to interview Lockie for the book.

For more information about Living in the Past and Times Have Changed, contact:

Lyn Loger, Nathalia Secondary College, PO Box 42, Nathalia 3638  Phone: (058) 662 331

The student publishing group at Wanganui Park Secondary College in Shepparton (Victoria) - see Connect 76 - have completed, published and launched their magazine: Auspicious.

More information from:

Michael Short
Wanganui Park Secondary College
Parkside Drive
Shepparton 3630
Phone: (058) 213 988

What would happen if you gave a group of year 10 students the chance to produce a magazine about their town and themselves?

The result would be Auspicious
In term 2, 1992, the Nathalia Secondary College SRC (Victoria) accepted the $1000 State Curriculum Innovation Award won by the school in the Classroom Section in 1991. This was won for the Times Have Changed Book written by students at the school (see Connect 71).

The book was based on Foxfire Principles. Some of the outcomes of Foxfire are very similar to what happens in Australia.

Many projects occur in Australian schools which are student driven. The difference with the Foxfire approach is that Eliot Wigginton has used it for 25 years and has now clearly articulated the principles upon which it has worked.

The three main elements of these are:
1. The project is student selected and student run. This means that the students are in charge of the finances, elect their own committees, work through their own timelines and accept responsibility for the successes and failures. The teacher is a facilitator.
2. The audience for the students must be outside the classroom. The project is reality based, not an exercise. Examples are writing a book, making a video, creating a wetlands, park area, sculpture garden, solar car etc.
3. The work must have academic integrity. All the skills required of students by the school need to be outlined and met in the running of the project.

The $1000 award has now been handed over to the SRC so that further student grants can be awarded; this time, grants are being awarded by our own student body.

How to Apply for a Grant
1. Discuss possibilities with your students;
2. Select a possible project;
3. Cost it as best you can with the students;
4. Have them write up an application to the SRC which will include such things as:
   - project idea
   - approximate costings
   - people involved
   - timelines for completion of the project.

They will need to know that the SRC will probably want to have some representatives speak to them about the application and that they will be accountable to the SRC for the carrying out of the project. This will involve them in presenting updates to the SRC on how they are going.

5. The SRC will make decisions about whether they will fund one or more projects.
who didn’t have breakfast at home or if there wasn’t anything for them to have at home; $95 went to a Horticulture class which is putting the money towards beautifying the school grounds with plants and shrubs.

“With each project, there was a requirements clearly set out that students had to present their progress and evaluation on the project. After each project idea was presented to the SRC, we had to make a hard decision as to whether that project was worthwhile to support with the Foxfire money. It was a good learning experience in terms of decision making.”

Alison Cobbedick
Year 9 Nathalia SRC Representative

‘Junior Educators’ in the Philippines

During the July holidays, six student representatives from St Columba’s College in Essendon (Victoria), accompanied by four teachers, spent ten inspiring days in the Philippines. The purpose of the tour was to grasp an understanding of global realities and to realise the extent of social injustice existing in a third world country. A major part of this project involved relating our experiences back to our school community.

Our experiences - some of them profoundly sad, other enlightening - provided us with the wealth of knowledge with which we returned. Speaking to the people, listening to their stories and gaining an impression of their culture, gave us an insight into the lives of the Filipinos as they see it, without media distortions.

One issue we encountered was the battle for educational rights by an organisation called the Student Christian Movement (SCM). Members of this group are university students in Manila who are trying to protect their right to freedom of speech. Coming from a country where freedom of speech is taken for granted, we were appalled to hear of students speak of their encounters with the authorities while rallying for their cause - encounters which often ended with the use of tear gas. This dialogue helped bring home the stark contrast between freedom of speech in a third world nation and that of a first world nation.

Junior Educators

In an inner-city suburb of Manila, we were struck by the compassion shown by people of our own age towards younger children whose only home was the street. These ‘junior educators’, as they were called, were involved in a voluntary peer education program in which they provided literacy and basic education classes for the youngsters.

These classes often took place in strips of dirt beside the busy roads - an environment in which the children felt most comfortable. For children who have never lived in a house, it is totally unrealistic to expect them to sit in classrooms to learn. Further, the skills that will equip them to live on the streets are not taught in the traditional curriculum offered by the school system. It is, however, a condition of living at Bahay Tuluyan, the street children’s refuge, that they attend school.

For many of the children, this is intolerable. Many even find it impossible to live in a building. For these children, their home and school are the street and their teachers are other children who know how to survive there.

Little did we know that the same opportunity for peer education would arise for us. For the first time, educating people has been our responsibility. Beginning with our immediate community and then to other groups such as Ashwood Secondary College, we’ve been challenged to involve a wide variety of people in a project that has touched us so personally. This has required, apart from courage, the strength to be able to relate our feelings openly and honestly - something that none of us have found easy. However, the response we have received has been sensational. Teenagers and adults alike have been genuinely interested in what we have to say and have expressed sympathy towards the problems faced by the people, and at the same time recognised the immense amount of hope amid the suffering.

Our intention was to learn about a third world country and then help others to understand too. In this sense, our project has been a complete success - possibly beyond what we imagined.
The Immersion Program at St Columba’s College

For St Columba’s College, the immersion program represents a major curriculum innovation which has already realised a considerable part of its potential to be embedded in the school’s general curriculum. Importantly, the program gives substance to the school’s mission to be a Christian community prepared to work towards bringing about a more just world. In this sense, the program has been highly significant for the enrichment it has brought to the life of the school.

The program allows the participating students to educate the rest of the school community. This has been done through special evening forums, lunchtime sessions for whole year-levels and also at the individual class level, where links have been made with relevant topics in religious education, geography, English and science. The school community has heard from the students and gained awareness of the complexity of the issues. It has encouraged the development of social criticism skills. The program has helped parents, teachers and students to appreciate our own culture and the culture of the people visited.

The student community affiliated with the Centre for Philippine Concerns is hoping to develop a Philippine student support network in 1993. It is proposed to start this in the Dandenong area. Inquiries should be directed to the Centre on (03) 329 9042.

Helen Roberts and Michelle Scerri
Year 11 VCE students
St Columba’s College
Buckley Street, Essendon 3040

Street kids with three of St Columba’s group. These children teach their peers how to live on the streets. This is their classroom.

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Behaviour Management
September 24th - 28th, 1993; Perth, WA

The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), in conjunction with the Western Australian Behaviour Problems Network and Edith Cowan University, is holding the Fifth National Conference on Children and Youth with Emotional and/or Behavioural Problems. The Conference is for teachers, service providers, and related professionals. It will include information on system initiatives, specific programs, practitioner evaluations and research reports.

Contact:
Gail Witham, WA Coordinator,
Behaviour Problems Network,
33 Gloster Street, Subiaco,
Perth WA 6008

or
ACER Development and Training Division
Phone: (03) 819 1400; Fax: (03) 819 5502;
Electronic Mail izard@acer.edu.au
Student representatives on Junior School Councils in the Lalor area in Melbourne’s northern suburbs have been meeting for training days throughout 1992.

At the last of these days, the Junior School Councils (JSCs) arranged to visit their local Secondary Colleges and observe the operation of Student Representative Councils (SRCs) there. The JSC members had questions to ask of the secondary student representatives.

They then came together to compare what they had learnt.

Preparing for Meetings

How do you prepare for meetings? What do you do before meetings? Do you ask your class for ideas? How do you decide what to talk about at meetings? Who decides this? How?

Things that have to be talked about are written down before the meetings. This makes the agenda. Other students tell them what they want done. They have meetings in home rooms before the SRC meetings. It is the secretary’s job to make sure everything is prepared.

Conducting Meetings

How do you run your meeting? How often do you meet? Does a student chair the meeting? What other jobs are there in the meeting? How do you know what has been decided?

The SRCs that we saw use an agenda - a list of what has to be discussed, and the order of discussion - to run their meetings. They can meet urgently if they have to, but normally they meet monthly, weekly or every fortnight (depending on the school). They have the following office-bearers: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Minute Secretary and Treasurer. The Minute Secretary keeps the minutes of the meeting.
After a Meeting

What do you do after a meeting? How do you make sure that what you decide, really happens? What jobs are there to do after the meeting?

At one school, the representatives go back and report to their classes. They decided to do fund-raising to get a drink machine, but they had to fight for it. Part of this was going back and reporting to the rest of the school. They went and saw the Principal and the School Council, but went to the classes first.

At a second school, every class gets a copy of the minutes after the meeting. They go to the Principal; if he disagrees, they take it to School Council. They also get other students to support them. After meetings, the people from the SRC stay behind to discuss who has to do things - sometimes it's the person who suggested something that has to do it.

At the third school, representatives go back and report to classes. They went to the School Council and also to the canteen committee. They said 'no' to what the students wanted. Four of the SRC are on the School Council, so they lobbied parents and teachers on the School Council about changing the rules.

Issues

What sort of issues do you discuss? What has the SRC done? Have you tried to do things and failed? What? Why?

The SRCs that we visited have worked on the following issues:

- uniforms, including runners and pants
- canteen food - getting more healthy food
- an area to sit in, in the canteen
- the cost of things
- a recycling bin
- fund-raising - for chairs
- discos, fun runs and a cake stall
- getting a drinks machine
- sponsoring a child in Thailand
- designing their own jacket (year 12s)
- lunch passes
- communications
- swings - an area for girls to use
Representatives

How did you become an SRC member? Why?
Have you been a member before this year? What is the difference between a good SRC member and a bad SRC member? What do you find hard about being an SRC member? What do you enjoy?
Were you in a JSC at primary school?

We found that the best way to become an SRC member is to get voted in by the students. The reasons for being an SRC member are that it gives you responsibility, that you become popular, and that it improves your attitude towards the school. For some students, they were on the SRC because you miss out on classes, but others were dedicated and wanted to be involved with changes at the school.

You need people who are not nervous to speak out, who are trustworthy and who have common sense.

We found that a good member of the SRC attends meetings, gets involved, listens, takes turns, has good manners and reports back, is committed and turns up to meetings. A bad member is a person who doesn’t care and who skips meetings.

The SRC students enjoyed organising things and enjoyed being successful. They found it hard juggling their homework and their SRC work.

From the three schools, only five students had been members of JSCs at primary school.
The Individual Schools of the

Greenbrook Primary School

JSC members in 1992 have been:

*February-June:* George Barulovski, Bradley Dancer, Nicole Dimarco, Cameron Finlay, Ebony Gaylor, Emma Murrell, Jason Ousalkas, Shane Thomas, Merrisa Walker.

*July-December:* Deanna Bagas, Katrina Bello, Cain Gaylor, Kyriacos Kyriacou, Alycia Panek, David Saffiat, Jonathon Sherwin, Bree Strezos, Rebecca Williams.

**Office-bearers:**

President, Vice-President, Minute Secretary, Correspondence Secretary, Treasurer.

Each grade nominates possible representatives and then votes. The JSC meets once a week, on Fridays from 9 am to 9.30 am.

We are in the process of changing the yard duty system. We have also raised $174.50 from running a cake stall and a lolly-jar competition. We are still deciding how to use this money.

A JSC is important to put forward the needs of the kids and make the school enjoyable for kids. It can also raise money and discuss things like yard duty and the cleaning up of the school.

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Lalor East Primary School

JSC members in 1992 have been:

Snezana Bogunovis, Simone Busch, Anna Doungas, David Ford, Marylene Lal, Jane McGregor, Pam Novin, Rosanne Sallemi, Justin Turnley; Mr Askew is the teacher who helps us.

**Office-bearers:**

Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Minute Taker, Correspondence Secretary. We elect people to these positions each term.

Classes (grades 3 to 6) elect representatives. Most grades have weekly class meetings. JSC meetings are held each week on Mondays at lunchtime. Our meetings last about three-quarters of an hour.

This year we have been involved in fund-raising - $1500 at our mini-fete - to buy exercise equipment for the yard. We also had discos, brown coins, Legacy, Red Nose Day and Coles dockets. We have been doing publicity for class fundraising (eg stalls), a garden competition, our school's 20th anniversary and special events at the school.

We have also made changes at the school: to the canteen menu, to the school ground play equipment, solved problems about the use of the grounds and worked on equal opportunity for girls.

As a JSC, we figure out school problems, we organise fundraising, we get people to find out and share information about what's happening at school, and we make decisions and recommendations.

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Lalor North Primary School

JSC members in 1992 have been:

Jessica Boubis, Alison Coppard, Anthony Dalakian, Melissa Fedele, Simon Haddad, Berna Irfan, Steven Mifsud, Mark Torcasso, Frank Torzillo, Lalitha Visuasam; A Pate (teacher rep)

**Office bearers:**

President, Secretary, Treasurer

Two members - the School Captains - are appointed. Eight members are elected by children in grades 4 to 6. All JSC members are grade 6 children.

The JSC meets every fortnight.

This year, we have got soap dispensers, paper towelling and bins for the student toilets. We also got extra bins placed on the school oval for litter, and nets put on the basketball rings. We did fund-raising activities to pay for the above 'ventures'. But we also have been learning how to get things done and how to run an effective meeting, with an agenda etc.

It is important to have a JSC so we can represent the children in our school and give children a chance to state their opinions on what happens at our school.
Lalor Junior School Council Network

Lalor Park Primary School

JSC members in 1992 have been:
Nicole Forbes, Richard Fusca, Tony Gacovski, Paul arafillis, Julie Keferevsk, Rebecca Mastramico, Daniel Timmanoski, Potini Tos, dam Zivanovic; Deborah Purser (teacher rep).

Office-bearers:
President, Vice-President, Secretary, Assistant Secretary and Fund-Raising Representative (on the School Council Fund-Raising Committee).

The representatives are elected from grades five and six. Each grade nominates candidates. The candidates have to accept nomination and give an election speech. Voting on takes place as per normal elections.

The JSC meets every two weeks in class time between 11.15 am and 12.10 pm Mondays.

This year, the JSC has got soccer goals and lights in the hall (spotlights and a mirror wall) for the school. We have managed to have lunch eating times changed, got new food in the canteen (chocolate/muesli bars) and a regular canteen duty, and organised a wheel-a-thon and bin rosters.

The JSC is important because children have a say in making decisions. That makes a better school. It is also important because we can organise things like yard duty for the grades, and working in the canteen. It has taught us organisational skills. Also, other kids often relate to kids telling them things than to teachers doing that all the time.

Lalor West Primary School

JSC members in 1992 have been:
Michael De Agostino, Helen Delli, Lance Jovanovski, Pande Jovanovski, Kylie McPhail, Anthony Micevski, Christine Mihelis, Mare Mitrevski, Beni Mrmacoski, Scott Watson

Office-bearers:
President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer. Occasional committees for special occasions eg fete, fund-raising etc.

One male and one female student from each grade level are voted for by that level after being nominated. The Junior Department is represented by those from the Senior and Middle Departments reporting to them.

The JSC meets fortnightly at lunchtime on a Tuesday. It usually takes the whole hour.

This year we organised and ran a disco, assisted at the fete, made suggestions on the canteen food and on playground equipment, assisted the computer teacher with Coles dockets, assisted the can collection teacher with aluminium cans and attended Senior School Council meetings.

It is important to have a JSC for the kids to have a say, so that things get done. Students tell JSC members what they would like fixed around the school. They are important because they help organise things around the school.

Meadowglen Primary School

JSC members in 1992 have been:
Freya Bergsteinsson, Amanda Fordham (President), Emilia Ivanovsky, Bryn McGillivray, Bianca Mercuri, Sarah Morris, Ben Myers, Rosemary Nguyen, Shane Pepyat, Scott Russo, Paul Sayers, Vesna Trajevnska, Dale Wandin, Adam Webb (Vice-President); Peter Wembridge (teacher rep).

JSC members are elected annually by their peers. The JSC meets fortnightly in the library, between 12.20 and 1.00 pm.

This year, the JSC has done various fund-raising activities, supporting charities and worthy causes. We have chosen new play equipment and helped plan and support a school auction. We were also involved in making new school rules, and made decisions on canteen food and sporting rules.

The importance of the JSC is that it is a meeting place to share ideas. It can improve the school grounds, get new playground equipment and sets new rules and guidelines for the students.

Students in the JSC learn how to work as a team and it introduces us to meeting procedures. It gives students a say in how the school operates and allows a choice, as well as enabling senior pupils to represent and put forward the ideas of younger students.
Comments on the Training Days

**Greenbrook:** We liked the bit where we had food. They are very informative. It was good how we got to see how the SRC works.

**Lalor East:** The training days are interesting and fun. They are enjoyable. We thought it was a good idea to visit the secondary college to see their SRC.

**Lalor Park:** They were very helpful and enjoyable. We got different ideas from the other JSCs. They gave us lots of information. But sometimes it was hard to have a say when you were in mixed school groups.

**Lalor North:** We learnt a lot of new things about JSCs and also about how other JSCs operate. We can share experiences and ideas, and meet and make friends. We learnt some things about secondary school. The food was great!

**Lalor West:** They are a good experience if you’re on Council at your high school. They are fun and interesting. You have a chance to hear about the other schools’ JSCs and how they work. You can meet a lot of new people. They are good but some bits are boring.

**Meadowglen:** They were great fun and a good time to share. We were able to say: “I liked the idea of...” “Do they do that? - we must try it.” The Secondary College students hold their meetings like we do! They raise a lot of money for their school.

The worst SRC members don’t turn up. The best ones have a lot of good ideas and opinions.

Many students join the student council when they are in primary or lower secondary school.
Throughout 1992, Junior School Councils from primary schools in the Preston and Reservoir area of Melbourne have been meeting to develop and share action plans for their schools. The network training days for JSC members have concentrated on:

- what action plans are;
- developing action plans for the work of the JSC; and
- learning the skills needed to implement these plans.

The JSCs were to come together at the end of the year in a final training day in which they shared the outcomes and processes of these action plans. Unfortunately, due to external restrictions, this final day did not happen.

However, the following reports have been provided by the Junior School Councils, to show what they have achieved and how they went about it.

More information can be obtained from each of the schools involved.

Norris Bank Primary School

At Norris Bank, our JSC meets every second Wednesday at lunchtime. There are twelve people on the JSC - one from each grade.

The members of the JSC are elected by the grades each six months. This means that more people get a turn, but at the start of the year it is hard and you need help.

In 1992, the Junior School Council has achieved the following:

- **School Bins**: We wrote to the School Council requesting new bins for the school. As a result, there are bins for recycling paper, for food scraps and for other waste. We are also seeking money to set up compost bins. It has made the yard a lot cleaner.

- **Aussie of the Month**: We decide each month on someone in the school who has been helpful and award them a badge and certificate. We had to work out appropriate reasons - someone who has been consistently good - and then interview candidates.

- **Fundraising**: We support Pablo, a grade 6 boy in Ecuador. We raised $25 each month for him. We also raised almost $200 for Red Nose Day. We did this with discos, mime-time, a challenge game, a colouring competition, stalls, and a 'guess the jelly beans' game.

- **Buildings and Grounds**: If JSC members see anything wrong around the school, they bring it to the JSC and we take it to the Buildings and Grounds Committee. For example, we sent a letter about taps behind the hall, about a safety fence near the road and about soccer posts.

- **Sport**: Grades 1 and 2 wanted an inter-school cricket team, so we asked the Sports Association.

- **Canteen**: We made recommendations to the canteen about push pops, hot dogs and drink cans. They wrote back with reasons why these couldn’t happen.

During the year, we have learnt a lot about planning - we worked out costs for a disco that we wanted, and found that it would cost more than it would earn, so we didn’t have it. We’ve also learnt about reporting back to our classes. We photocopy the minutes each week and use these to report back. We have a buddy system for the preps, where we pick them up from their rooms for JSC meetings, and help them during the meeting.

Our advice for people coming on to the JSC next year is: ‘Don’t forget to report to your class’; ‘Keep calm - you’ll get the hang of it sometime’ and ‘Plan everything well!’

Our JSC in 1992:

**President**: John Trampesvki; **Secretary**: Lisa Strode; **Members**: Nadine Kelly, Troy Kotandis, David Hamilton, Saniya Kazi, Jarrod Sibbison, David Piper, Shelley Mitchell, Clint McKay, Phillip Younger, Ole Risa, Daniel Diliberto, Daniela Stojkovska.
PRESTON NORTH EAST PRIMARY SCHOOL

Our action plan for 1992:

- a logo competition for PNE PS
- hold regular assemblies
- get wire round the plants on the school oval area
- have a garden competition
- grade 5/6 JSC members to attend at least one session of the School Council.

Outcomes:

- The logo competition for PNE PS was very successful. Interested people from the community and school were invited to submit entries. We had lots and lots. The winning people were two high school students who have brothers and sisters at our school. We combined ideas from both students to make our logo.

- Regular assemblies are still not being held because of the weather. It is suggested that we use the hall on wet days.

- Our school community is really pleased with our garden development this year. We have flowers and vegetables growing this year. We have expanded the area which has been replanted. Many grades and groups of children (such as ESL) have been gardening. Unfortunately, we didn’t win this year’s competition, but we will be trying even harder next year. We now have gardens around the library, hall, car park and in the middle section of the school.

- The grade 5/6 JSC members attended a School Council meeting. We found the meeting informative. We found out a lot of things and how to run meetings properly.

Directions for 1992

- become involved in white paper recycling;
- support a child in the third world;
- continue to develop our gardens;
- introduce a few minutes of music before the bell.

KINGSBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Junior School Council is an important part of our school. At the beginning of each year, students in grades 3 to 6 elect up to four students to represent their grade and lower grades. These representatives then choose a boy and girl school captain.

We have a special morning to introduce the JSC to the whole school. It is called an investiture. This year, Mr Neil Pope came to it.

The JSC were awarded their badges and received a diary. We each gave a speech. We said what we would do for the JSC and thanked the people for voting for us.

Highlights of 1992

- **Cash-a-can**: Each week we collect cans for recycling. This year we raised $54. We filled five big bags and eleven shopping bags.

- **Pupil of the week**: The JSC goes round to every class every week and gets the teachers to write in a book who they think has been good or done something special. On the Monday morning assembly the following week, the ‘pupils of the week’ are read out and given a ribbon. People get this award for doing something outstanding such as cleaning up, doing excellent work, working quietly or helping others, being polite, writing great stories etc.

- **Social Service**: In social service we are raising money in each class for a donation to the Lifesavers. This year we raised a total of $176.21. The most that we raised for one week was $20.

- **Bruce Kingsbury**: One day, our Principal Mr Jones and a few Junior School Councillors represented Kingsbury PS by going to the city, where the Shrine of Remembrance is. There we learned about Bruce Kingsbury and celebrated the 2/14 Battalion. Our school was named after him.

- **Birthday Book**: At the start of the year, somebody donates a Birthday Book, then we go around to every class so they can write down the students’ birthdays. When they finish, we read them out on every Monday and Friday and we give them certificates.

The JSC is important to us. In the JSC, students learn how to speak clearly and to use expression. They learn to have confidence behind a microphone. They also can learn to speak in public places.
ROSEBANK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Our action plan for 1992:

Communication at our school: we are trying to tell the lower grades what the role of the JSC actually is. We suggested to our grade reps to report more often. Another way to communicate is to have a suggestion box.

Communication to other schools: we decided to do it by producing a newsletter to other schools; also by inservices, phone calls and visits to the schools.

Raise money: we decided this year to continue our canteen which the grade 5/6 are responsible for. We have hot food, ice creams and drinks. We also have little raffles.

Our report:

The Junior School Council met every Tuesday and Thursday. This is what we did:

We have tried to communicate with the lower grades in several ways. We had a day when two members went to each grade and told them what the JSC actually does for the school and we asked what kind of items they wanted next year to make the school more interesting. We also had a suggestion box, but face-to-face discussions were better. But we found we still didn’t have enough time to report to them.

We also had a McDonalds Day, which the lower grades really enjoyed.

We also communicated with other schools in our district with a JSC newsletter, which we produced ourselves. We managed to produce three issues of the newsletter in a half year and distributed about 20 copies of each one. Our newsletter was discussing things like what schools wanted to do - which we called action plans. Problems were found with schools getting information in late, with contacting people and in getting more cooperation on the third issue.
RESERVOIR EAST
PRIMARY SCHOOL

Junior School Council 1992 Action Plan

- We arranged whole school activities eg a Funky Food Disco, to help the school fete. We also raised money to buy games for the school by a can collection. We asked students in the grades about what games they wanted us to get. We recycled cans and cashed them for school projects. Each student who brought 20 cans got an entry in a raffle for a free canteen lunch.

- We visited School Council meetings and learnt about the running of our school. We gave reports, listened to the meeting and discovered they have jobs like President, Secretary, Vice-President and Treasurer, just the same as the JSC.

- We have looked after other children eg we stopped fights, set a good example especially in the yard, and gave advice.

- We made our playground more pleasant. We planted trees, and organised the Dazzling Dustbin (a trophy for the cleanest area in the yard).

Aim for 1993

Develop our playgrounds!

JSC Councillors: (second half year)

President: Paula Murphy; Vice-President: Candice Lynch; Secretary: Nathan Graham; Treasurer: Melinda Cook; Can Coordinators: Theodore Mitsakis, Trent Lawson; Members: Kane Finerty, Scott Warren, Zane Thomas, Anna Cecov, Kristal Finerty, Amanda Buerger

JSC Councillors: (first half year)

Anna Miridakis, Glenn Sutton, Glenn Brown, Wayne Comfort, Erin Brealey, Amanda Ellis, Gannette Hejazi, Andrew Comfort, Matthew Graham, Sean Reid, Katie Stanbury.

PRESTON
PRIMARY SCHOOL

1992-93 Action Plan:

The Junior School Council plans to make our school a better place to be (more attractive):

- survey students to find out what they think needs improving;
- organise an anti-litter campaign;
- start a recycling program eg paper and cans;
- write to 'Buildings and Grounds' Committee and explain that seats are broken and we would like colourful new play equipment.

Progress so far:

Survey: resulted in the compilation of a list of concerns and a letter to the senior School Council: "We have conducted a survey of the students at the Tyler Street site to gather information about what the students think needs improving and have come up with this list - grass on one of the playing fields; open air shelter; paint shelter sheds; either with a mural or bright colours; repair and/or replace seats; extend fence behind soccer goals more bins; recycling of paper and cans."

Anti-litter Campaign: posters designed and posted around the school. Announcement at assembly, encouragement of other students by JSC members. Notice in Wednesday Weekly.

Submission: to Science and Technology Committee applying for funds to establish a garden in the assembly area planter boxes Success unknown.

Recycling Program: Guest speaker from Preston Bottle Co. - ideas to be formulated into an action plan for 1993.

Bookstall: Money raised to purchase a book on the 'Environment' for our school library.

Directions for 1993:

- Continuation of anti-litter campaign;
- Implement recycling program (paper only);
- Follow up submission and contact Preston Council for advice and guidance on planting;
- Keep Buildings and Grounds Committee up to-date on the condition of the schoolground.
PRESTON EAST PRIMARY SCHOOL

During this year, the JSC has got new bins with slots in the lids for rubbish. We’ve also planted about 20 trees around the school during Environment Week.

It started when we were talking about the rubbish in the playground and we needed to do something about it. So we decided we needed to make an action plan. This said:

“Improve school yard”:

1. New bins - slotted lids
2. Two people (JSC) checking playground each night - report to grade whose yard duty week it was.
3. Idea of one grade per week instead of different grades each day.
4. Assist in planting of trees.
5. Help with walkathon to raise money for playground equipment - posters, setting up.
6. Encouraged groups of children to clean yard and JSC monitors give out prizes.

We did all of these things successfully. The yard looks cleaner; everyone is putting rubbish in the bins; they like doing duty; the yard looks nicer with the new trees. The grade 3/4s get awards for doing the right thing and putting rubbish in the bins. They stick these awards in their award books.

Next year, we’ll have the same representatives from grade 5 going on to grade 6, so that we’ll know how to get things done and it won’t be as hard. We’re planning to have a radio program over the loud speakers; we’ll have house names and colours.

This year’s JSC has been really successful and we hope next year’s will be just as good.

This is our school badge:

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RUTHVEN P.S.

JSC Members

[Names of JSC members]

Ruthven’s Backyard

Our main plan for 1992 was to improve the garden beds in the middle section of our school. The area was very bare and unsightly. We wrote to the Preston City Council (Parks and Gardens) and were lucky enough to get lots of help. From Hilo Harpur, who came to our school. Together we looked at the area and decided on the most suitable plants. The JSC and helpers became gardeners for a whole and put the plants into the garden. Fundraising was done to pay for the plants but we were really lucky because Hall donated lots of fantastic plants. Thanks Hall.

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October-December 1992

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PRESTON SOUTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Project Name: “Developing Our Playground”

What we wanted to do:
- We wanted to make our playground a better place;
- We wanted new, safe fun equipment;
- We wanted all children to play happily in the playground;
- We wanted to develop a quiet area with tables and benches between the Library and the Community Room.

What we did:
- We got ideas from our grades and worked out what we wanted at our JSC meetings. We then got people’s advice, we looked at catalogues and looked carefully at our playground.
- We chose the piece of playground equipment – it was called ‘Fortuna’ and was about $7000.
- We told Mr Proud, our Principal, and the Senior School Council, what we wanted.

How did we go?
- Unfortunately the toilets took most of our school’s attention after one of our girls was attacked. They had to be rebuilt nearer the school, so the playground development was mostly put off until next year.
- We have raised money. For example, we have had a pie day and a jelly-bean competition.
- We have made special cards so that we can borrow equipment to help some lonely children feel happier in our playground.
- Our School Council President has thanked us for all our ideas and work. We have all thanked her and the other adults for listening to us and for helping us to make a better playground.

Preston South JSC Members:

Kingsbury Primary School JSC:
Sascha Curran (C), Andrew Webb (C), Bernice Cameron, Leah Arambatzis, Kai Mills, Linda Bowman, Ricky Evans, Jaimi Faulkner, Kylie Berwick, James Thomas, Thao Ho, Wayne Webb, Dananthi Galapitage, Belinda Somerfield, John Athanasopoulos, Nerine Rowe.

From other pages:

Preston North East Primary School JSC:
Rebecca Griffiths, Samantha Goulter, Dinh Xua, Donna Wykes, Jenny Xua, Rachel Barker, John Ione, Merryn Wilson, Kristy Stowe, Emma Bailey, Kylie Barker, Vatsana Kosanlawath, Huy Tang.

Preston East Primary School JSC:
Michael Whitley, Jacinta Cowland, Kate Elder, Leigh Swain, Zoe Senior, Janine Salem, Stacey Ceci, Shane Harvey, David Domena.
The Ballarat Student Network 1992

"Pass the chocky bikkies please."
"Great! Chocolate again - we always have nice biscuits here."
"Not like your school eh?"

So begins a typical Ballarat Student Network monthly meeting. The Network is a group of student representatives (usually two per school) from each of the state Secondary Colleges in the Ballarat area. Meetings are held monthly at a different school, on a rotating basis at 4 o'clock. This way we all become familiar with each other's schools from the inside, and have a chance to see anything new such as new buildings.

The main objectives of the group are:
• maintaining vital links between the Government schools in Ballarat;
• sharing concerns and supporting each other as we seek solutions;
• breaking down barriers between 'rival' schools;
• discussing different issues and gaining ideas from different schools, so we can all benefit from the experiences of different schools;
• forming new friendships; and
• learning leadership skills and meeting procedures.

The host school's students are responsible for running the meeting. Some schools have a teacher who attends; others do not. We do have a person provided by the Ministry of Education - currently Mr Bruce Eldridge - to coordinate our group and authorise taxi slips home from meetings, as well as helping with things we can't do because we have little money and we can't drive.

After the meetings, the student reps report back to their own school groups, such as Student Councils, School Councils etc so that more people can gain from ideas brought to the Student Network.

To follow up this learning, the Network holds an annual Conference. This year, about 100 students attended workshops of their choice, on topics such as the Environment, Relaxation, Public Speaking, Study Skills, Self Defence, Theatre Sports, Careers, the VCE and Eat Well/Play Well/Study Well. The Network asked students what they wanted, then we visited or phoned possible workshop leaders or speakers and asked if they would lead workshops. Most people were happy to.

This year, we also organised the catering. Each school had a different responsibility, eg getting the cheapest sausages in Ballarat, getting Sunicrust to donate bread, hiring a barbecue etc. We all took our share and were able to keep costs low enough to only charge students $2. As well as these student contributions, Mr Eldridge sent letters to all our School Councils asking for $50 donations to help, and four responded. We finished up covering costs.

Each school also has different responsibilities on the day eg warm-up activities, room arrangements, introduction of speakers, thanks etc. The local TV station screened an item on the Conference that night.

In addition to the knowledge students gain from the workshops they take, the Conferences have proved invaluable in fostering friendships between schools, as well as giving Network members quite a lot of responsibility in planning, organisation and funding in running the day.

Also, some follow-up things have happened after previous Conferences. As a result of student requests, a health nurse (a speaker at one Conference) regularly visits some of the schools. This year, Theatre Sports was new and due to an enthusiastic response, that workshop leader now visits some schools, taking lunchtime sessions, and soon we will begin inter-school competitions on Saturday afternoons, possibly leading up to a Theatre Sports competition in next year's Ballarat Begonia Festival.

We hope the Student Network is able to continue its activities and work for school generations to come. Roll on the chocolate biscuits ...

Heather and Allison Dalman
Year 9 Wendouree Secondary College
Student Network Representatives
Our job: to create a daily newspaper for the Australian Association for Adolescent Health (AAAH) Conference.

On the 18th, 19th and 20th of November, media students from Footscray/Yarraville and Westall Secondary Colleges participated in the AAAH Conference and published a newspaper on the presentations and workshops that took place on the three days.

In the beginning, we were not too sure what the Conference was about. The only things we knew were that we would be working with another school, and that we were to write articles on the workshops we attended. After a quick rundown of our goals, we went off to attend the presentations and workshops, came back, and wrote and published our articles on them.

Having participated in a similar Conference last year (the Child Poverty and Education Conference), I think that these opportunities for students to experience how day-to-day newspapers are put together (even its simplest fashion) are excellent. Normally schools might give the media students a similar scenario through a school paper, but the pressure of producing real newspaper articles which inform accurately and entertain almost immediately, is very different. It's a lot of fun and also a bit of brain work, as sometimes understanding the older and more educated speakers can be quite confusing.

The fact though was that we weren't regarded as silly teenagers but as young people who contributed in informing others who had been at a certain workshop, of what went on in the other workshops.

I think that every media student who contributed would agree that in some way the conference was personally relevant. It dealt with many issues that teenagers, at some point at least, hear about. Issues such as eating disorders, teen pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and suicide were on the agenda and it's very refreshing to know that there are indeed people concerned about the young and the latter rarely hear of such things going on when they need to hear it - not even through the media.

Attending the Conference gave me (and, I think, the others too) a lot of confidence and a chance to test myself and my abilities.

I gained skills that at school wouldn't be the same, and I also learnt a lot from the presentations and workshops, especially this year's Conference. These skills, such as communicating out of my own peer group, will come in handy later at school, as well as everywhere else in life.

David Piang-Nee
Westall Secondary College

The daily newsletter I helped produce was called 'SAY AAAH!'. I thought it was going to be stressful, but instead I found it very enjoyable. I worked with students from other schools, and attended sessions that I personally was interested in. The experience helped me to realise how a real daily newspaper would run and the skills needed for the various tasks.

I found a lot of my time being spent in showing students how to use the computer equipment and helping with any problems they faced with the software. This didn't discourage me because I gained more knowledge on the usage of the equipment. Also, my patience was tested when confronted with basic problems.

Being one of the scarce young people running around the Australian Association for Adolescent Health (AAAH) Conference and attending the lectures and presentations was an experience. I have never been to a Conference where the people that they are discussing - adolescents - are not present. I felt it was quite ironic when social workers were discussing the future of disadvantaged youth, when in reality they didn't understand the pressures adolescents face. Being a teenager myself, I could relate to the suggestions discussed but found it irritating when they were not dealing with appropriate solutions for issues that they didn't understand fully.

My ignorance on various issues affecting young people was confronted, and my knowledge in being able to help friends in various threatening situations improved to the point where I feel confident in providing practical help. I also found that problems that I have encountered and may encounter were discussed, so I may be better equipped to handle them. Overall, I found the Conference timely.

Producing the newspaper and receiving a lot of positive reinforcement from the people, gave me instant gratification on the work I had done.

Elizabeth Koumakis
Westall Secondary College
Young People’s Participation in Local Government

YOUR COUNCIL: YOUR SAY

by David Williamson, Victorian Youth Advocacy Network

This article is particularly written for young people aged twelve to sixteen years. It concerns the practical steps young people can take to work with their Council Shire or Borough on responding to the local concerns of young people.

Introduction

Local governments (Councils, Shires and Boroughs) are elected by local communities to represent local interests. Local government aims to be representative of the whole community, provide community services and respond to the issues raised by the community.

However as a form of government, local government is not always understood, relevant or accessible to young people.

There are a number of reasons for this. For example:

- young people aged under 18 do not have the right to vote;
- other young people who can vote don’t choose to, because they think their vote won’t change anything;
- Councils do not always see services for young people as a priority;
- Councils do not always work with young people, encourage their involvement and listen to what they have to say;
- sometimes young people think they are being talked down to or that their views are not as important as the views of adults.

These reasons why Local Government is not relevant to young people ARE REAL. However, there are some Councils who do listen to their young people and there are many examples of good things happening when young people’s views are taken into account. Your Council could be like this.

For example, your Council may involve young people in planning and running local projects, drop in centres, festivals and speak outs, or on Junior Councils.

Your Council could already be involved in a range of positive projects involving young people.

Remember the Council is democracy at work. It is the closest form of democracy to the community.

The following information and ideas are to assist young people make that local democracy work for them.

Making the Council relevant to young people won’t be easy and it won’t always work. But remember: young people do have the right to be heard by their Council. Young people do have the right to have a say!

The ideas in this article will be grouped under the following headings:

1. GETTING YOUR HEAD TOGETHER
   Why do you want to talk to your Council anyway?

2. DEVELOPING YOUR IDEA
   What types of questions need to be answered to assist in planning your idea?

3. FORMING A GANG
   Spreading the workload.

4. KNOW YOUR COUNCIL
   The levels of government in relation to Councils.

5. THE PEOPLE INVOLVED IN COUNCILS
   Councillors and council staff.

6. MAKING CONTACT WITH YOUR COUNCIL
   Some steps to take.

7. COUNCIL MEETINGS
   How they work.

8. THE END BIT.
Getting Your Head Together

It is absolutely essential that Councils involve young people in decision making and planning regarding the development of services for young people. These services will then better reflect the needs and aspirations of young people. Services developed "hand in hand" with young people will assist the development of positive services and services which involve young people in longer term decision-making processes.

One example of young people's positive contribution to the planning of a local service concerns the building of a BMX track:

"A Council in Melbourne decided to build a BMX track for young people. Plans were prepared by the Council engineers and the track was built by Council labourers. After 3 months the track was competed at a cost of $30,000. Unfortunately local BMX riders soon found the overall layout of the track boring. As well, heavy rain quickly reduced the track to a mud heap because the wrong materials were used to build the track. The local young BMX riders banded together and asked the Council for a new track - a track they would plan for the Council. To cut a long story short, the Council accepted the riders' new plans and took their advice about the appropriate building materials to use. When it came to rebuilding the track all the riders helped Council workers build the track after school. The new track was finished at half the cost of the original track, attracted no vandalism and was used positively for many years."

This is just one example of how young people's action can be positive for Councils and young people.

Many Councils work hard to respond to the requirements of their community. Most Councils run a range of programs for children, young people, parents and grandparents. The quality and quantity of the programs they run usually depend on two things. These are:

a) Council's level of interest in providing services to the community; and
b) The amount of money available from the Australian Federal Government and the Victorian State Government to assist them to run these services.

Whether it's a BMX track or not, there are three ways your Council may be able to assist young people. These are:

1) advice from Council staff about ideas, e.g. advice from the Youth Services Worker or someone with responsibility for young people's services;
2) providing money to get the idea off the ground;
3) talking about the idea at a Council meeting to see what other ACTION the Council/Shire could take to assist, e.g. the Council/Shire could direct their Youth Services Worker to spend time helping young people to get their ideas going.

So now the big question is:

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?

There are many things that Victorian Council/Shires have assisted young people to do. Some of these are:

- Drop in centres
- Discos
- School assignments
- Work experience
  - "Young people's speakouts"
    - these are special events where young people organise a time to invite a range of people to listen to their views
- Bus for young people
- Human rights projects
- Young women's groups
- Attending the Victorian Youth Advocacy Network - Statewide Young People's conferences
- Safe trains
- Aerosol Art
- Skateboard ramps
- BMX tracks
- Battle of the bands
- Camps and day trips
- Holiday programs
- Information cards
- Posters
- Employing workers with young people
- Advocacy projects

Maybe your idea is mentioned here, or maybe not.
So what is your idea?
Developing Your Idea

Once you have your idea it is important to check it out. The first thing to do is find out if your idea is of interest to friends and even parents. Their support will be really important in the long run. So it is important you bounce ideas around with others first. If they think your idea is not a good one, you may have to find like-thinking people to support you. As well, someone else may have had your idea first and what you want to do may be already be going on. However you will soon find out if this is the case. The people to check out your idea with first could be:

- friends
- parents
- teachers
- workers with young people

Once you have checked out your idea you must start getting your act together. When dealing with Councils it is important to think about your idea and have it clear in your mind. It’s sometimes not enough to say to a Council: “I want a drop in centre”. Therefore you must start to ask yourself some hard questions. For example:

- Why is having a drop in centre important? Consider the arguments for and against.
- What type of drop in centre could it be? e.g. type of activities; who will manage the centre?
- Where is a good venue?
- Who would come?
- Who will supervise it?
- How much money is needed?
- When will it be open?

Then you will need to think about what is needed to turn your idea into action. This may include money, human assistance and publicity. Further, how do you go about having your say or taking action.

Do you:

- do it yourself?
- ask the Council or someone else to do it?
- decide to take action by sharing decisions with your friends and the Council?

Thinking about these practical steps associated with putting your idea into action is important. It will show you are organised and have your act together.

These are the sort of questions your Council will want answers to if you go ahead and contact them about your idea. So write down your ideas as you go. Don’t worry if you can’t think of everything by yourself. You will get help along the way if you ask for it.

Forming a Gang

Sometimes it takes more than just you to change something. Taking action with others will always be exciting. This is because other people have different ways of doing things or different ideas about the way it should be done. It is very important that you work with other young people to make a change or to get something going in your local community. Your gang could consist mainly of your friends and other people about your age who agree with what you want to do. It is important for you to make sure everyone understands what you are on about and remains enthusiastic.

The good things about having a gang to help you are:

- they are someone to bounce ideas off;
- they can help out with meetings, phone calls and planning;
- they can go to the Council with you;
- they can help you get your idea off the ground;
- they can make you laugh when you get sad and depressed about how long it takes to achieve your idea;
- they can make the planning fun.

So now you have your head together. You have a clear idea; you have the support of like-minded people. The next thing to do is find out more about councils and your local Council in particular.

Know your Council

Before you rush off to the Council and become a real rebel rouser, it is important to:

- know that what you want to do is something that the Council is responsible for and/or will assist you with.

One of the things you must be sure of first is whether your idea is the sort of thing the Council/Shire can assist you with. If you want to run a Snake Collecting Club or organise a trip for you and your friends to see a Madonna concert in Hawaii, your Council might not be the right type of people to talk to.

- have sufficient knowledge about who your Councillors are and how the Council/Shire decision-making system works.

This type of information will assist you understand more about the realities of working with your Council and also some of the shortcuts, e.g. how you can contact and lobby Councillors directly about what you want to do.
Governments

Governments are meant to make decisions concerning what is best for the general welfare of our community.

Australia has three types of government each with different levels of responsibility:

The Australian Government (also known as the Federal or Commonwealth government) is the biggest. Some of the things the Australian Government does include:
- Collecting lots of money (taxes);
- Distributing some of this money to State and Local governments;
- Dealing with other countries and issues that affect all of Australia, e.g. welfare, immigration, rights of children and young people;
- Printing money;
- Employing an Army, Navy and Airforce.

State Government, e.g. Victorian Government - is not so big. Generally the role of State Governments include:
- Collecting some money from taxes;
- Negotiating for and administering money from the Australian Government to run schools, hospitals, public transport, police force, legal aid and programs for homeless young people;
- Providing money to Councils and other community groups to run services for children, young people, older people, etc.

Local governments - also known as Councils or Shires - are the smallest. Generally the roles of local governments include:
- Collecting some money from people through rates;
- Administering money from the Australian and State Governments to help run local services for the community, e.g. health, children, young people, older people;
- Collecting rubbish, building roads, developing parks and gardens, running recreation centres and youth centres, and grabbing stray dogs off the street

There are some large local governments or Councils and Shires in Victoria, e.g. Sunshine, Shire of Bulla, Shire of Ellimah - and some are very small, e.g. City of Fitzroy, which is 5 square kilometres in size - that’s tiny!

There is a lot more to it all but now you know that each level of government is separate, independent and has different responsibilities. The good thing about Councils/Shires is that they are local - the closest form of government to you. They will only be important and doing their job properly if they are in touch with their whole community. This includes you and other young people.

The People involved with Councils

To get things done we need to know about how local government works and if there are any workers at the Council (e.g. a Youth Services Development Officer) to provide advice and assist you to take your idea to the Council.

There is a range of people involved with Councils. Some get paid and some do not. Who are these people and what do they do? Let’s find out.

a) Councillors - councillors are local people elected by residents aged over 18 years. You will find your Council area is broken up into smaller areas called wards. Councillors are elected to represent each ward in the Council area. You live in a ward. Find out which one.

Councillors are elected for 3 years and are not usually paid for their time. If they are paid, it is in the form of a small annual allowance.

NB The number of young people elected as Councillors in Victoria in 1992 is very small. The youngest is Cr Joe Schembi who is on the Broadmeadows Council. Joe is twenty years old. Given that there are hardly any young people aged under 25 years on Councils, the needs and issues of young people, especially those aged under 18 years, may often remain hidden to older Councillors and adult Council staff.

b) Mayor - The Mayor is the leader of the Council and is elected by the Councillors to be Mayor for one year. Some other Councillor usually gets a go the following year.

Mayors are not paid for their time; however they usually receive a mayoral allowance.

c) Council Officers - Staff of Council - These are the people who work for your Council. They are paid for their work.

The types of people who work at Councils are workers with young people, engineers, garbologists, child care workers, home help, health inspectors, town planners, etc.

Senior Council staff provide information and advice to assist Councillors make their decisions.

After Councillors make their decisions, Council staff then have to do the work.
Making Contact with the Council

To find out more about your Council and who can assist put your idea into action you can do the following things:

- Find out where the Town Hall is and ring them up. The phone numbers of all local councils can be found in the Local Government section at the front of the White Pages;

- First, request a list of Councillors’ names, phone numbers and addresses and find out which Councillors are in your ward. You will then be able to see who the Councillors are who represent your neighbourhood.

  Not all Councillors will show a great interest in your idea. You can save yourself some time by finding out which Councillors manage the Community Services Department and just talk to them.

- Secondly, ask for the Youth Services Worker or the person responsible for young people’s services. You could start by talking to this person about your ideas. You could ask them if there is a Junior/Young People’s Council or some other group that is working to create more opportunities for local young people.

- Thirdly, organise a time to meet the Youth Services Worker at the Council. At least this will give you the chance to suss them out and see if they are interested in helping you and able to give you a hand with your idea/project.

After talking to all these people about your idea you will know:

- if your idea is a goer and how much these people will assist you; and
- what the next step is in talking to Council.

If you are not clear at this stage, then it is important to recontact people and go over things again.

So now we are on the way. By taking these steps you will understand more about who the key people are at Council and what they do. If they are helpful that’s good, because they may agree with your idea and provide assistance. If they are unhelpful it could be hard. They have a lot of power to stop you dead in your tracks. That’s why it’s important to continue to make friends along the way. In the end it could be that the more friends you have, the more the Council/Shire will have to listen to you.

For example, if the Council won’t assist you and if you think your idea would be supported by the community, the local paper may wish to do a story about you and your idea.

Well you’re all revved up to go!

You now should have a clear idea to act upon and you know more about your Councillors and Council staff. However, nothing concrete will probably happen unless the issue is discussed by the whole Council and a formal decision to assist you is made by the Council.

Council Meetings

After you make contact with all these people, nothing is going to happen unless the Councillors then hear about your idea again at their Council meeting.

The only way they can really help you is after someone writes a report for them to discuss at their Council meeting. It is the Council staff’s responsibility to write this report. Until the report is done, the Councillors cannot make a decision.

If there is general support for your idea from all the contacts mentioned before, you must find out who at Council is going to write this report and by when. Things can take a long time to happen in Councils.

For example, it may take at least 2 months for the Council to make a decision. Yes, that’s right: 2 months! It could be up to 2 months before the Council staff even have time to consider your idea. So you may have to be very patient.

The important thing is that you know when the report will be talked about by the Councillors. When you know this date, you can get all your friends together and all the contacts you have made, including the local paper, and go to this Council meeting. Councillors are more impressed when a number of people take the time to come to Council meetings. By attending the meeting with others you can:

- be available to talk to the Councillors in support of your idea; and
- show that there is real interest in your neighbourhood about your project.

The Council Decision

Councillors will receive the report about your project with heaps of other reports, all to be read before the Council/Shire meeting. Therefore it is important you call them once again to talk to them about your idea and how it is going. Tell them that Council staff will be sending a report to them about your idea and that you will see them at the Council meeting. This will show them you’re really serious.
At the Council meeting you don’t have to say anything or do anything unless asked. Just your presence or a few words from you and your friends will probably go a long way toward helping the Councillors make up their minds. Hopefully they will ask you to have a say, so be prepared if they do.

There are a number of decisions the Council could make about the report that relates to your idea. Some of these might be:

- it is not the Council’s responsibility to assist with your idea
- your idea sounds alright and Council staff will look into it further - this means the Councillors have put off their decision until they find out more information about your idea. The Councillors will request that this information be gathered by a Council officer and presented to them in another report. Yes, unfortunately this may mean another 2 months’ wait. However, it’s better than being knocked back and usually means your idea is okay.
- your idea is what’s needed and the Council is prepared to spend the money to make it possible. At this stage the Council will probably ask a Council Officer to pick up the tasks associated with putting your idea into action.

Most Councils will want more information before they make a decision, especially if it’s a big project that will cost lots of money e.g. Recreation Centre, Skateboard ramp, Drop In Centre.

However, if it’s a small project that doesn’t cost much, like a Speakout Day or Camping Program, they may tell their staff to get on with it and work with you to get it going.

The End Bit

It can take a long time to get something changed in your neighbourhood or even to see your idea achieved. In some cases it takes years, e.g. building skateboard ramps and recreation centres.

The thing is that your Council is there to help you. You have the right to have a say and be heard by your Council. And it’s not just for your benefit that you’re doing this. There are many examples where Councils save money and produce good services because they listen to young people and involve young people in the planning and management of local projects.

Finally, the things to remember about having your say and local government are:

- think about your idea;
- talk about it with other people;
- find out if Council can help you with your idea;
- talk to anyone and everyone who has the power to assist you;
- take your case to the Council;
- have it talked about at a Council meeting;
- if the Councillors support you, assist Council staff get your idea going;
- thank those who gave you a hand;
- don’t forget to have fun along the way.

Written by David Williamson, Co-ordinator, Victorian Youth Advocacy Network Inc. 1st Floor, 181 Queens Pde, Clifton Hill 3068 Contact: (03) 481 1488
CITY OF BERWICK
YOUTH PARTICIPATION WEEK 1992

The City of Berwick (Victoria) recently held its third Youth Participation Week from August 15th to 23rd.

Youth Participation Week was conceived in 1986 as a method of consulting with young residents about their needs and aspirations for the future. So successful was the first Week, a second was held in 1989, and this week has now become a triennial event for the Berwick Council.

SCYABA (Sister Cities Youth Ambassadors Berwick Australia), a youth newspaper, the appointment of Specialist Youth Workers, transport options and information networks have all been born from past City of Berwick Youth Participation Weeks.

Youth Participation Week 1992 started with the annual Battle of the Bands for local musical talent. The production was orchestrated by the young members of the BADNEWS (Berwick and District New Entertainment Worth Seeing). It proved to be an excellent way to ‘kick off’ a week of forums and activities, which culminated in the opening of the Endeavour Hills Youth Activities and Resource Centre (YARC) built by Council at a cost of $300,000. The need for this Youth Resource Centre was identified by young people at the 1989 Youth Participation Week ‘Speak Out’ Forum.

City of Berwick Councillors see participation and consultation as the primary elements of Youth Participation Week. Young people demonstrated their wares to the wider community and enjoyed activities both organised by themselves or on their behalf and, as active consultants, young people conducted ‘face to face’ encounters with a host of community delegates.

It is from the various forums that young people produced recommendations about the programs, facilities and resources needed in the City of Berwick. Those recommendations are presented to the Mayor and Councillors of the City who have in the past demonstrated their commitment to young people by implementing the recommendations from 1986 and 1989.

The outcomes of Youth Participation Week ‘92 are far-reaching. New links with young people have been established; older ones were re-confirmed and strengthened. Fundamentally though, the recommendations and feedback will be considered seriously by the City of Berwick as a platform to guide youth policy over the next three years ... until YPW ’95.

For further information on the City of Berwick Youth Participation Week, ring the Leisure/Youth Services Coordinator, Ms Jennie Lee, on (03) 705 5220.

Discussions during the ‘Speak Out’ forum in Youth Participation Week ’92
Want an education, but can't stand school?

LYNALL HALL
Community School

Year 7 to 12 VCE in a small, friendly environment.

No Fees. No Uniform. Enrol now (it's not too late!).

Enquiries welcome at 178 Victoria Street, Brunswick. Phone 380 9837.
There are several small, community or alternative secondary schools in and around Melbourne within the Victorian Ministry of Education.

While there are substantial differences between these schools - in purpose, enrolment policy, relation to local communities and active participation of students - there are also similarities that arise from the deliberate small size of these schools.

The schools are:

**Caulfield Park Community School**
319 Balacclava Road, Caulfield North 3161
Phone: (03) 563 5644

**Collingwood Alternative School**
162 Wellington Street, Collingwood 3066
Phone: (03) 419 3816

**Croydon Community School**
Cnr Mt Dandenong Road and Anzac Street, Croydon 3136
Phone: (03) 723 3112

**Kensington Community High School**
Cnr Racecourse and Smithfield Roads, Kensington 3031
Phone: (03) 376 1953 or 376 4174

**Lynall Hall Community School**
178 Victoria Street, Brunswick 3056
Phone: (03) 380 9837

**Sherbrooke Community School**
(Primary and Post-primary)
311 Mount Dandenong Tourist Road
Sassafras 3787
Phone: (03) 755 2007

**Sydney Road Community School**
350 Sydney Road, Brunswick 3056
Phone: (03) 380 9417

Connect asked each of the schools to provide a brief description of themselves.

**Lynall Hall**

Lynall Hall Secondary School is a small Department of School Education secondary school located at 178 Victoria Street, Brunswick 3056. There are no fees, and the school is not zoned. We are open to enrolments from the whole of Melbourne. At any given time, there are approximately 50 students here.

The school offers a comprehensive education from year 7 to VCE completion at year 12.

We offer places to students whose learning in basic areas has fallen behind that of their peers, whose learning has been interrupted and who wish to return to continuous formal study, whose talents may not have been recognised or developed, who feel isolated or overwhelmed in a large school, whose attitudes to learning, schooling and life are damaged and need rebuilding.

We offer an education based on identified needs - as you can see, those needs may vary greatly.

If you have any students, particularly in years 10, 11 or 12, who you believe may benefit from schooling in a smaller alternative setting, please contact us for further information about our enrolment criteria and process.

*Jane Romany-Maxwell*
Principal/School Coordinator
Caulfield Park Community School

Caulfield Park Community School is a specific purpose school designed to provide an excellent education for students at risk. The school caters for 100 students.

The school is organised to provide three levels of program, each level designed to support students at risk and schools in Southern Metropolitan Region in a specific way. Caulfield Park Community School believes that it is best for students to return to their local school at an appropriate stage, and the programs as a whole are working to this goal where possible.

The school believes that students at risk should receive teaching and learning at the highest standard and does not accept the premise that poor student behaviour is an indicator of low intelligence and an inability to complete year 12. Particular emphasis is placed on the curriculum areas of English, Maths, Science and Humanities. These four areas of knowledge are the pillars on which the school is built.

To support student academic success, the school provides a comprehensive diagnostic testing and remediation program in the areas of literacy and numeracy, integrated across the school curriculum. The academic success of students at Caulfield Park Community School is dependent on the provision of a consistent and responsive structure maintained through all staff working as members of a cohesive group. This structure works towards developing within students self-discipline and self-esteem that will enable them to control their behaviour and complete their schooling. Integral to the effectiveness of this structure is the development and maintenance of a cooperative working relationship with parents.

Collingwood Alternative School

Collingwood Alternative School is a government school of 40 students and 7 teachers which has been running an activity-based program for 20 years. It caters for secondary students unsuited to large mainstream settings.

Classes are small (no more than 7 students to one teacher) and students are in mixed-age and mixed-ability groups. The program includes compulsory literacy/numeracy/pastoral care classes and a compulsory Personal Development class. All other subjects such as Music, Art, Crafts, Cooking and Sports and academic subjects (English, Humanities, Work Education, Maths and Science) are also offered as electives. The school does not offer whole courses at various year levels (ie year 7, year 8 etc) but rather, each individual works at his or her own level and pace.

Students enter Collingwood Alternative School usually after experiencing learning and/or behavioural difficulties in larger schools, and many students have been poor attenders. Building students' self-esteem is a top priority at CAS and our small classes help us address learning difficulties and behavioural problems. The smallness also creates a family atmosphere where students learn to develop better relationships with their peers as well as with adults. Students are encouraged to participate in decision making through daily whole-school meetings and negotiating their activities.

We have a School Council where parents, and social and community workers participate in developing the school program and promoting it throughout the local community. Our funding is mostly through the Disadvantaged Schools Program of the Federal Government.

Sydney Road Community School

Sydney Road Community School is a small government postprimary school. It is open to any students who live in Brunswick, are graduating from a Brunswick primary school or have brothers or sisters at the school.

We do not take more than eighty students at any one time and classes rarely contain more than thirteen students. The small class sizes and the smallness of the whole school are distinctive features.

Due to the close working relationship between teachers and students, curriculum programs are continually evolving and are responsive to the needs of students and broader educational trends in the state.

The design of the main school building provides a central focus for the whole school community in nurturing democratic participation in the day-to-day operation of the school.

Students are grouped into three levels: Junior School (years 7 and 8), Middle School (years 9 and 10) and Senior School (years 11 and 12). All students at the school study English, Australian Studies and Mathematics. Science and Art are compulsory to Year 10. Junior students choose between Italian, Greek and French and are able to continue their studies of a language through to Year 12.

In years 11 and 12, students can select from a wide range of subjects taught at Sydney Road Community School or at neighbouring Brunswick schools.

The curriculum emphasis is on the provision of a good quality general education for all. This policy is consistent with government policy and the principles of the VCE.
Kensington Community High School

Kensington Community High School has a total enrolment of 90 students - 25% are VCE students, and there are three year 7-10 workshops (in 1992) each with 25% of the school population.

The school offers an alternative education system that can provide for the many needs of the present-day student.

KCHS has a flexible curriculum and structure which allows each student to construct a program for her or his individual educational needs. Students design their own timetables, which include a combination of Literacy, Numeracy, Expressive Arts and Technology areas. For example, a student who wishes to do mainly Drama may negotiate to do all drama classes offered, plus a combination of related subjects.

This process of negotiation and student decision-making creates an environment that many students then wish to learn in. The school has a history of success for many previously unsatisfied students and parents.

The whole school curriculum plan at KCHS is therefore geared towards making the curriculum as relevant to our students as possible. We offer many practical subjects, all of which have arisen from students' interests and demands.

Each Monday morning, students discuss school issues in their workshop groups, and are involved in all decisions. They learn to chair meetings, take minutes and voice their opinions. Students are encouraged to attend curriculum day meetings and to join in all discussions.

The school offers an incredible array of subjects, even though it is a small school. The staff are expected to use their various skills to a maximum eg a female staff member, who is a member of the Women's Circus at Footscray, is running a very successful girls circus group.

The school has always had an exceptionally outgoing staff who are very dedicated to the philosophy of the school. Parents/guardians, staff and students interview prospective staff in the pursuit of maintaining this dedication.

"Working Together For Change: The Performance Workshop at Kensington Community High School"

The Performance Workshop is one of four workshops at Kensington Community High School. It reflects the school’s commitment to providing access to and success in education for a wide variety of students. A goal-based, student-centred curriculum, and the type of subjects offered - acrobatics, dance, circus skills, theatre studies, improvisation, percussion, band and singing - also encourages success through an emphasis on learning by doing.

This booklet is one of a series of 16 produced and funded by the Commonwealth Disadvantaged Schools Program.

Through Working Together for Change, which describes the program, its genesis, structure and operation, readers are challenged to reflect upon their school’s organisation and approach to students.

Copies of Working Together for Change are available from Kensington Community High School or from the Victorian Education Shop as part of the Social Justice Curriculum Collection 1990.

Education Shop
117-121 Bouverie Street, Carlton 3053
Phone: (03) 342 3939

DISADVANTAGED SCHOOLS PROGRAM
THE SOCIAL JUSTICE CURRICULUM COLLECTION 1990
WORKING TOGETHER FOR CHANGE

Kensington Community High School
Croydon Community School

Croydon Community School is an alternative learning space located on Dandenong Road, close by Croydon Central. It is a government post-primary school of 80 students between years 7-12, with 11 teachers and two administration staff who are also actively involved in all school activities.

It provides a caring transition program for juniors, a wide range of electives and opportunities for personal development in the middle years, along with either a full VCE in years 11-12, or two other alternatives which are some VCE subjects alongside student-chosen electives, or the option of obtaining a school-based certificate with subjects arising from both school and community activities.

Support staff are available for the Integration program, parents as tutors and links with an outside social worker. Parents are an invited and welcome presence alongside both students and teachers on the wide range of committees that function in and around the school.

The school has a proud record of developing new and exciting programs to help people learn and develop. Students participate in running all aspects of school business, thus learning responsible self-management.

There is a meaningful spread of subjects across the curriculum, featuring a strong Creative Arts area which has a tourong drama performance each year, alongside Art, Graphics, Dance, Music, Science and Technology, Maths and English. There is a strong Physical Education component also, with a number of camps and physical education activities throughout the year.

Features of the school experience are whole school meetings, discipline committees, self-assessment reports, friendship groups, whole school camps and excursions - students have real input into a decision made at the school.

We have interesting students! A politics student, Jeff Telford, recently travelled to the USSR with another student Chan Barton, to view the wind-down by the Soviets of nuclear armaments and their embrace of democracy. We had an all-girl rock band at one stage and students are currently creating their own dance pieces, writing their own music and plays etc.

Sherbrooke Community School

Sherbrooke Community School provides an alternative within the government system for parents and students. The school is different in that it is P-12, it is small, students are expected to take part in the running of the school and they have to negotiate courses with their teachers and classmates.

Enrolments are limited to 30 primary students and 95 post-primary students. The students and staff are drawn from a wide area covering the hills and the outer eastern suburbs.

Because of its size, parents and students can establish close links with the school more easily. Children can find security - especially quiet, timid children. Parents feel they are close to the school and know what is happening there.

The courses offered are designed to have every student achieve their potential (the same as every government school), the difference being that we may go about it in a different way.

We believe there are many learning opportunities outside the four walls of the classroom. Our students use community facilities a lot, they go on many excursions and camps, they work with a variety of adults other than teachers, and visitors are welcomed into the school. We try to relate our learning to the community at large.

There are few things that we do that are unique to Sherbrooke. Most of what we do can be found in other schools too. What is unique is that the approach is school-wide. All classes are involved in active learning, learning by doing, rather than being a passive observer.

A common misconception is that we are a school for students who have had problems in other schools or for children with academic problems. We are an alternative to the large neighbourhood schools; we have kids with a range of abilities and needs.

Our philosophy and practice caters for all students - not just a particular group.

Information about Sherbrooke Community School has previously appeared in Connect numbers 44 (April-May, 1987), 68 (April 1991), 71 (October 1991) and 74 (April 1992).
RETHINKING POLICIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

TOWARDS A NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

A Conference sponsored by the
Centre for Youth and Community Studies, RMIT Youth Research Centre, University of Melbourne National Centre for Socio-Legal Studies, LaTrobe University

MELBOURNE
14th-16th APRIL 1993

Abstracts by 10th December 1992;
Papers by 1st March 1993 to

Dr David Maunders,
Centre for Youth and Community Studies,
RMIT Coburg Campus, PO Box 179, Coburg 3058
Fax: (03) 350 2484

Conference bookings to:

Graphic Tours P/L
359 Exhibition Street
Melbourne Vic 3000
Phone: (03) 663 4005
Fax: (03) 663 2364

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Negotiation and Tactics

We’re not sure where this came from - a sheet across the desk! The following are suggested as some possible activities to introduce the concepts of negotiation and tactics - in class discussions, in SRCs, at network meetings etc:

Activity 1. An exercise in power:

In pairs (A and B), A is sitting in a chair, B wants to sit in A’s chair. B can use anything in her/his power, except physical force, to sit in A’s chair. A is only to move out of the chair if and when she/he wants to.

Activity 2. An exercise in compromise:

Same pairs. This time, A and B are standing facing a chair. Both want to sit in the chair. Both can use everything in their power to sit in the chair except physical force, however an agreement must be reached on whatever action is decided.

Discussion:

Who has the power in the first exercise? What gave this person the power? What did it feel like to have or not have power?

In the second exercise, who reached an agreement that was satisfactory for both A and B? How was this agreement reached?

Which of the two activities involved more conflict than the other? Why?

Activity 3: Tactics

BRAINSTORM as list of common family arguments eg homework, housework, using other people’s belongings. Role play a dispute with three to four students. The aim is to reach a compromise so that all family members have a say and get some part of what they want.

Other students observe and report on tactics used by individuals Who got most of what they wanted?

Students to brainstorm a list of other arguments and tactics which might be used by family members.

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6th Annual Democracy & Education Conference
24th-26th June 1993
Deadline for workshop proposals:
Feb 1, 1993

The Institute for Democracy in Education
210 McCracken Hall
Ohio University
Athens Ohio 45701-2979 USA
Resourceful Communities
Integrating Education, Training and Work for Young People in Rural Australia

This book is about 'community-based partnerships' between education, business, government, non-government and community groups in rural Australia.

A broad range of joint ventures involving schools and the wider community (eg school-industry projects) is documented and analysed. Outcomes, processes, critical factors as well as principles and ethics are discussed. Practical strategies for key players (eg young people, principals, business and industry representatives) are presented. While a major focus of the book is on best practice, particularly in terms of 'what works and why', the impact of current theories, concepts and recommendations (eg Finn, Mayer and Carmichael) is also considered.

The most powerful educational programs being developed in Australia draw strength from the inter-twinning of three strands: they are based on the choice and enthusiasm of students; they bring students into a productive relationship with their communities; they are intellectually rigorous and meet (and exceed) academic agendas. In documenting and analysing several of these programs, Resourceful Communities provides inspiration, practical information and the confidence of a firm theoretical position to others who would seek to reconstruct purposeful approaches to schooling.

Resourceful Communities is available from the Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA), PO Box 884, Belconnen ACT 2616 - cost $19.95 (ACSA members: $15.95). Postage within Australia included; overseas, add $5.

RAVE: 50 ISSUES YOUNG

RAVE is published by students at the Nunawading Youth Residential Centre (formerly Winlaton Youth Training Centre) in Melbourne.

In the early days, the student population in Winlaton Education Centre was approximately 80-90 young women, with 18 teachers. From old photographs, there were between 4 and 5 young women working with the editor, on a full-time basis, to produce each issue of Rave.

RAVE has now reached its 50th issue.

Subscriptions to Rave are $5 for 4 issues. Due to uncertainties about the Education Centre's future, current and potential subscribers should contact the Centre on (03) 878 3180 before sending a subscription.

Contact Rave, Nunawading Youth Residential Centre, Education Centre, 186 Springvale Road, Nunawading 3131.

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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:

JSC Inservice News (Rosebank PS for Preston JSC Network Vic) October 1992
Altona Lookabout (Altona Primary Schools, Vic) Issue 19, June 1992
Diamond Minutes (Year 9, Bright School, Vic) Say AAAH! (Student produced daily newspaper from the AAAH National Conference by students from Westall and Footscray/Yarraville Secondary Colleges, Melbourne, November 1992) Nos 1, 2, 3
The Homeless Age (Melton schools, Vic) November 1992
Auspicious (Year 10, Wanganui Park SC, Shepparton, Vic) November 1992
Rave (Nunawading Youth Residential Centre, Vic) No. 50; October 1992 - the 50th anniversary edition!

OVER OTHER PUBLICATIONS:

Australian:

Options (Youth Bureau, Canberra, ACT) August - November, 1992
Collective Notes (COSHG, Vic) Nos 76-78; September-November 1992
Network News (Surrly Hills, NSW) Sept 1992
Up2Date (AYPAC, ACT) No 2, Sept 1992
A String Through the Maze (YRC/CEP, Vic) Curriculum Perspectives (ACSA, Belconnen, ACT) Vol 12 No 3, September 1992
Working Together for Change (Kensington Community High School/DSP, Vic)
Youth Issues Forum (YACVic, Vic) Spring 92
Student Forum Report (Inner Western SSC, Vic) 13/8/92
The Journal (VCYAN, Fitzroy, Vic) No 3, August/September 1992

Overseas:

Hands On (Foxfire, USA) Nos 41, 42; Fall, Winter 1991
AERO-Gramme (AERO, New York, USA) #9, Autumn 1992
Democracy and Education (IDE, Ohio, USA) Vol 6 No 5, Fall 1992
Lib Ed (Bristol, UK) Vol 2 No 20, Winter 1992
National Coalition News (NCACS, USA) Vol 17 No 1, Spring 1992

Articles:

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