• Switched On – Switched Off: An Update
• The Museum of Values: An Activity
• Launch of a School Charter: Marian College, Vic
• Victorian Primary School SRC/JSC Congress 2008
• NSW State SRC Conference 2008
• VicSRC: Regional Student Conferences Outcomes
• SRC Survey
• ‘A Good Representative’: 1988 Resource Revisited
• Student Initiatives to Change the World: Timor Leste Village Lighting Scheme & School Aid in Sichuan Earthquake
• Resources: Democracy & Education Call for Manuscripts; Enviro Inspiro! 2008; Survey on Young People’s Right to Participate; Professional Learning Activity on Student Action Teams, Values Education and Service Learning; Connect publications; NSW Youth Conference
**This Issue:**

I am still thinking about Student Councils and fundraising. At the Regional Student Conferences that I've been presenting on behalf of the VicSRC, students regularly reported on their fund-raising initiatives for charity or for school resources. And I regularly challenged them about whether that is what the Student Council should be doing.

The student responses were interesting. “We get involved in fundraising,” they said, “because that is generally something we can do without a big argument within the school. If we try to tackle issues of curriculum, or rules, or school structures, or people’s behaviour, we don’t often succeed: we get knocked back or we can’t get agreement.” Faced with that frustration, it was easier to do things that enabled students to make small differences – the Student Council was also actually seen to be doing something!

Buried within those comments are many issues. First, there’s the issue of the training and support that Student Councils need to be effective. At many of these Conferences, students also identified ‘working as a team’ and ‘getting support from others’ as issues of concern to them – where they needed training. If there are big and difficult issues of concern, how are students being supported to raise and resolve these effectively? Secondly, students perceived that their views were rejected – sometimes without reasons being given. How seriously are schools taking the formal ‘voice’ of students? What sort of responses do students ‘automatically’ receive? How can they raise issues in a more supportive atmosphere? Thirdly (and it’s part of the previous point), how do schools plan to actively involve students in important decisions within the school, and give them the time and information to come up with considered and complex proposals – that enable them to take part in serious discussions?

Unless those issues are addressed, it is no wonder that Student Councils will take the easy if marginalising approach of organising ‘out of uniform days’ to respond to the fund-raising requests that come from many groups. And this then becomes a self-perpetuating definition of the purpose of Student Councils: it is ‘what Student Councils do’ - the sum and total of their work.

However, I’m sure that this will probably continue to be the case for some time, so how do we respond now?

I think there are two broad possibilities – one structural, one conceptual. One structural response that we discussed with students was to form a ‘fund-raising committee’ of the Student Council and hence stop such activities from taking over all the work of the Council. This committee (or even a separate group of students) then reports to the Council, along with other committees.

The conceptual approach arose through the work of the mMaD? (Are You Making a Difference?) program and originated within the philanthropic community. Here, the Student Council (or a ‘Student Foundation’) is challenged to think first about the nature of the world it wants - and hence of the changes it wants to bring about. It formulates this into a mission statement. Only then does it raise funds. It then advertises the availability of grants to organisations that might meet the students’ mission statement. Funds are allocated in order to achieve those changes ... and students monitor the use of their funds to see whether those changes have occurred.

It’s a small change, but one that alters the purpose and power of fund-raising, and enables students to recognise that through action or skills or funding, they have power to change the world.

Roger Holdsworth

**Next Issue:** #173: October 2008

Deadline for material: end of September 2008
Student Initiatives in School Engagement

Does knowing more about engagement give us the ability to change our level of engagement with school? And if students design and run school activities such as excursions, will this improve their level of engagement?

These are some of the questions being investigated by students at Penders Grove and Preston South Primary Schools (in Melbourne’s northern suburbs) in the on-going Switched On – Switched Off project.

In Connect 168 (December 2007), the schools reported on their 2007 students’ research, through the formation of Student Action Teams, and with the support of the CASS Foundation.

In 2008, both schools have continued their work in this area, moving from research around engagement, to planning and taking action to improve it. The schools recently held a joint Student Forum to share their plans and action. The following descriptions from each school are drawn from their mid-year reports:

Pender’s Grove Primary

Re-Forming the SAT

At the start of 2008, students from last year’s Student Action Team (SAT), who are now in Year 5 and 6, planned and shared in the leadership of an Engagement Forum for all students in Year 4. Many of the experiences in which they had participated in the course of last year were included and directed by them. Current SAT members took leadership of small groups and explored engagement through discussion, the ‘Good Day/ Bad Day’ drawing, and drama. All Year 4 students were encouraged to nominate for places on the SAT and the continuing SAT members shortlisted and approached the successful applicants.

b. Starting the Action

The students’ Education Campaign sharpened their goal: ‘Does knowing more about engagement give us the ability to change our level of engagement?’

A pre- and post- Education Campaign survey provided the SAT with data to evaluate the impact of their experiences. The preliminary findings of the pre-survey indicated that, while students expressed their understanding of the importance of engagement, 88% admitted to knowing between some and nothing about it!

Strategies were then identified by the SAT to help all students reflect on engagement and develop a deeper understanding of how it affects us all. These included the following:

- A-Frames were placed at the front of the school each morning for two weeks. Each included slogans or phrases that the SAT members thought might provoke students to question their engagement at school;
- Switchometers were placed around the hallways around the school;
- Students from the SAT collaborated to run a workshop on engagement in their own classrooms. Many of the activities that were used in the first year were implemented by the students; and
- An Engagement Student Treasure Hunt was designed and implemented by the SAT. It involved all students from Year 4 to Year 6 working in mixed ages in groups of up to
six. Groups were then asked to answer particular puzzles and complete challenges focusing on engagement.

c. Evaluation Processes
Students have begun a post-Education Campaign survey that seeks to gauge any increased understanding of engagement and to determine if that increase in understanding acts to empower students to make changes to their own engagement. This survey will then continue to feed into the development of further action.

Jeff Jackson

Preston South Primary
Re-Forming the SAT

At the beginning of the year, the Student Action Team (SAT) re-formed and replaced outgoing members of the team with new members from Grades 4 and 5, as well as re-introduced everyone to the concept of engagement.

In our initial meetings, we revisited the activities and experiences of 2007 and discussed our ideas and understandings of what engagement is, the things that influence it, and how engagement is being created in the school environment.

The SAT discussed how they wanted to choose the new members of the team. They agreed on the following criteria:

- A mixture of ability
- Honest and trustworthy
- People who do and don’t like school
- People the SAT can work with
- Ideas people
- People who can work in groups

The SAT then organised and ran an introduction/information session about engagement for all students in Grades 4, 5 and 6. They ran activities, explained the SAT’s work and offered students an opportunity to join the group. After the applications were made, the SAT discussed who it would like to join the team and had to justify their reason for or against the applicants. There are now 13 members and 2 deputies.

Planning Our Action

The SAT brainstormed and then short-listed 10 ‘actions’ that they felt have the potential to make school more engaging. The members of the team surveyed all students from Grades 3-6 to discover which ‘action’, from their list of 10, other students felt would make the most difference to engagement. The winning idea was to have an excursion that is planned and led by the student body, where students choose the destination, activities and so on.

Starting the Action

So far the Student Action Team has pondered and discussed their excursion. Their ideas are generic to any excursion and include things such as having everyone involved, going to new and exciting places, and having a contingency plan for bad weather. These ideas were presented at the interschool forum under the heading ‘how to make a great excursion.’ The excursion will be run in the second half of the year.

Evaluation Process

The Student Action Team is learning that the effectiveness of their action must be measured. The students have done a pre-action survey with Grades 3-6 to determine their experiences of last year’s excursions. A similar survey will be conducted after the SAT excursion. The initial survey showed that Grade 3 and 6 enjoyed their excursions more than did Grades 4 and 5, and that boys felt they had more fun and learnt more than did the girls.

Other Notes

There have been many other positive developments from the SAT and its work. Other items from the survey have already been adopted and led by students within the school. One of these initiatives has been the purchase of a digital microscope to be used for science classes. This came about as a result of the SAT’s desire to do more science experiments and to do more ‘real’ science using specialised equipment – because they believe this will be engaging. This has already been the case.

Another off-shoot from the SAT and its work has been the establishment of lunchtime art classes that are run by students, for students. This came about when the idea of student-led classes was rejected as the main action we would pursue, in the SAT survey mentioned earlier. However, two students were so keen on this idea that they pursued it through the Junior School Council and meetings with the Principal. The classes have been run during second term.

Sam Ross
Combined Student Forum 1, 2008

This Forum was held on Tuesday June 10th at Penders Grove Primary School. It provided an opportunity for members of the two Student Action Teams to meet each other (in some cases for the first time), to report on what they had done, to get ideas from each other, and to explore possible initiatives.

Students from Preston South wrote this report for their school newsletter:

For further information:
Jeff Jackson: jackson.jeffrey.r@edumail.vic.gov.au
Sam Ross: saminlondon@cheerful.com

The CASS Foundation is a small private foundation that provides grants for medical and scientific research and education projects. In 2004, the Foundation commissioned researchers at Monash University to conduct a review of current research and practice about student engagement. Their report, Student disengagement from primary schooling: a review of research and practice, led the Foundation to provide funding in 2007 for seven projects in Victorian primary schools designed to improve student engagement. For further information about the CASS Foundation, or to read or download a copy of the Monash report, please visit the CASS website: www.cassfoundation.org

2003 Survey of SRCs

In 2003, Second Strike conducted a survey of Australian SRCs. The survey was completed by the SRC Teacher Adviser in almost every case. Here is a selection of the results:

How often do SRCs meet?
1% meet twice a week; 31% meet weekly; 49% meet fortnightly; 11% meet monthly; 4% meet once a term; 4% meet when needed

How would you rate support for the SRC from the student body and from the staff and admin?
73% of SRCs have their own bank account or independent sub account within the school bank account.
51% of SRCs provide some form of training for their SRCs.
64% of SRCs are interested in inter-school training and events.
65% of SRCs love the idea of being able to put their SRC logo on merchandise.
61% of SRCs have or are looking to develop their own SRC website.
64% of SRCs have or are looking to develop their own SRC newsletter.
65% of SRCs feel they need to further formalise their constitutions, minutes and/or agendas

What do SRCs spend most of their time working on?

What this data show is that many student councils are functioning moderately well, but many are still not offering training and structure for students, for example, in the form of Agendas and Minutes. However, even amongst many of those schools that were apparently functioning well, SRCs still focus the vast majority of their time on fundraising and student social activities or ‘fun stuff’.

In early 2009 Second Strike will launch a further and more extensive survey to see how this information has changed. This survey will be repeated at the end of the year as well to provide further comparative data. As the vast majority of surveys were not completed by students, this is one aspect future surveys will have to look to overcome. A division of primary and secondary school data will also be an important addition.

David Mould, Second Strike
info@second-strike.com
The Museum of Values Activity

The Museum of Values activity was developed within the two Student Action Team-based Values Education clusters in Melbourne (Manningham and Darebin schools) in 2007. It was used in the ‘engagement’ Student Forum of the project, introducing students to the ideas about Values. There was widespread use of metaphors within these forums, with other activities based around CSI, Thank God You’re Here and Mission Impossible.

The activity started some time before the Student Forum. Each school team was challenged to identify objects that symbolised the values they thought were important within their school community. (They could choose their values, but were each allocated one value from the nine National Values.) They were asked to bring three objects and three words or phrases (didn’t need to be the same values as the objects). In one case, there were six primary schools involved; in the other case, eleven primary and secondary schools.

On the day, about 80 students sat in a large circle around empty tables. One by one they presented their objects and words to the group, saying why they had chosen these symbols.

The tables became covered with objects and cards. The idea that these objects were found by future archaeologists in a ‘dig’ was introduced. What would these objects tell us about what was important in this society, and what people did as a result of these values?

The students were then broken into mixed school groups and each given a starting point. It was hoped these would develop out of the objects and values, but with shortage of time, the nine National Values were used. Each small group was then asked to set up a museum room or case – a display drawn from the archaeological dig. They could choose up to six objects and six cards (the figures varied between the clusters).

Each ‘museum space’ started with an overall value label (on a chair on a table) and students collected items related to this starting point. The students were given small cards that they used to label the objects and explain their link to values; they also had larger cards that they used to describe actions in society that came out of these values, and these actions connected to the objects and statements via cords and strings.

At the end of the activity, which took about 20 minutes in small groups, the entire group ‘toured’ the museum and each small group explained their display.

Following the activity, I reflected:

As we went round the group and they donated their object I was struck by the focus and seriousness of the students.
Geoff Jones, the Darebin cluster coordinator, wrote about the activity in that cluster’s report:

School groups had workshopped in their school the idea of the selection of an artifact which illustrated their “value”. They had discussed the value and its meaning and had explored ways of demonstrating their understanding in concrete ways. Their artifacts were inventive, creative, often witty. Their offerings included a gorgeously wrapped gift, a water bottle, a flag, a globe, a large key, a set of scales, an intricately prepared diorama depicting two figures, a first aid box and a school song. What could all these objects tell us?

The students’ attention in this phase of the work – when they all came together at an interschool forum – attests to the good groundwork already undertaken in their home schools. They had already put thought and effort into selecting and developing their objects and had developed rationales for their adoption of these particular artifacts. They were consequently interested to hear about and understand why students in other schools had made their selections. Had their thinking been similar? Perhaps they had understood the value differently? Was there something new or useful in their approach? And could the objects being unveiled be used in other ways – to illustrate other values for example?

The use of real objects to build metaphors for values is one which seems to work for students at this middle years level. Some were more literal than others and it is interesting – and understandable – to see how the secondary school students used a more sophisticated set of images to highlight their values. But the engagement of all students was an important precondition for the next phase of this exercise which involved groups of students selecting key artifacts to build their mini table exhibitions. The exercise generated great discussion across age groupings and school groups.

Teachers from the school also reflected:

“Students worked with great focus, intensity and cooperation in their mixed school teams to produce these ‘museum displays’. The products, in our view, show a level of sophistication, deep thinking and creativity not manifested in their responses to the student survey or even in their school definitions of ‘what is a value?’ We concluded that the museum game, culminating in the group ‘curating’ of a museum display, was a powerfully effective learning activity, which deepened students’ understandings about the 9 national values by challenging them, in a cooperative problem-solving situation, to discover and make concrete links between abstract ideas, symbols, objects and their own background knowledge and experiences of the real world.”

Roger Holdsworth

(photos: Sue Cahill, from the Manningham cluster’s Museum of Values activity)
Tuesday the 22nd July has been a very important day in the history of Marian College and this day will be recognized in the future as the official day for the launch of our School charter which has been developed by our lamp bearers and SRC representatives over the course of semester 1.

It demonstrates a collection of rights and responsibilities each student at Marian College has to live up to in being part of this community.

It was developed by the students, perused by both staff and students for suggestions for improvement or clarification, and was launched with a presentation by the SRC and Lamp Bearers. Each student was given a commemorative Bookmark and Badge to mark the occasion.

This will hopefully become the code by which all students live their lives at Marian.

Congratulations to both the Lamp Bearers and SRC for their work and launch of the Charter. It will be remembered long after those students have left.

Kerrie Williams
Student WellBeing Co-ordinator

Rights:
Every individual member at Marian College has the right to:

- Expand their educational background through various learning styles, at their own pace and to the best of their ability
- Be free to say what they believe in and be informed about the current issues
- Be treated equally and respected, without being discriminated against
- Feel welcome and accepted into the community
- Be themselves and practice their beliefs without being judged upon
- Be in a safe, friendly and clean learning environment
- Feel happy, be loved and supported

Responsibilities:
It is the responsibility of each member of the community to:

- Work to our full potential in order to achieve our goals. To use resources efficiently and to take advantage of them.
- Communicate, listen and respect each other’s ideas and opinions with a positive approach
- Treat others equally without being judgmental
- Welcome and include all, ensuring they feel comfortable and a part of the Marian Community
- Encourage individuality and accept each other’s differences as well as their beliefs
- Create a happy and loving atmosphere
- Maintain a clean and safe environment
- Abide by school expectations (as in Diary)
- Act as role model for all members of the community

Extract of the Presentation from the Lamp Bearers – Debbie Barbar and Donna Nguyen to the School Community.

This charter has been created by students for students. Ideas were first established during meetings, and then finalized by a series of editing phases with both the student body and staff. You may think the charter is cliché, however, it is an essential list that needs to be practiced, recognizing the actions and behavior we need to uphold in our everyday living and activity in the Marian Community.

Our aim is to achieve a sense of Unity and Agreement. These guidelines are a way of stating that obvious. It is to reinforce ideas and everyday happenings though formal statements.

We, the leaders of the school have been working hard with the desire that this charter improves the school for the better. Students should feel comfortable in their environment and we should all live and work together. This charter is not a set of rules and regulations enforced by adults to discipline the students. This is exactly what it is not. The charter is a student developed document with the intention of uniting the student body and creating a future where we can co-operate and tolerate one another without conflict or negativity.

The charter is a symbol of unity among the young women from Year 7 to Year 12 that represent our school community.

We must all work hard to ensure that it lives on long beyond this launch today as we all work together to make Marian a better place. Wearing of the badge presented to you means that you are advocating your agreement to live by this charter with the rest of your peers. It means so much more than just a badge.

Donna Nguyen and Debbie Barbar
Lamp Bearers

marian News
A Community growing in Faith & Love • Serving Others • Striving to Achieve • Thinking for the Future
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The NSW State Student Representative Council Conference in early August is the peak student leadership conference supported by the NSW Department of Education. This year, the conference celebrates its 21st anniversary.

Up to 130 student leaders, elected by their peers at interschool and regional Student Representative Council meetings, including ten Aboriginal student leaders, are participating in this year’s conference. Skill development workshops and theme-related activities provide direction for follow-on regional student leadership activities.

The theme of the conference: *Let’s Improve – Make the Move!* encourages students and Student Representative Councils to:

- raise their awareness about issues related to social justice;
- get more involved in improving their school environments;
- improve student connections so that Student Representative Councils are more inclusive;
- actively engage in ‘real’ issues through student leadership;
- collaborate with the school community to formalise processes associated with the inclusion of a ‘student voice’ in schools.

All students participate in a ‘coreshop’ on *Taking Action!* to create a personal action plan to assist participants to implement conference outcomes locally. In addition, all students participate in two ‘flexishop’ from a range of ten possible choices. These sessions address different aspects of the conference theme. A Student Forum is held at the conference and each regional Student Representative Council team was invited to put forward one recommendation.

The Director-General of Education is closing the conference on Friday 8 August.


**SRC priorities**

Priorities for the NSW State SRC are based on the resolutions passed at the previous year’s State SRC Conference. The 2008 NSW SRC is currently acting on the following resolutions passed at the Student Forum at the 2007 State SRC Conference.

**Resolution 1:**
1. establish a link on the student portal homepage to the student leadership website;
2. establish an SRC e-forum which will include all regions.

**Resolution 2:**
1. promote the implementation of peer mediation in schools;
2. trial the new NSW SRC/MindMatters resource, *Creating Connections: Student to Student*.

**Resolution 3:**
The NSW SRC encourages all public schools to reduce their energy bills and greenhouse gas emissions by at least 5% per year for three years.

**Resolution 4:**
The NSW SRC works with the NSW DET to educate all schools to be less discriminatory towards the many different minority groups that exist within the school community. They are to develop resources and educational programs to increase the acceptance of minority groups and promote equity.

**Resolution 5:**
The NSW SRC in conjunction with the DET develop a pro-forma to be given to all students in NSW secondary schools which lists national and state support services that would be expanded to include local support services.

**Resolution 6:**
1. improve and promote the SRC website;
2. ensure that all SRCs are connected and the community is actively involved.

Each region puts forward a recommendation for debate at the 2008 conference. All recommendations passed at the Student Forum during the conference will be discussed by the incoming 2009 NSW SRC when they meet in November 2008.
Core-shop: Let’s Improve - Make the Move!

Scenario 1:
Last term, there were two fights in the playground between seniors and juniors. At the last SRC meeting, five Year 7 students complained that they feel unsafe in parts of the playground, especially around the toilets ... so in order to fix the problem, the SRC is planning to paint a mural on the back fence promoting world peace.

Use the flow chart above to better identify the intended outcome (step 3).

What might be some actions (step 4) to take in order to achieve this outcome?

Scenario 1:
My best friend always complains that there’s no shade to sit under at lunchtime ... Now, because I’m the president of the SRC, I’m going to ask the principal to do something about it! He should listen to me!

How should the SRC go about collecting evidence (step 1a) to prove that there really is no shade? (It appears that only one person has complained.)

... and what about the actions of the student? What should this person have done before marching off to the principal?

Also ... Is it really a solution to just complain to the principal and ask him/her to do something about it?

If lack of shade really is a problem, what actions (step 4) would an effective SRC take?

Scenario 1:
When my SRC surveyed the students about the quality of school life, three issues arose:
• the students said they were bored at lunchtimes;
• the students wanted more say in ‘real’ decision-making at school; and
• they complained that the sandwiches sold at the canteen were boring.

... so the SRC is planning to meet with the canteen supervisor next week.

Why do you think the SRC decided to only take action on the last issue?

How should the SRC tackle the other two issues?

Use the flow chart (boxes 1-4) to plan action on either the first or second issue.

Does this action plan help to solve the problem?
Use the flow chart to better identify intended outcomes and to plan action.
FRENZYZ: A Festival of Ideas for Victorian Primary School SRCs and JSCs!

FRENZYZ is the expo of ideas for JSCs, featuring the 1st Junior Student Council Congress, September 9th, 9.30am to 2.30pm, Box Hill Town Hall (Melbourne).

If your student council has been looking for new ideas and challenges, then this is where they will find them.

This event is open to Primary Schools only. It involves opportunities to attend training workshops, physically try out different ideas, games and activities, see new fundraising suggestions in action, and to discuss how Student Councils work with other students and professionals.

The whole atmosphere of FRENZYZ is exciting, vibrant and fast paced! Dozens of stalls will be available for students to sample, build, trial, debate, write and learn. But you’ll have to be quick because those stalls will periodically shut down and then re-open as a new idea. Teachers will also be offered their own optional workshops during the day.

One of the key features of the day will be the first ever Junior Student Council Congress. The secondary schools have an annual Congress where they debate and represent the opinions of students right across Victoria, and then pass resolutions on what should be done, just like a parliament. This is primary school students’ opportunity to show they’re up to the challenge too and have just as much to say.

To qualify for a seat at Congress you must have students registered to attend FRENZYZ before it fills up completely AND your students must agree to run some form of consultation with at least part of the school before the day.

We will provide you with a survey to run with a minimum of 20 students on two key issues to be debated at the Congress - The Environment and Bullying. However, you can do more to find out what students are concerned about and what they think should be done. If you don’t research it before the Congress then it cannot be discussed during the Congress!

Once you’ve registered, we will provide you with posters to go up around your school encouraging students to come and talk to you, and all the information you will need to make it to the Box Hill Town Hall. Refreshments will be available on the day, however students will need to provide their own lunch.

Which seat will your school be represented in?

Costs: The cost of this event has been subsidised by government funding. Hence, instead of $75 per head, we are excited to be able to offer you the following low registration fees:

• $30 plus GST per student (1 free teacher per 4 students)
• $20 plus GST per student if your teacher is a registered member of VISTA (Victorian Institute of SRC Teacher Advisers). Want to join? We can send you a membership form!

Places will fill very fast so please register quickly to avoid missing out on having your school represented at this pinnacle event. If you need more information or have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us at any time.
During Terms 2 and 3, the VicSRC organised a series of 17 Regional Student Conferences across Victoria. These conferences brought together around 900 students from 130 schools. The days included SRCs sharing what they are doing, students learning from each other and being challenged about the roles of SRCs, information about how to tackle an issue (action planning) and some discussions on topics that students identified as important.

Students also learnt about the VicSRC and its role and started to develop local links for future clusters that will enable sharing and common action to develop further.

A more extensive report on each event will be sent to all participating schools, but already there have been some positive responses. A group of students from Gippsland wrote to the VicSRC:

“Thank you for involving us in the Gippsland SRC Conference. You have brought our SRC team to a new level of excellence and we are very appreciative of what you have shown us.”

There have also been positive responses from SRC support teachers:

“The overall response from my students was a very positive view of the day, and it has inspired them to commit fully to our newly formed SRC. I most enjoyed having the opportunity to connect with other SRC Advisors.”

“I just want to say thank you for yesterday. I found it very helpful and came back with some new ideas, and some more enthusiasm for the role. Also, a whole lot of awe regarding Frankston’s set up – WOW! The kids enjoyed it also, and hopefully there are some good things that will arise out of what they discussed.”

“I met with some of the students today; they have given me glowing feedback about the day’s activities and want to become more involved in VicSRC.”

The VicSRC acknowledges the support of the host schools: Chaffey SC (Mildura), The Hamilton and Alexandra College (Hamilton), Traralgon College, Bairnsdale SC, Lyndale SC (North Dandenong), Elwood College, Penola Catholic College (Broadmeadows), Bendigo Senior SC and Eaglehawk SC, North Geelong SC, Macleod College, Benalla College, Wodonga Senior College and SFYS in Wodonga, Marian College (West Sunshine), Ballarat HS, Frankston HS, Brentwood SC (Glen Waverley) and Dimboola Memorial SC.

Thanks also to VicSRC Executive members (Sarah, Andrew, Georgia, Linh, Ash, Emma and Doug) who spoke at the days, and to those whose work contributed to the success of the days, including running teacher sessions: VicSRC supporters Lyndall Nulty and Ruthie Hambling, James Tonson (VicSRC Project Worker), David Mould (Second Strike), and Sally Morgan and Josh Levy (Education Foundation and ruMAD?).

And thank you all for taking part! Without your input, the conferences would have been less informative.

Topics Raised at Regional Conferences!

Students suggested topics for discussion at the Regional Conferences and formed workshops around those with priority. A wide range of concerns were put forward. Examples included:

**SRC-related:**
- Organising and surviving as an SRC;
- Representing students better;
- Involving more students (especially younger students);
- More control over SRC accounts;
- Greater recognition for students;
- Better decision-making and communication;
- SRC camps and excursions;
- Working as a group;
- SRC structure.

**School-related:**
- Team building amongst students;
- Student input to curriculum, rules;
- Overhauling facilities (toilets, canteen etc);
- Bullying;
- Inter-school collaboration;
- School and campus mergers;
- Earlier introduction to VCE subjects;
- Uniforms and school image;
- Peer support and advice;
- Lunchtime activities;
- Improving relationships in the school;
- Student health and safety.

**Community-related:**
- Links with the community and primary schools;
- Environment (recycling, rubbish, solar energy, minimising waste).

Connecting Regional Conferences with the VicSRC Congress 2008!

These topics and issues form the basis for further discussion and decisions at the current VicSRC Statewide Congress.

When thinking about the action that flows from the discussions, much of the follow-up will happen in individual SRCs. However, there may be issues and actions that are best dealt with at a wider, state-wide level. For example, canteen prices for healthy foods was discussed at some conferences; SRCs might be able to negotiate with canteen managers in individual schools; however, the VicSRC might also be able to discuss the issue with a School Canteens Association – and, if this is appropriate, ask for a statewide subsidy for all schools for healthy food. Or issues around environmental concerns, toilets, health and safety – all have possibilities for statewide action by students.

In these cases, SRCs could discuss possible action further and propose topics for discussion, debate and action at the VicSRC Congress. That means schools could do some further investigation and offer to run a workshop at Congress, as well as starting to prepare a motion for debate.

The VicSRC receives funding support from the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and is auspiced by and based at the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic).
So you’re a representative!

That means you’ve been appointed (elected, chosen or volunteered) by your class or home-group to be on a student body. Or perhaps you’ve been elected by all students to be on the School Council or some other committee.

That’s a big responsibility. It means you have to:

• take the job seriously;
• put in time and effort;
• present students’ views and not just your own ideas.

This article is meant to give you some ideas about what the job of representative means and how you can do it.

You need to be a visible representative – the class and the school must know who you are and what you are doing. That means reporting to home groups, talking at assemblies, putting up posters, collecting ideas. In some schools, representatives have a badge so other students know who they are. Other students can then approach you around the school and ask you to mention things or see if you can get things done.

Being a good representative means always keeping in touch with what students want you to do. And sometimes, it means standing up for decisions and arguing them to teachers and the Principal.
Before a Meeting
If you’re a good representative, you don’t just walk into a meeting without any thought or preparation.

You have to think, prepare, organise!

Think:
- back to what was discussed at the last meeting – read the minutes (the record of the meeting)
- about what is to be talked about at the meeting – read the agenda (the list of topics)
- about what you want to say – talk to other students.

Prepare:
- your folder of notes and minutes
- motions (written out suggestions) to be put to the meeting
- arguments in favour of your ideas and motions.

Organise:
- a discussion of the agenda in your home group
- other representatives to support you
- your ideas and motions to be put on the agenda – see the chairperson before the meeting.

And its important that you turn up to meetings. If you really can’t and have a good excuse, make sure you put in an apology before the meeting.

During the Meeting
What do you do during an SRC, Council or committee meeting?

Being a representative means taking an active part in what goes on – giving ideas, putting forward the views of students (not just your own!) and knowing what’s happening all the time.

You need to know how meetings work. They’re just a way for a group of people to share information and agree on what to do. Everyone in the meeting must make sure it’s a success, and that means:
- listening to other people
- considering other views
- trying to reach an agreement in which everyone wins.

If you want the meeting to decide something, put up a motion on this and try to get support from other representatives.

(You might like to look at the article on Meeting Procedures in this series – in the last issue of Connect – for more ideas.)

It’s a good idea to have a folder to keep together all the papers from the meeting, as well as your own notes. Write down the important things that happen in the meeting in this folder. Think about ways in which you can make these things clear and interesting to your class when you report back to them.

After the Meeting
You have two main tasks after the meeting: to tell others what was decided, and to carry out any action that you agreed to do.

Other students appointed you and they want to know what happened. You need to tell them if their ideas were accepted and what other ideas came up. You need to do this in a way that makes it interesting for them. (There’s another article in this series called Getting Ideas and Reporting Back – in the next issue of Connect – that gives you ideas on how to do this.)

You might have to work out a survey of your group or of the school to find out information for the next meeting. Talk with teachers about getting time to do this, either in homes groups, or as part of your class work.

If the meeting has decided on something, you might have tasks to do – letters to write, people to visit, leaflets or posters to put up. Make sure you get these done by the time agreed on.
**Getting Publicity**

To get extra support (and the more the better), there are different ways of letting people know what's going on. Publicise what you're doing around the school, with SRC posters or newsletters. These can tell people how your action is progressing. You could use the PA system to broadcast your information at lunchtime. The SRC could operate a ‘radio station’ to classrooms and the yard.

Use the mass media to get your message across. Your local newspaper or community radio station is always looking for news and will be more than willing to help you. Just ring them up.

You could start your own publication within the school – and this could become a class project. If there are particular things you need, start by putting SRC ‘classified ads’ around the school.

**What Do You Need?**

All this takes time. You need your own time, at school or at home, to read and prepare. You need time at school for discussion and debate. In some schools, this is during home-group or pastoral time. In others, it happens in English or other classes.

Students have lots of good ideas for you to bring up at meetings. From talking with others – older students, younger students, teachers, parents, friends – you will get more ideas and learn a lot about the topics being discussed.

Teachers can be a big help. Work out which teachers are particularly interested to support you. Make sure they know what’s going on. Get their ideas. If you have a difficulty as a representative, they might be able to help you work out how to overcome it.

**Credit**

All the activities we’ve talked about in these articles take time and effort. However, if you take your role seriously, you know that you also learn an enormous amount.

The sorts of things you are learning are, in most cases, the things that your subject classes are aiming at. Surprised? For example, public speaking, writing correspondence, keeping minutes, making posters, setting up role-plays, teaching younger students, budgeting and so on, are all probably part of the subjects you do.

There are ways to get the time and work you put into your role as representative recognised as part of your school work. That means you can get time in class to work on things for the SRC, you can encourage others to work with you, you could get specific time given to SRC representatives, and you can get credit for your work in assessments, reports and references.

To do this, you’ll have to negotiate the idea and its details with teachers. You’ll probably have to talk with your form or year level coordinator to get agreement on arrangements that go beyond one class and you may have to discuss practical arrangements with the person who does the timetable. It would be a good idea for the SRC to talk about a ‘credit policy’ for the school and to put a proposal to the School Council.

The kit *Credit and Support* was published by the Schools Division of the Victorian Ministry of Education in the late 1980s. Perhaps it is still in your school somewhere. It contains lots of good ideas on how to go about getting credit for your work.
The Hardest Thing
Not all decisions are made in meetings of SRCs, School Councils or committees. Perhaps your class needs to work something out as a group.

You might be asked, as class representative, to “do something!” You might have to listen to complaints and problems. Often the hardest thing about being a representative, is not to take sides, but to help the group work out its solutions. You’ll learn a lot from other meetings that will help you here.

But after the decision is made, you could have another hard job – to stand up and speak for the group and for their decision. Again, remember: when a decision is made, you must present the views of the group and not just your own ideas.

More from this series of SRC Pamphlets coming up in future issues of Connect:
Getting Ideas and Reporting Back; and Making It Happen
Other titles from previous issues of Connect have been:
Why Have an SRC?; Making Decisions; and Meeting Procedures

Discussion Points
1. “Some classes don’t let you report back.”
   If they don’t listen, what do you do? Is it their fault? Is it your fault?
2. “Some students complain all the time, but don’t follow anything up.”
   What do you do to get over people being negative?

A Checklist of Possible Student Council Resources

What resources does your Student Council (in a primary or secondary school) have to help it do its work?

The following 10 ideas were developed this year in several Regional Student Conferences. Not all of these may be possible in any particular school, but every school should be able to organise some of them.

What’s your score out of 10?

☐ Folders for all Student Council members:
The folders would be used for keeping minutes, agendas and notes together. They could have the Student Council logo on the front.

☐ A pigeon-hole for Student Council mail in the front office:
When mail for the Student Council comes into the school, it should be directly accessible to the Council and not kept on someone’s desk until the next meeting. The Secretary’s job is to collect and present the mail.

☐ Student Council badges:
These identify Student Council members, so students know who to approach. They can be presented in a ceremony acknowledging who has been elected.

☐ Photos of Student Council representatives in the school foyer:
When visitors arrive at the school, they are greeted by a strong statement of the importance of the Student Council to the school.

☐ A Student Council newsletter or column in the school’s newsletter:
The Student Council could have its own newsletter or contribute regularly to the school’s newsletter.

☐ A noticeboard for the Student Council:
The noticeboard can publicise the next meeting, provide the minutes of the last meeting, carry news about Student Council events. Who has the key?

☐ Photocopier access – code or card:
The Student Council needs to make copies of agendas and minutes etc. A photocopier card could have a budgeted amount of credit on it for Council business.

☐ A Student Council budget:
The Student Council could have a budget line in the school’s accounts, with an agreed amount allocated each year.

☐ A filing cabinet for the Student Council:
The collective information of the Student Council needs to be kept somewhere accessible to members. It could contain minute books, correspondence, ideas etc.

☐ A meeting room or office for the Student Council:
Where do you find the Student Council? Where does it work? An office or small meeting room can provide space for the Student Council to meet, work and store possessions.
Student Initiatives to Change the World

Student Initiatives Can Light a Village

The Timor Leste Village Lighting Scheme

Action by Australian students can help six villages in Timor Leste (East Timor) to get solar powered lighting for all their houses. Many student groups want to make a difference to their world, and this project provides one way for students to devote their time, talents and ‘tithes’ to changing the lives of Australia’s neighbours.

Such initiatives go beyond simple ‘fundraising for charity’. They involve students in discussing their goals for the world (and the part they play in it); identifying issues of concern and possibilities for change; focusing their time, skills, energy and funds around that change; and then following up their initiatives to see what changes have occurred – and what the impact has been.

This example is provided through Australia’s Alternative Technology Association (ATA). They have provided the following information for students and schools who would like to get involved in this very real effort to improve the lives of young people and their families, who live not very far from Australia.

The ATA's Village Lighting Scheme is providing basic solar powered lighting to all households in six sub villages in Aileu district in Timor Leste. Two lights in each house will make a positive difference to the lives of students, women and families in this poor rural area.

Timor Leste is one of the poorest countries in the region, with the World Bank estimating that over 40% of the population live below the poverty line. This harsh statistic is particularly highlighted when the sun goes down. In rural areas, people prepare and eat their meals using candles or kerosene; students struggle to read and learn in the dark.

Having access to reliable and clean light benefits children’s studies. Three hours of night-time light creates the opportunity to increase learning and complete homework. Women also report increased opportunities to undertake other tasks during the daytime when they can see better at night.
A current light source is kerosene, which is both expensive and polluting. Kerosene lighting costs $2 per week from a small household budget. Moreover the light produced is of poor quality and smoky, resulting in eye strain and respiratory and burn related problems.

A much better alternative is to develop solar powered lighting. The solar lighting system ‘Lampu Diak’ that is used in this project has been developed solely for the needs of Timor Leste, in collaboration with villagers. The system has a low basic cost per household: a $100 system includes 5W solar panel, battery, controller and two lights and then has little on-going cost. To extend this approach to the six villages will cost $32,000. This funding will go towards the purchase of system components and implementation expenses including training, local technicians and freight.

The International Projects Group of the Alternative Technology Association (ATA/IPG), together with the Friends of Aileu - Moora Moora Cooperative is coordinating the project and are seeking co-funding of up to $16,000 to complete the project.

If an SRC or other student group wishes to help with the funding or to get involved in this project, you can find out more information from Anton Vikstrom, Project Manager of the International Projects Group, Alternative Technology Association. Anton can be contacted at: anton@ata.org.au or by phone: +613 9631 5416. Contributions can be sent to: The International Projects Group, ATA, 1/39 Lt Collins St, Melbourne 3000.

Peter Lewis

Student Initiatives on the Sichuan Earthquake

School Aid is an Australian-based group that supports student initiatives to make a difference globally through fundraising and other actions. It has recently launches an opportunity for Australian school students to connect with, and support, children affected by the Sichuan Earthquake - the worst natural disaster to strike China in over 30 years.

The timing of the Sichuan Earthquake at 2.28 pm on May 12, a school day, had a particularly devastating consequence: many of the victims were children. Over 7,000 schools collapsed, affecting more than 3 million children.

Each fortnight, a new Life Story is published on the School Aid website at www.schoolaid.org.au and these include a firsthand account from a child who personally experienced the earthquake. We encourage students to read and respond to these stories. School Aid will send Australian students’ responses to China, as well as showcase a selection of them on the website.

Essential education materials are still needed for quake-affected students in China. Schools can fundraise to supply student desks and chairs, teacher desks and chairs and blackboards and chalk directly to schools and children that need it. These educational materials, as well as all Messages of Hope from Australian students, will be delivered by School Aid’s partner organisation in China, Save the Children. As usual, School Aid will give regular updates on the website.

To get involved, please visit www.schoolaid.org.au where you can also read about the outstanding efforts of over 300 schools in the Burma Emergency Appeal, who have so far helped over 8,000 Burmese students. What a difference this has made! The Burma Emergency Appeal is still open, as many more children in Burma still need school kits so that they can return to school.

Keep up your amazing work!

The School Aid Team

C/o Daniel Bolotin
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daniel@schoolaid.org.au   www.schoolaid.org.au
**Democracy & Education**

**CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS:**

Teacher Voice in Today’s Schools - Why Is it Critical?

**Deadline:** October 15, 2008;  **Publication:** March 2009

We are seeking manuscripts that explore the role for teachers’ voices in today’s classrooms. Manuscripts might address themes captured in the following questions:

- How has the role of teachers’ voices changed over the last century?
- What does it mean to be an activist teacher in a democratic tradition? What is the role for these teachers in the coming decades?
- How do teachers’ voices and student’s voices balance each other? What are models of collaborative conversation that involve student voices in the decision-making process? How do these models assist in the teaching and learning of democracy?
- How do teachers communicate with the larger community connected to schools (parents, community groups, other schools)?

Teachers are busy people. When do you have time to talk with and collaborate with other teachers? How does that conversation look? How can teachers bring their voices together to make change?

With national, state, and district mandates, where is there room for the teacher’s voice? What are examples of innovative ways that teachers have ensured their voices are heard?

We invite educators to explore these issues in theory (essay), to suggest pedagogical approaches (teacher file), or to share your own classroom experiences (reflection).

To learn more about the categories for article submissions, or to submit a paper, please visit our website and read our submission guidelines. Please feel free to forward this call for papers to any colleagues, students, or peers that might be interested in submitting an article for consideration.

**About Democracy & Education**

*Democracy & Education* is a US-based journal about the classroom; it focuses on sustaining and developing democratic teaching practices that value the voices of students and teachers. It is a community colloquium bringing to light the success and struggles of educators as they work to merge democratic teachings and principles with real-world practices. We are committed to capturing the good practices of the worldwide teaching community, empowering the young to play articulate roles in the public space, supporting diverse perspectives, and encouraging caring, equitable, just, and inclusive teaching.

If you would like to receive calls for papers for future issues, please email Hanna Neuschwanderl: journal@lclark.edu

The current Issue of *Democracy & Education* is on the theme: *A Pedagogy for Social Justice*. This issue focuses on the role of social justice in the classroom. *A Pedagogy for Social Justice* can be ordered by subscribing to the journal (US$40 associate rate, US$70 institutional rate), or purchased individually for US$10. Bulk rates for classroom sets are available. To learn more about this issue, or to order copies, visit our website: www.lclark.edu/org/journal/
Enviro Inspiro! 2008

Enviro Inspiro! is a school environment improvement competition for secondary students. It was run during Terms 1 and 2, 2008 in NSW public schools. This is the third year that the competition has been held.

The competition is run by the NSW Student Representative Council (NSW SRC) using funding provided by the NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change. Teams of students (or Student Action Teams) from NSW government secondary school were invited to enter the competition and be in the running to win great prizes.

Entrants had to create a five minute DVD to showcase their successful student-led school environment projects. The media and supporting two page overview of the project had to demonstrate how students had:

- researched the need for improvements to the school environment;
- successfully implemented a school environment project; and
- enhanced the school environment.

The winning entries were showcased at the 2008 NSW State Student Representative Council Conference: Let’s Improve-Make the Move! from 5-8 August.

Entries in Enviro Inspiro! 2008 that were worthy of special mention are:

- E-Waste: Karabar High School;
- Global Citizens: Warrawong High School;
- IBIS: Randwick Girls High School; and

The prize winners were:

3rd prize ($1,000): Lambton High School: Green Day 2008
This entry raised environmental awareness through a range of measures which included a concert, sculptures made out of recycled materials, environmental competitions and an ‘environmental pledge’ taken by the school’s students.

2nd prize ($2,000): Taree High School: Saving the Environment, One Step at a Time
Taree High School created a 5 minute DVD to showcase the school’s five environmental commandments:

- Recycle paper;
- Turn off any unused lights;
- Look out for our trees;
- Put all your rubbish in the bin; and
- Save water and turn off taps.

This entry identified simple ways to improve the school environment that are transferable to most school contexts.

Winner of Enviro Inspiro! 2008 ($3,000): Warrawong Intensive English Centre: Adapting to Change
For those who don’t know, an Intensive English Centre assists students who migrate to Australia from other countries to develop their English language skills and acclimatise to the NSW public school system before entering high school. Students can spend up to three terms at an Intensive English Centre.

The talented students at Warrawong Intensive English Centre, whose English language skills were in various stages of development, took a unique approach to their Enviro Inspiro! entry.

The students compared their personal need to adapt to life in Australia to the way that we all need to adapt our environmental habits to suit the changing environment and climate. Students compared themselves to frogs growing from tadpoles to adult stage. The entry also showcased the efforts of the students to build a frog pond within the school.

The entry also showed the very different and sometimes difficult environments that students in our schools sometimes come from, in some cases fleeing from war and persecution.

Young People’s Right to Participate

Take Our Survey NOW!

The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission has launched a survey on the Victorian Office for Youth youthcentral site for all young people 25 years and under.

Tell us what you think about the right to participate and go in the draw to WIN a voucher worth $350.

The direct link to the survey is:


We look forward to hearing from you!

Anna Forsyth, Legal Officer, Human Rights Unit
Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission

Student Action Teams:
Implementing Productive Practices in Primary and Secondary School Classrooms

Student Action Teams - teams of students who, as part of their school curriculum, adopt a community issue that they care passionately about, research it, decide what needs to be changed or improved and take action to achieve that.

In this book (April 2006) primary and secondary schools in Melbourne’s northern suburbs tell how to establish and implement Student Action Teams. They describe their students’ work researching and acting around traffic safety and the environment and reflect on what they have learnt: the basic principles of Student Action Teams, their practical operation, and the stories of successful approaches and outcomes in two projects. The principles and approaches outlined here can be used to guide developments in any school - acting alone or in a cluster. Includes sample worksheets and pro formas.

Order NOW from Connect: $33 or $27.50 for Connect subscribers.

ISBN: 978-0-9803133-2-1

Reaching High:
A Program Promoting Positive Approaches to Learning Differences

Reaching High tells the story of 14 years’ work around literacy in north central Victoria. Student participatory approaches are central to a program that caters for students with learning differences, with an annual student-run three-day regional camp as the culmination of that program. This camp brings in adult role models who have, or have had, learning differences, to act as mentors for students. Past student participants now also act as leaders, adult role models and assistants.

This inspiring and exciting 120-page book documents the development and operation of the Reaching High Program. It outlines the theory and community links behind the program, and how it is built on the active and strength-based participation of students. Includes a DVD of practical ideas.

First published by Connect in December 2006;
ISBN: 978-0-9803133-0-7

Order now: $33 each ($27.50 for Connect subscribers)
YAPA NSW Youth Conference 2008: Participation into Action!

30 September, 1 & 2 October 2008 (school holidays)
Y Hotel Sydney Hyde Park (Sydney CBD)
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for NSW young people aged 12 to 17 years
From changing the world to changing your school’s uniforms, from influencing your local council to getting the government to listen, from putting on a band night to rocking the entire country: if you’re young with something to say or do, get the skills to really make it happen!

Y Hotel Sydney Hyde Park is an unlicensed hotel and the conference is a drug and alcohol free event.

$90 per young person (there is no GST) - covers conference attendance, resources and lunch on Day 1 and Day 2. This fee does not include lunch on Day 3, overnight accommodation, dinner or breakfast. There is no charge for an accompanying adult.

Travel subsidies available for rural young people.
See conference brochure and booking form:

Student Councils and Beyond:
Students as Effective Participants in Decision-Making

The first Connect publication (from 2005) supports effective and relevant participation of students in decision-making in primary and secondary schools.

It brings together a collection of practical ideas and articles about how Student Councils can go beyond tokenism ... and make a difference. Case studies, ideas, worksheets!
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Ask the Children: Overview of Children’s Understanding of Well-being (NSW Commission for Children and Young People, Surry Hills, NSW)

Australian Youth Research Centre Annual Report (AYRC, The University of Melbourne, Vic) 2007

Education Views (Queensland Department of Education, Training and the Arts, Qld) Vols 17.01-17.05; January/February-June, 2008

Leadership (Leadership Victoria, Melbourne, Vic) Autumn, 2008

Learning Matters (Catholic Education Office, Melbourne, Vic) Vol 13 No 1, 2008

Research Developments (ACER, Camberwell, Vic) No 19; Winter 2008

TLN Journal (TLN, Abbotsford, Vic) Vol 15 No 2; Winter 2008

YAPRap (Youth Action and Policy Association, Surry Hills, NSW) Vol 18 Nos 7, 8; July, August 2008

Youth Studies Australia (ACYS, Hobart, Tas) Vol 27 No 2; June 2008

International:

Democracy & Education: A Pedagogy for Social Justice (Lewis and Clark Graduate School of Education and Counseling, Portland, OR, USA) Vol 17 No 3; June 2008

Education Revolution (AERO, Roslyn Heights, NY USA) Issue 53; Summer 2008

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August 2008
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