Credit Where Credit's Due!

In this issue:

Credit for Participation
A collection of articles from the Connect archives
PLUS:

• Do SRCs assist connectedness and retention rates?
The experience of ATC Sunshine
• COIL: Program impact at Maldon PS
• 'Making It Happen': 1988 SRC Resource Revisited
• Resources: Learning Matters: 'Beyond Badges on Blazers'; Wanted: Multifaith and Multicultural Reporters; Inspire: 'Young People's Perspectives on Taking Action'; Connect publications; Democracy & Education

Some Important Steps Forward in Credit for Participation
(While Looking Backwards)
This Issue:

At the end of our 29th year of publishing Connect, I have found myself looking back to some early copies and realising the recurring nature of the issues raised there. (Actually, with a small leg infection, I was house-bound and able to catch up on completing the database index of all back articles.)

In particular, as we work more and more with students in student organisations (both within schools and between schools), and as we see students taking on important and essential roles on committees and boards (again within schools and for regions or state departments), we’re brought up against the same issues that several articles in this issue of Connect address. That is: how can we ensure that this participation is recognised academically and therefore:

- has the time (and other support) to be effective; and
- does not disadvantage students by taking time away from their studies?

We’re again finding that some students, invited to sit on state-level panels or address conferences or committed to the effective roles of SRCs or student networks, are being forced to decline opportunities and involvement because it jeopardises their school success. Others are pressured by economic circumstances and the need to contribute to their own or their family incomes. This means that access to participatory roles is uneven: it locks out students who are perhaps struggling with school work; it locks out students with fewer financial resources.

These were exactly the issues of ‘Credit and Support’ addressed throughout Australia in the mid-1980s (that’s over 20 years ago!). What solutions and challenges were developed then? So here we delve into the archives again and reproduce articles, but if you want to specify sub-sets (eg “articles on SRCs from NSW between 1985 and 1995”), I can do printouts for you.

The Database of Connect Articles

At last the gaps are filled and all back articles of Connect are now indexed in a single database. This can be searched by issue, by topic, by geographical area - and so on. I can’t send it out electronically (it’s too big for one thing - and you may not have the appropriate software), but I can do printouts. Again, it’s probably not appropriate to ask for the entire thing (too big - almost 3000 articles), but if you want to specify sub-sets (eg “articles on SRCs from 2001 originally) links the early work on credit and assessment with ideas that identify title, issue number and length. A small donation to make credit for students’ participation in education decision-making.

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Why does Connect exist?

Connect has been published bi-monthly since 1979.

It aims to:

- document student participation approaches and initiatives;
- support reflective practices;
- develop and share resources.

Cover:

A special focus on revisiting Credit.
Cartoons on pages 6, 7, 18, 19 and 21 by Mark Ryan – secondary student activist in 1985-6.
Do Student Representative Councils assist school connectedness and retention rates?

The Australian Technical College Sunshine [ATCS] is one of 24 technical colleges established by the previous federal government to respond to the skills shortage in trades. Australian Technical Colleges cater for Year 11 and 12 students who wish to remain at school while they complete their senior school qualifications and start an Australian School-based Apprenticeship. The ATC Sunshine is currently in its second year of operation, and is based at Sunshine College North Campus while awaiting its new building to be completed in Suffolk Road, Sunshine in December 2008.

Starting a SRC to improve school connectedness and retention rates

As a new school, the ATCS has been keen to establish a strong relationship with its students. Students come from a variety of schools in the western suburbs and only spend two years at the College. This year, students spent three days at school – at the most. With students also attending TAFE and work placements, there seemed little time to work on ‘connectedness’ and retention rates!

To address these issues, and in addition to offering a strong mentoring program, the ATCS has set about establishing a Student Senate as a voice for the students within the decision-making structures of the college. The Senate began in 2008 and meets to represent the ideas and interests of students at the College. The Senate organises activities and events for students, and communicates ideas and concerns to the staff, Principal and governing board.

Some of the achievements of the first Senate in 2008 have been to:

- organise two Out-of-Uniform Days to raise money for a worthy cause;
- provide feedback to the staff on matters such as the Mentoring Program;
- introduce the idea of a Year 12 jumper just for Year 12 students; and
- organise End-of-Term activities for students.

The Student Senate grew out of Focus Groups we held with students around June. From these groups, we realised that students needed a ‘voice’ in the operation of the school. Members weren’t initially elected; I visited all classes and asked for volunteers or interested students. Some were experienced in student participation and some had not had any experience in this type of leadership at all.

Some Reflections

Establishing a Student Senate in limited time presented enormous challenges! The task was further complicated by the fact that on Monday, the only day all students were at school, most of our Year 11 electrical students were required at TAFE! Thus, an organisational issue further limited the Senate’s ability to meet.

This has meant that our Senate was unable to meet as a complete group this year due to these timetabling constraints. This was unfortunate, but essential to students attending TAFE. Instead, meetings were held in year level groups. But a better solution had to be found! For me, a techno-dinosaur, a solution came via the internet. Our college is implementing a Learning Management System, and in negotiating this, I discovered social networking sites. With amazing ease, I was able to create a ning, or social networking website (see http://www.ning.com/) for our Senate. This gives our students the ability to log on to the ATC Sunshine...
Student Senate, blog, view suggestions for school improvement, add pictures and ideas and generally communicate. Senate members have been invited to join. Next year, we will invite all students to join and hope this will increase access and connectedness further.

So far, the progress seems slow. I am still to organise training for the Senators, but with Year 12s moving on and two of our Year 11 students leaving this year, I will probably start again next year with two remaining Senators and rebuild with new students. We have also changed the way we organise our curriculum so that students attend school in four week blocks next year, then four weeks at TAFE and four with their employer, and so on. This might assist us to meet more regularly … but the niggling might still be required!

Starting 2009

The Student Senate will be electing new representatives in February 2009. We hope that all new students will consider being part of the Senate. However, if students would like to have a say but don’t want to be on the Senate, they can still participate by:

- speaking to the Senate representatives and telling them their ideas;
- joining the Senate niggling by giving the school their email address; and
- being part of the activities planned.

Evidence for Participation

The link between school culture and mental health has long been recognised (Fuller, 1998). This research shows that school cultures that are health-promoting exhibit respectful, warm relationships that are positive and assertive. I wondered whether student voice or participation, assisted in developing that kind of school culture. I wondered whether student participation in a school not only assisted the development of a positive school culture, but had a direct impact on school connectedness and retention rates. It seemed a simple premise and a likely one, but was there any evidence to suggest this was true?

Many hours and articles later, I think I’ve found that the evidence before us suggests that student participation (whether it is through SRCs, student action teams or participation in decision-making structures generally) does promote school connectedness and can increase retention rates.

Overall, there is much literature and research to support student participation. In summary, youth or student participation is identified as a human right, recognised by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF, 2008) through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC, 1989, articles 12, 23, 28 and 29). Youth participation is also in keeping with World Health Organisation (WHO, 1997; WHO 1986) directives on school health and youth health promotion. Further, youth participation within communities increases the social capital of those communities (Stone, 2001). Youth participation is also directly relevant to the social determinants of health (Wilkinson & Marmot, 2003). All this was what I had hoped, but with regard to SRCs specifically, the evidence was not as easy to establish.

However, the pleasing news for students, teachers, parents and anyone involved in SRCs, Student Action Teams or civic participation is that all the available evidence indicates that youth participation a positive contributor to school connectedness and increased educational outcomes. Work by Hannam (2001), Shier (2001), Fielding (2004), Holdsworth (2005), Smyth (2006), Davies & Yamashita (2007) and Whitty, Wisby & Diack (2007) support this. Added to this is the body of evidence to suggest that increased connectedness to school is an important protective factor for young people (Fuller, 1998; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW], 2007). Youth participation has social and mental health benefits for the school experience and beyond (Fuller, 1998; Shocket, Dadds, Ham & Montague, 2006; Rose-Krasnor, Busseri, Willoughby & Chalmers, 2006; AIHW, 2007). The body of evidence is growing!

Overall, it seems clear that student participation is a win-win for everyone. When students participate in effective decision-making, they benefit personally and in ways that extend beyond the school years. Further, the school benefits from increased connectedness and ultimately, the society benefits. Young people who have had meaningful experiences in participation, leave school empowered with the skills to shape their world. This is very encouraging to those of us who work in schools to create opportunities for young people.

References


**World Health Organisation (1986). Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion**

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**COIL: Follow-up**

**Program Impact**

*In the last issue of Connect (#173), Jenine Threlfall reported on the development of the Challenging Opportunities and Inclusive Leadership (COIL) program at Maldon Primary School in Victoria.*

Jenine has now provided further information about the program’s impact in the school and community.

Quantitative and qualitative measures were used to evaluate the program. The most striking finding was that student motivation in this cohort rose from being in the lowest quartile of Victorian schools with grade 5 and 6, to being in the 90th percentile. Surveys and anecdotal evidence found students felt more confident and better organised. Parents and community members also responded unusually strongly and positively.

The following are some student evaluations:

**What aspects of COIL have impressed you?**

- “Decisions are followed by action.”
- “The improvement with organisation and getting along.”
- “How well people work together.”
- “The organisation and involvement of students.”
- “I think what impresses me most is that everybody in COIL has given all their ideas to make the school a better place.”
- “The work people have achieved.”
- “How we are independent and get to do stuff by ourselves.”
- “That students can organise big events.”
- “How we have such a big role in the school.”

**What excites/motivates people about COIL?**

- “Being in a group with your friends.”
- “Trying to achieve a goal.”
- “Being able to have the chance to be leaders! All kids!”
- “That everyone gets an input in school issues.”
- “How it’s the kids’ choice - fun groups.”
- “Knowing they are putting something back into the community.”
- “Making a difference.”
- “That the groups are made up of kids. I think what motivates us is, whether we are organising a visit or raising money, we are helping the school.”
- “We all have a role to do.”
- “Being able to do what we want to achieve.”
- “Being able to come up with your own ideas.”
Running a ‘fish-bowl’ is a training strategy for role-players and an audience in which possible approaches to the topic being considered can be suggested and tried out. There are several ways to use the fish-bowl.

At its most basic, the fish-bowl has a small number of active participants role-playing a situation (eg a meeting of the SRC), surrounded by an audience. The active participants are given a scenario, and perhaps specific roles, and asked to play out that situation – such as conducting a meeting around a particular topic. The audience watches what happens.

The first variation divides the audience into sectors, with each sector asked to watch for a specific response: eg who dominates discussion, roles that people play in the meeting, how conflict is handled. The audience can be ‘prepared’ for this by the facilitator, while the role-players discuss their own possible approaches in another room. After the role-play (when the facilitator stops the action), the audience comments on the aspect they were observing.

A further development is to stop the action in the fish-bowl at various points to allow discussion about possible strategies and directions that the role-players could take on the topic. The facilitator can judge appropriate points to call ‘stop’, with the audience then suggesting possible things for the active participants to try.

Or the more sophisticated approach is that, after an agreed amount of time, any audience member can call ‘stop’ and suggest a possible strategy. The active participants then have to adopt this approach. Even more involving is when the audience member calls ‘stop’, suggests the alternative strategy and then actually replaces one of the members of the fish-bowl to try it out.

At the end, it is important to conduct a discussion of what happened and what was learnt.

Try it, and let us know of any variations you come up with.

Roger Holdsworth

The Fish-Bowl: Group process training
Credit for Participation

Lately, an issue has been re-emerging that has been considered — on and off — for over 20 years: that of providing students who are active participants in formal school decision-making (on SRCs and on Boards and Committees) with time, recognition and other support. This issue has been addressed under the headings of ‘credit’ and ‘accreditation’.

In dusting off old copies of Connect, we came across several articles that are still highly relevant today—even if some of the specific policy references have changed. In 1995, in re-addressing this issue, we noted that the concern was with “extending academic credit to students for their participation in school activities — principally around school and regional governance. This issue was initially referred to as ‘Accreditation’, but (as this term has taken on other, more specific meanings) has come to be called simply ‘Credit’.”

The first article was originally published in Connect 31 in February 1985 and reprinted in Connect 91 in February 1995. In turn, it originally drew on some articles in Connect 29 under the heading ‘Toward Accreditation’, in which various schools and consultants documented some ideas about recognising the work that students do on committees (etc) as part of their ‘normal’ school work. The article was developed by a working group of a Student Advisory Group of the Victorian Participation and Equity program (PEP) and members of the Student Participation Support Network.

We’re also interested to explore this issue further in future issues of Connect — from today’s perspectives and in today’s climate.

Another Step ... Towards Accreditation

What is ‘Accreditation’?

Accreditation here means a way of formally recognising participation on committees both inside and outside schools, as part of students’ workload. It appears most obviously in ways of giving credit for such work within the school’s reporting system.

Why is Accreditation Necessary?

Students are at school to learn. Accreditation raises two issues:

• participation in various structures is a valid learning experience and should be recognised within the overall teaching/learning strategy of the school;
• students should not be penalised for missing classes or homework times to attend meetings — this should not be an extra, unrecognised burden.

Behind this, accreditation is also important to enable all students to have access to participation and representation, not just those students who can ‘afford the time’.

What are the Issues?

An approach to accreditation of students’ participation on committees (etc) must pay attention to the following sorts of issues:

• If the student misses classes to serve on a committee, must class content be ‘caught up’? Are there alternatives?
• What structural changes can happen to school organisation to make such attendance less personally disruptive?
• Should student representatives be required to present a formal report that can ‘count’ against course requirements?
• Who can/should attest to ‘performance’ on committees? In what terms?
• Can goals of involvement be specified that enable assessment to be negotiated?
• If some form of accreditation is negotiated, is it best as a new/separate unit, or incorporated into other subjects (eg English)? How about other subjects?
• What are the implications of such accreditation for the way one (teacher or student) approaches all other classes? eg class committees? negotiation?

(from Connect 29, October 1984)
Problems
The following danger areas need to be kept in mind:

- Participation on committees can be ignored or marginalised;
- Vague promises of recognition can be given, that are later denied;
- Students can be pressured to catch up on work missed, or ‘failed’ because of ‘missed classes’;
- Teachers and students can lack an understanding of the importance of accreditation, why it must happen, how it can happen;
- Students can spring the requirement for accreditation on teachers at the end of the year. Teachers need notice in order to work out arrangements – this must be done at the start of the year.

What is Needed?
1. Students need time to:
   - prepare: read papers, consult with other students, lobby other committee members, travel (if necessary), write proposals, research issues;
   - attend: meetings can be during school hours (clashing with classes), at recesses, out of school hours;
   - follow-up: write reports, discuss with fellow members, report back to constituents.

   This time needs to be available without penalty ie students should not be penalised for being on committees or carrying out recognised work in relation to attendance.

2. A form of reporting is needed that enables participation to be recognised.

   It is difficult to conceive of a student receiving a letter or numerical grade for participation. Rather, a descriptive reporting system is needed to summarise the achievements in terms of specific and negotiated goals. Such a reporting system should give parity to a report on participation with all other subject reports. As such, this poses a challenge to the whole school’s system of assessment and reporting.

3. The accreditation of participation should be, as far as practicable, part of the regular recognition the school gives to students’ achievements.

   Accreditation of participation should not be an ‘add-on’ element either structurally or in terms of the reporting format. It should be involved in and affect mainstream operation of the school.

4. At least a reference should be made available by the committee (etc) outlining attendance and involvement, skills and abilities exhibited, and growth shown.

   This should be the minimum form of accreditation.

Where Accreditation Can Be Placed
1. A separate subject can be created eg as an elective. This could be a cross-age subject, say called ‘Government’.

   The subject would enrol all students involved on committees (SRC, School Council, Regional or State Committees etc) and could both give time for preparation and involvement, as well as providing some training and background.

   It would be relatively difficult to timetable in order to allow all interested and involved students to be in class; it could reinforce a marginalisation of such involvement.

2. A subject could be created but not time-tabled. Teacher time would be allocated and enrolled students would communicate with this teacher in small groups or one-to-one.

   This recognises the involvement formally in both students and teacher time and is flexible in arrangement. It is, however, easily absorbed – the time just vanishes to other things.

3. An existing subject can undertake participation as a ‘project’ eg a Politics class could set up an SRC as part of its ‘normal’ workload.

   This could give both time and a natural focus for recognition. It could, however, seriously restrict who can become involved. Perhaps ‘time in lieu’ could be given for the project to run during recesses or after school.

4. A general subject eg ‘Extension Studies’ can be created for a range of activities of which participation on committees is one possibility.

   Similar comments to 2. (above) can be made.

5. An existing subject can recognise participation as part of the workload of that subject.

   For example, an English class could accept work done for meetings (minutes, reports etc) as equivalent to essays, exercises etc. This would mean that an agreement could be made about certain class lessons for which attendance was compulsory and others during which a student could be involved in meeting preparation, attendance or follow-up.
This seems to have the greatest flexibility and easiest recognition as part of the school’s ‘valid’ curriculum. It does require extensive understanding of the issues by the whole school and explicit negotiation of processes.

What Should a Student Have to Do?

Attendance at a meeting is not enough (just as attendance in a class is not enough). There should be explicit agreement on what needs to be produced and on what evidence credit is available.

Some possibilities are:

1. A student’s verbal contribution to a meeting could be recorded in the minutes (in as much detail as required). These minutes could be accumulated by the student as ‘evidence’.
2. A student could produce written reports, both to the meeting and as a report to constituents. These reports could be filed by the student.
3. Reports could be published eg in a school newspaper, community newspaper, in the school newsletter to parents, in a taped speech or interview over the PA system or on local radio etc. Copies of these reports could be filed by the student.
4. Speeches made to the meeting or to students (including at after-school functions) could be filed, either in written form, or on tape.
5. Long-term or overview reports could be produced by the student using previous documents (minutes, reports etc) as evidence.
6. The student could (should!) keep a diary that includes:
   - administrative details – date of meeting, purpose, conversations etc;
   - content of meetings – motions moved, topics discussed, reactions of others;
   - personal reactions – feelings, uncertainties, tactics proposed etc.

This diary would form a record in itself and also be a source for student self-assessment.

Who Will Oversee Accreditation?

Self-assessment could be part of the outcome of accreditation of participation. But the participation and the pieces of work required probably also need some other ‘verification’

Possibilities for who could do this depend on the ‘location’ of the accreditation:

1. The teacher of the new or ‘regular’ subject could receive work done and enter it as part of the student’s recorded achievements. This person would then also be responsible for writing reports as required.
2. A ‘special’ teacher could be allocated the task (with time release if possible) for formally recognising participation (negotiating goals and workloads, writing reports etc) where an informal arrangement is decided upon.
3. An ‘outsider’ (eg consultant, PWC, parent, Principal) could maintain an overview and negotiate both goals and assessment.
4. A committee member could undertake to provide such a role.
5. It is possible that a mixture of these approaches could be used, with the committee members, consultants, parents and Principal (for example) feeding reports to a specific teacher charged with their collation.

What Steps Should Be Undertaken?

1. These points need to be established in principle. An outline needs to be proposed to the school Principal and School Council.
2. Arrangements of accreditation need to be worked out clearly and in detail and written down. These can be negotiated individually or with a group.
3. A contract embodying these points needs to be signed by teachers and students involved.
4. Possibly a special form can be produced to include student and teacher assessment of participation.

Roger Holdsworth
for the Working Party, 1985

Student Action Teams:
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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.

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ISBN: 978-0-9803133-2-1
Negotiated Exemptions and Substitutions

It is inappropriate to award students recognition for their participation other than as part of the curriculum. Special references, letters of commendation etc, do not overcome the educational disadvantage currently experienced by student representatives. Only through credit as part of the curriculum can this educational disadvantage be overcome.

**Some Approaches to Student Accreditation**

Many of these tasks performed by student representatives are identical to, or similar to, or highly appropriate to, tasks for which students receive credit in class, but for which student representatives currently gain no credit. Some schools have recognised this and have negotiated ‘exemptions’ from class work on the basis of work done as student representatives. Other schools have introduced electives or subjects in which student participation and associated skills comprise major components of the courses.

**Negotiated exemptions:**

Students negotiate with schools to receive credit for their work in existing subjects. At Echuca Technical School in 1984, for example, Year 9 students involved with the Participation and Equity Program (PEP Task Force negotiated with their English teacher to have their oral contribution in task force meetings, schools reference group meetings and student network meetings count towards and be assessed as part of their oral English work. The assessment was done by a task force teacher. Similarly, their written reports of all meetings attended, articles written for school bulletins and newsletters, speeches written for presentation at school assemblies etc, were accepted in lieu of other written materials as part of the assessable workload. It is possible that student treasurers could have their financial books etc regarded as part of their mathematics or accounting workload and that student researchers could have their surveys/interviews and findings regarded as part of social studies or politics subjects etc.

A more detailed case study of Echuca Technical School is included (see box - right).

It is important that all students are treated equally in such negotiations. Because teachers might differ in the extent to which they will negotiate exemptions, it is important that school curriculum committees or Councils provide a guideline for negotiated exemptions or perhaps establish a moderating group for exemptions.

**The Next Steps**

It is urgent and essential that schools address the issues of student participation and student accreditation. Possible approaches have been suggested and it is now up to schools to select or devise the approach that best meets the needs of first, the student representatives and second, the school.

A starting point could be raising the issue in meetings of staff, students, parents, curriculum committees and School Councils. Following on from this, the Council of curriculum committee could form a widely representative Student Accreditation Subcommittee, whose brief is to consult widely, explore the possibilities and recommend policy and practices for the school.

Some of the areas to be explored would include:

- which model of accreditation is most suitable?
- what actual work is required of the student representative?
- how should this work be presented and/or assessed?
- what background skills and information does the student representative need?
- who will oversee the accreditation and make the assessment?
- should individual ‘contracts’ for each student be negotiated?
- should ‘contracts’ be negotiated with individual teachers, faculty/department staff, curriculum committee or a student accreditation moderating group?
- how will the student representatives’ performance and assessment be reported back to the student and parents?

Perhaps the Schools Reference Group of PEP schools could assist schools to get started by, for example:

- listing the tasks of student representatives;
- identifying subject areas where those tasks might be appropriately assigned and assessed;
- recommending on models of accreditation;
- drafting a policy guideline on accreditation; and
- drafting a syllabus for a ‘Student Participation’ unit/elective/subject.

*Margaret Ellis, 1985*
Negotiated Exemptions and Substitutions: One Example at Echuca TS

In 1984, Echuca Technical School became a Participation and Equity Program school. Among other things, this involved the school in further developing its student participation in educational decision-making.

Very soon into the school's PEP activities, it became clear that the student representatives on the PEP Management Committee were missing many classes, falling behind in their work and being placed under great pressure because of their role as student representatives. It was apparent that action had to be taken to ensure that these students were not penalised for their participation.

One of the staff members on the PEP Management Committee was also one of the school's four SRC liaison teachers and, fortunately as it turned out, was also the English teacher of the PEP student representatives. Because of her involvement with a broad range of student representatives, she was aware of the tasks that such students had to undertake as part of the educational decision-making processes and she saw their appropriateness to the school's curriculum. She decided, as a trial scheme, to negotiate exemptions or substitutions from the required work in her English classes for the PEP student representatives.

All students in her English classes were required to complete a minimum number of writing activities, varied in type and length according to the students' abilities and conceptual development. In Term 3, all students were expected to complete 20 such pieces of assessable writing. The PEP student representatives were given complete exemption from five of these on the basis of off-setting time missed in all classes because of participation in meetings. The time that would have been spent on those units could be used to catch up on other missed work eg writing up notes, studying for tests etc.

The PEP student representatives were also allowed (after negotiation on relative effort, degree of difficulty etc) to substitute written work done as part of their student participation for other written work which would normally be done for English. Examples of this substitution were:

- agenda and minutes of student subcommittees in lieu of summary-writing and technical/instructional writing exercises;
- letters to other SRCs, school committees etc in lieu of letter-writing exercises;
- reports of PEP meetings for the SRC and other student committees in lieu of report writing or essay writing exercises;
- articles written for the school bulletins and parent newsletters in lieu of creative writing exercises;
- design and administration of surveys in lieu of major written assignments.

Oral English was a major part of the English syllabus, and the PEP student representatives, instead of being assessed on impromptu and prepared talks in class, contribution to small-group and whole-class discussions in lessons, and recitations etc, were allowed to substitute their participation in committee meetings, their skills in chairing meetings, their addresses to form, year and school assemblies, and their interviews with the Principal etc. Because the English teacher was an SRC liaison teacher and on the PEP Task Force, the assessment of these tasks was relatively easily arranged.

The reading activities of student representatives were also exempted or substituted. Because PEP student representatives were required to read a great deal of documentation, including committee papers, Ministerial Papers, the PEP Guide etc, they were required to read fewer novels, short stories and comprehension materials. Often, in class they were given the choice of reading materials relevant to their student representative tasks, or general English reading matter.

On occasions, material used for clear-thinking exercises were directly related to the student representatives' work eg analysis of arguments for students having more say in their own learning experiences. From time to time, writing exercises were suggested that would help these students formulate their opinions eg essay topics were set on such matters as: "Should this school continue with its present form of assessment? Discuss."

The students' reports clearly stated that they had been given exemptions for certain tasks because they had participated in other activities. These other activities were listed. The reports also stated that these students had completed a number of other tasks that had been included in their assessable work as equivalent substitutions. These tasks were listed too.

There were a number of student representatives' jobs that could have been substituted in other classes, but because of the trial nature of the scheme, were not. These jobs included typing of documentation (Secretarial Studies), taking of minutes (Secretarial Studies), keeping financial records (Accounting), design of posters and publicity materials (Art or Graphics), devising surveys (Social Studies).

In short, the negotiated exemptions and substitutions scheme not only removed the penalties of student participation and awarded students due credit for their participation, but broadened the curriculum so that it was based on real life experience, rather than on academic exercises.

Margaret Ellis, Regional PEP Consultant Loddon Campaspe Mallee Region, Vic
Putting the Participation Back Into Representation

Giving academic credit to representation contains some major traps. These are not organisational traps – the wealth of available material and the publication of Credit and Support will go a long way towards solution of such questions of process.

No, what I’m referring to are the educational traps.

After all, in Victoria we have a statement in Ministerial Paper 6 (Curriculum Development and Planning in Victoria) that:

9.1 The Government intends that all students have access to educational experiences that are challenging, purposeful and comprehensive and that result in all students improving their educational achievement. (my emphasis)

and this is further developed:

9.3 The task of ensuring effective access requires that schools … design courses so that students may participate in each area of learning and are not prevented from continuing their learning as a result of school organisation… (pp 12-13)

To put it bluntly, how can we justify giving time and formal credit within the school’s curriculum to learning activities to which, necessarily, only a few students can gain access? Aren’t we just establishing another elite, exclusive subject areas (and potentially opening that area to already advantaged students)?

Let’s look at how representation develops. Within a school of (say) 600 students, decisions of the type made by a School Council (school curriculum and discipline policies, resource allocation, forward planning and so on) are generally dealt with at some distance from the forums of the whole school body. A few small (alternative or community) schools have developed procedures by which the whole school community can meet as one and decide upon policy directions, but such an approach within a large institution is cumbersome and probably unmanageable. Thus forms of representation are developed.

Perhaps there are three students on the School Council and they, in turn, are drawn from and/or advised by a Student Representative Council (SRC) – consisting perhaps of two students from each home or class group. In the best of circumstances, the students on the School Council meet regularly with the SRC to report on issues facing the School Council and, where necessary, the representatives on the SRC return to their ‘constituents’ for discussion and advice. Perhaps both the SRC and the home/class meetings are regularly timetabled to allow this to happen and are recognised to that extent as important components of the school’s curriculum or organisational structure.

It has been argued at some length that both time (to carry out the role of representative) and formal credit for learning are important. Not least among the reasons has been a desire to ensure that no-one is de-barred from becoming a representative.

But that’s not enough. To repeat the dilemma: only a few can be representatives; how can we support credit for something to which only a few can gain access? In the approach we outlined above, the representatives on the bodies act essentially as individuals. They themselves are active participants in the decision-making process and are guided regularly by links with their constituents, but they are still not affecting the educational passivity of the great body of students.
There is a way out the dilemma, but it is a difficult and challenging curriculum decision. Participation must be put back into representation.

A approach to representation that identifies it as primarily participative enables us to turn the question round by asking: how can we transform the nature of the issues under consideration and the participation process, so that it is necessarily inclusive and common? That is, how can we build the issues into a curriculum that is open to all, important to all and through which, in various ways, all students can contribute to achieving commonly agreed goals? The issues of recognition through allocation of time, credit and support, then become the ‘normal’ curriculum and administrative questions of the school – ones of goal setting and allocation of resources to their achievement – and student participation is essential to the ways in which the school’s learning program is implemented.

In such participatory representation, the presence of representatives upon a decision-making body is only one part of a broader form of participation by all students in the issues under consideration. This will mean the development of regular forums (an SRC and class group meetings) for discussion of issues, in order to inform and draw direction. That’s a necessary condition, but still not sufficient. Participatory representation can and should go beyond that, in directions that are educative rather than administrative.

An educative approach regards the many policy issues under consideration to be central to the curriculum processes of the school and thus relevant to active consideration and investigation within the teaching and learning strategies of the school. They are planned as part of the democratically determined curriculum of the school.

So, for example, development of a school policy on rights and responsibilities for the whole school community would involve, firstly, an understanding of why such a policy is an important part of the learning of the community and secondly, how development of that policy might involve the active participation of all students in investigation of the issue as part of their classroom practice. Various classroom groups might look at aspects of the issue, coordinating their interests through their SRC representatives. One group might decide to interview parents or to draw them into active participation on the policy determination; another group might investigate existing charters of rights at international levels; another might collect examples of practices from other schools, together with processes of development and reactions from the school communities; still another might grapple with the political issues associated with an Australian Bill of Rights. A variety of activities, adopted with attention to age, interest, experience and abilities, would aim to have as many students as possible active participants in issues that affect both their behaviour in the school and the role of the school in its wider social context. Final decision-making on such a policy and its implementation, monitoring and evaluation, would follow as a natural consequence of this education process.

The process of participatory representation becomes concerned with providing a means for improving the learning experiences of all about significant issues, rather than either regarding representation as an external task, or providing access to a learning experience only for a few representatives.

I can outline such an approach briefly, but of course I can’t dismiss the difficulties involved in such massive curriculum re-orientation. Present practices of representation are a stage (and must be seen to be that) towards such a broader view of participation. Students are still working on these bodies and are still being advised and informed by student organisations. Representation is, in many circumstances, a legislative reality and requirement. It is important that, as part of the development of student participation in that curriculum re-orientation, representation of students continues, and continues to expose its needs and opportunities.

Such changes don’t occur by waiting until the perfect scenario of student participation can be put into place wholesale, or by solving questions of credit at classroom level and slowly extending the bounds of participation into ‘upper levels’ only after processes are secure in the classroom.

Change is a more complex political process, that advances jerkily, seizing opportunities and developing in several directions at once. Hopefully such directions cohere – a major issue is to make sure they do. In such a view, student representation in its present (imperfect) form is one more step, an opportunity to be developed towards broader models of participation. And that brings us back to the immediate issues of credit and support.

It does, however, sound one enormous warning note. Not every form of representation and not every form of participation is deserving of credit and support. The measure must be: is such representation aimed at the maximisation of the participation of all in activities that lead to an improved learning experience for all?

Roger Holdsworth, 1986

In this section on ‘Credit and assessment’ useful distinctions are made between acknowledgement, academic credit and provision of time. However, the basic ideas about negotiated exemptions and student requirements carry ideas from the earlier articles. The Manual also adds a useful Credit Checklist.

The Student Action Team (SAT) is an important part of the school, and the work of students and teachers in it needs to be recognised.

Students
A Student Action Team should involve student learning and there should be some form of assessment or credit available for students’ work. This could involve a formal assessment within or alongside other subjects, a specific reference or certification, special access to training – as well as more intangible results like publicity through the local press and personal satisfaction.

It is important to distinguish between:

- **acknowledgement or recognition by the school**: through certification, references, newsletter articles, awards at assemblies, access to specific benefits associated with the work. This says: “You’re doing a good job; you’re doing this officially”. This is the very minimum that the school should do!

- **academic credit**: assessment of the skills gained, either in a personal reference or within a subject’s assessment processes. This says: “You’ve learned specific things; you’ve completed work requirements”.

- **provision of time**: for the team to complete their work (including allocation of time or replacement activities within other subjects). This says: “You have formal time within your school commitments to do these important things”.

One way to achieve this is to have a system of negotiated exemptions and replacements within appropriate subjects – work requirements that don’t need to be done, or work requirements from the SAT that replace other class work.

**Requirements**
It is not sufficient just to claim to have been on a team; students will need to make sure that their SAT work is documented – a diary, records of meetings, details of reports written or talks given, results of research undertaken. These need to be outlined, negotiated and agreed in advance.

**Credit Checklist**
A checklist could be developed for each individual member of the SAT:

- time provided
- formal assessment
- certificate
- reference
- skill objectives specified
- work requirements specified
- acknowledgement (assembly etc)
- training opportunities provided
- training undertaken

**Examples**
Previous SATs identified several ways of providing recognition, assessment and time:

- “There will always be joint projects being developed as part of the SOSE curriculum”
- “Research questions for SAT will be included in other subject areas”
- “SAT will be a SOSE elective known as Community Studies”
- “SAT may occur within an English class”
- “SAT will be a formal sub-committee of the SRC”
- “A display of leadership awards given to SAT members”
- “A plaque saying that students were recognised for participating in SAT”
The Student Executive elected at the VicSRC Congress in May 2007 was the first group of students elected to a governance role in Victoria since the ‘Paving the Way’ conference in 2001. This meant we had to begin by setting up a range of processes and procedures for the VicSRC and expectations for how we would operate as a group. We also had to quickly take on various roles such as producing the VicSRC newsletter, maintaining the website and VicSRC membership records. To get our heads around all this we went for a two-day strategic planning and training camp. This enabled us to establish a vision for the VicSRC, as well as some goals and strategies for achieving them. We also had time to learn some new skills and to get to know each other better as well.

One of our early public actions was a presentation to the Victorian Parliament’s Inquiry into Dress Codes and School Uniforms in Victorian Schools. This was a great opportunity to expand on student resolutions from the Congress and put student viewpoints directly to Members of Parliament who were interested in the issues. It was a little daunting though, appearing at the formal hearing where our every word was recorded and written into the parliamentary records! A copy of our submission can be downloaded from the VicSRC website at: www.yacvic.org.au/vicsrc/publications

The first half of 2008 saw an increased engagement with government. We began by meeting directly with Education Minister Bronwyn Pike. We outlined what the VicSRC is all about, what we’ve been doing and the resolutions from Congress 07. She was very supportive and gave us several points of contact to follow up various issues. Early in term 2 we attended a Summit on the Victorian Government’s new Blueprint for Education. This was the first time students had attended such an event and our presence was noticed and welcomed by other participants. Our main point was that students should be included as active partners in education along with parents and other groups. Again you can find a copy of our written submission on the publications page of our website.

Our last main task was the planning of Congress. Thanks to some extra funds from the Values Education Program, we were able to hold it over two days. This enabled students to really get into the issues, develop better resolutions and build a broader sense of ownership of the VicSRC. A full report from Congress will be available shortly.

In closing we’d like to thank all those who’ve supported us this year.

- the students and SRCs who’ve come to our events or joined as members;
- schools who’ve hosted regional conferences and local cluster meetings;
- the Youth Affairs Council and Education Department who’ve provided organisational and financial support;
- all those who’ve helped us run our events and meetings – particularly Roger Holdsworth and David Mould;
- VicSRC Project Officer James Tonson for ... everything else!

Whatever we’ve done and wherever we’ve gone, students have shown a strong desire to make a difference in their schools and communities. We’ve done our best to make their voices heard in the right places but there’s still a long way to go to get proper recognition and support for the contribution SRCs can make. We now hand this challenge on to the next executive and encourage you all to support them by promoting the need to hear student voices wherever you go.

VicSRC Exec 2007-2008
(From left to right):
Stephanie McCall (Yr 12, Whittlesea SC);
Georgia Kennelly (Yr 10, University HS);
Sarah Chadzynski (Yr 12, Macleod College);
Linh Do (Yr 12, Braybrook College);
James Oldfield (Yr 12, Wangarri Park SC);
Abigail Lopez (Yr 12, Pakenham SC);
Emma Lewis (Yr 10, Eaglehawk SC)
(Absent): Ashlee Frye (Yr 10, Eaglehawk SC);
Doug Flakemore (Yr 11, Frankton HS)
Two New SRC Clusters in Victoria

Bayside, Glen Eira and Kingston SRC Cluster

It is with great pleasure that we announce the launch of the Bayside, Glen Eira and Kingston SRC Cluster, the first of its kind in our area. Our region has 32 secondary colleges and over 23,000 students spread across the southern Bayside suburbs of Melbourne.

Our SRC Cluster started as a partnership of local organisations committed to youth participation and student action, namely the VicSRC, Bayside Glen Eira Kingston Local Learning and Employment Network (BGK LLEN), Bayside City Council, City of Kingston, Youth Connect, Victoria Police and School Focused Youth Service. Together these organisations planned the establishment of an SRC Cluster over a number of months and then invited all secondary schools in the region to send an SRC delegation to a student meeting in early September.

Despite it being a busy time of the year, our first meeting was attended by 14 students from four local secondary colleges (Westall, Glen Eira, Cheltenham and Bentleigh Secondary Colleges). The meeting was a great success with all students advising that they were keen to be part of a regional SRC Cluster that would be issue focused, meet at least once per term, rotate between schools and allow for training or guest speakers as part of each meeting agenda.

Our second meeting, held in late October, built upon the first, with 20 students taking part. The meeting was held at Bentleigh Secondary College, and the SRC there planned the agenda, coordinated a guest speaker and school tour, and organised a delicious morning tea and lunch. The guest speaker was Bentleigh Secondary College’s Head of Sustainability, Mr Bill Thomas, and through his presentation we learned about the array of innovative, environmentally conscious activities and initiatives the school has introduced. A school tour allowed our SRC Cluster to see some of those initiatives first hand, including the rain water tanks, wetlands area, vegetable garden and IT program that monitors daily water and energy usage. Each school had a chance to highlight the SRC activities that had taken place since the last meeting. It was exciting to hear about our very first cross-school initiative, when one school revealed that they had implemented an anti-graffiti strategy after hearing about its success in one of the other schools at our very first SRC Cluster meeting!

We’re very excited about what the future might hold for our SRC Cluster. We are looking forward to 2009 as a time to expand and enhance the SRC Cluster so that it becomes an important vehicle for student action, engagement and development in our region!

Fiona Waugh
BGK LLEN
research@bgkllen.com.au

Western Metropolitan Student Alliance

2008 was the inaugural year for the Western Metropolitan Secondary Student Leader Alliance, and will be going through a name change in 2009 to the Western Metropolitan Student Alliance. After many attempts to have a student cluster to discuss issues and problems that are facing young people and students in schools today, the alliance seems to be the most successful yet. Having our first meeting in Term 3, the Alliance has grown from four participating schools (Taylors Lakes Secondary College, Braybrook College, Caroline Chisholm Catholic College and Copperfield College) to an estimated nine in 2009.

Our first meeting, held at Taylors Lakes Secondary College, was on the 5th of September and it was a time of sharing what the Alliance is able to do and also what others would like from the Alliance. Our second and more productive meeting, hosted by the wonderful Caroline Chisholm Catholic College, happened in mid-October and was concentrating on planning for the cluster for the next year. Next year, we plan to create a student-run initiative based on Drugs and Alcohol Awareness and to create a video and show it within our schools and incorporate it with our school curriculum.

**Stronger + Better = United** is the motto that has been established for the Alliance, which reinforces the beliefs that we hope for, for the Alliance: becoming **stronger** in our schools as a student body, becoming **better** in our connection with our peers and community, but only being able to do it when we are **united** as a group of people.

This Alliance is hopefully going to be advancing to greater heights in 2009 with a vision of building connections with the community as well as connecting with our peers in making sure that we are hopefully making a difference in their school community. The Alliance will be having an official public launch early in 2009.

Ryan Lim
Year 9 Captain, Taylors Lakes SC

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). It can be reached there on 03 9267 3744 or, for the cost of a local call from outside Melbourne on 1300 727 176; or by email: vicsrc@yacvic.org.au
SRCs have great ideas and great hopes. But often plans are made and then ... nothing happens! The SRC gets known as ‘all talk and no action’. Whose fault is that? You can’t leave action up to someone else. If you have an idea and decide on something, you also have a responsibility to make it happen.

The sorts of things SRCs decide are:

- asking other people to do things;
- telling representatives what to do;
- making policies and statements;
- deciding to do something themselves.

This article is about the last of these. It provides help with the steps involved in turning decisions into actions.

We continue re-publication of the series of training pamphlets for Student Representative Councils, first published in 1988 by the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic). This one, about ‘making it happen’ - ie about taking action, was written by Roger Holdsworth and Sally Warhaft, with illustrations by Mark Ryan.

We’re reprinting these pamphlets to celebrate their production, but also to ask the question: If we were to revise and reissue them, what changes would be needed?
Planning

The first step to taking any action is planning – working out exactly what you want and how to get it. Planning has to look at:

- **what** and **why**;
- **how**;
- **who**; and
- **when**.

An action planner is helpful to organise exactly what you have to do, how you’re going to do it and by when each part of your action has to be done. Organise a meeting or get together with others to set out your action planner, so that everyone knows what has to be done and by whom. Here are a couple of examples of action planners:

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<td>Description:</td>
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<td>Idea: <strong>Development, sketch, mind-map:</strong></td>
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<td>Plan of Action: <strong>Steps to completion:</strong></td>
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<td>Persons: <strong>network of services</strong></td>
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<td>Time: <strong>hours required</strong></td>
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<td>Budget: <strong>expenses</strong></td>
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Without planning, even the smallest task can become a real headache. Plan well in advance.

A clear plan will mean that everyone knows what they’re doing. It avoids arguments and wasted time. It enables people to work together to achieve the aims they’ve sent down. People should be given specific tasks that interest them. Get together regularly to talk about how the plan and the tasks are going and to evaluate what and how things are being done.

But don’t get caught in the planning stage for too long. It should be something you do carefully but quickly or otherwise you’ll get bored with it. It’s the doing that’s really important and planning is simply to help you with the doing.
**Step 1: What and Why**

Be clear about your aims – what you want to achieve. You’ll need to be **realistic**: try to decide on something you have a fair chance of being able to do. Every success means that you gain more confidence and skills, and that more students see the value of what you’re doing. You also need to be **idealistic**: have hopes, dreams and big ideas – something to really aim at. That means thinking about what you’d really like your schools, and other things, to be like, and sticking to these aims.

The **support** of other students is also important: you can do so much more with others. You should always try to pick an issue that a lot of students believe is important, and then involve them in deciding what to do about it.

It is important at this stage to **record clearly** the things that you decide on. Writing down your aims and arguments will be useful in making sure you’re clear and in convincing other people as to what is good about your planned action.

**Step 2: How**

Now you know what you want to achieve, **how** will you make sure it happens? Start by having a **brainstorming** session with the group – see the article on **Getting Ideas and Reporting Back** for some details on how to do this. Look back over the ideas you have come up with and talk about them.

Next, divide up the different things to be done into small steps and put these into order. For example, if you have decided you want to run a decision-making day for the SRC, your steps could include:

- choose possible days;
- work out a program for the day;
- find a venue;
- get school approval;
- organise speakers;
- make lunch arrangements;
- arrange publicity;
- organise for people to be out of class.

You need to go through this until all tasks have been written down.

**Step 3: When and Who**

Next you need to work out a **timetable** for your activity and all the tasks to be done. This just means arranging them in order and setting down a date by which each task should be completed. That’s usually pretty simple, but it means thinking about other things that are happening. It’s no good planning to hold your decision-making day on an interschool sports day, because no-one will turn up.

When you’ve done this, decide **who** in the group is going to do each task. Try to make sure that the work is evenly distributed – don’t leave it all to one or two people. You can also give jobs to people outside the group and get others involved. People could work together to support and learn from each other. Your group will be stronger and more effective if you all try to learn new skills.

**Step 4: Do It**

Go! It’s useful to have someone to make sure that everything gets done (and on time) and who helps someone who is having a problem with a task. You can change this role round so everyone gets experience at it.

You also need to **monitor** the progress of the action, to see how it’s going, to change direction if you have to, and to learn from results. This is called **evaluation**.
Step 5: Evaluate

There’s always a need to sit down during and after some action to see how it went. How well did you achieve your aims? You can always learn something for next time. You should look at:

- what happened? (there may be different ideas on this, so you might need to collect some evidence);
- did you achieve your aims?
- why did you ‘succeed’ or ‘fail’?
- how could you improve next time?

Rather than saying “what went wrong?” ask yourself and the group: “what do we learn from this?” Nothing is a ‘failure’ if you learn something from it. If you don’t look back at what happened, you just run the risk of repeating the same mistakes and meeting the same problems without even noticing.

At this stage, too, look back at the people who helped. Thank them – they’ll appreciate that and be more likely to help you again next time. A report from your evaluation will make sure you record what you learnt. Write it together and make it available to others.

Getting Resources

Resources are the things you need to help you take action. They can be physical resources (photocopiers, computers, filing cabinets etc), financial resources (money) or human resources (people):

- **physical resources:**
  You will need to write a list of the resources that are needed to make your action plan work. Are these available to you in the school already? It’s silly to spend hard-earned money to buy extra things when you could arrange to use what’s already there. Who controls the resources? Who will you have to ask about using them?

- **financial resources:**
  Set out a budget for the items you will need to buy. Where could the money come from? You can probably identify a number of places and people to try: the School Council, the principal, teachers, students, parents, community groups, trusts, government programs. *(There was a book called: Making Sense: A Guide to Funding for Young People that had lots of good ideas about how to apply for money.*) Your ideas will depend on circumstances in your school, but you could look at:
  - **organising fund-raisers:** there are lots of possibilities: stalls, walkathons, food fiestas, concerts and so on. Be creative and dream up ideas – but don’t spend all your time raising money!
  - **human resources:**
    You need to identify who can help you to achieve your plans. Use the special skills of people in the group and people they know. Do you have someone whose parent can help you with fund-raising or who can get cheap posters made up? Can you get a student who is good at designing posters and could do this in Art classes? Using the available human resources will help cut costs and save money.

Look around your school and community. Identify:

- who is available to help: it’s no good asking someone who is so busy they can’t do anything else;
- who is interested: make sure they know what is going on;
- who is supportive: there will always be people in the school – teachers, parents, administrators – who are particularly interested to help you without taking over.

Some SRC members make sure they report to the staff meetings about their discussions and decisions. Others make a regular time to keep the Principal informed. And one SRC makes sure that all members ‘adopt a teacher’ after each meeting so that support is built up.
Overcoming Obstacles

No matter how organised you are, things will still go wrong at times. Obstacles will occur. You will meet opposition. There are two important principles to keep in mind:

- stay positive and confident – obstacles are not the end of the world, and can be overcome;
- learn from every obstacle you meet and overcome – do it better next time.

Define what the obstacle or problem is. Perhaps it’s not as big as it appears. Try to understand what the opposition is. Why has this problem occurred? Can you get round the obstacle instead of having a head-on shouting match?

Secondly, be sure you know what you’re on about. Are you confident of your facts and arguments? Have you planned carefully? Go over your reasons again – test it out by role-playing with someone to rehearse your argument.

Thirdly, identify your support. Who will stand up in a group and support your ideas and proposals? Visit parents, teachers, students and so on, and ask for their assistance. This is called lobbying for support. It might even be helpful if someone else is willing to propose your idea so that all the attention doesn’t fall on you.

Fourthly, get advice and support from other student groups. There are Student Networks linking many schools. These bodies are useful places to discuss your problems, to get ideas and to ask for letters of support to be sent to you. Contact your Regional Office, School Support Centre or the Youth Affairs Council for information.

Having your plans clear, knowing the steps involved, getting the resources you need ... these are the main clues to making it happen for your SRC.
Learning Matters: Beyond Badges on Blazers

Learning Matters is a bi-annual journal of the Catholic Education Office Melbourne. The current issue (Vol 13, No 2, 2008) highlights issues around 'student leadership.' The editorial explains that this edition "contains much material relating to formal leadership roles and structures within the school, but many articles speak of leadership much more broadly, including opportunities for leadership outside the school."

Student voices appear throughout the articles—from primary and secondary schools in Victoria. In others, teachers and administrators reflect on student leadership for social justice, in inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue and in Health and Wellbeing forums.

Copies are available by subscription:

The Editor, Learning Matters
Catholic Education Office Melbourne
PO Box 3, East Melbourne Vic 8002
Email: director@ceo.melb.catholic.edu.au

WANTED:
Multifaith and Multicultural Reporters

The Multifaith Multicultural Youth Network (MMYN) and youthcentral are looking for young people from across Victoria to report on multifaith and multicultural issues. If your application is successful, your articles will feature on the Faith and Culture Youth Page of youthcentral.

For more information follow the link:

Young People’s Perspectives on Taking Action

The second research report arising out of the ‘Bridging the Digital Divide’ project is titled ‘Young people’s perspectives on taking action.’

Led by the Inspire Foundation (www.inspire.org.au), a national organisation that uses technology to create opportunities for young people to change their world, and funded by VicHealth, the report found that “taking action” to marginalised young people means something quite different to traditional definitions of social and political participation.

The research found that some of the barriers to participating in social and political action included not knowing how to take action, the attitudes of others and their own personal circumstances and characteristics.

For the most marginalised, issues such as safety, personal security and health were paramount.

The research involved focus groups with young people and in-depth interviews with service providers across Victoria. It explored how young people from a diverse range of backgrounds feel about participating in political and social action.

Electronic copies of the report are available at:

For further information about this research please contact Michelle Blanchard, Research Officer at Inspire on 0403 171 989 or (03) 9825 5170.
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) 9489 9052 or (03) 8344 9637

Australian:

Education Views (Department of Education, Training and the Arts, Queensland) Vols 17.06 - 17.10; July-Nov/Dec 2008
FYA Newsletter (Foundation for Young Australians, Melbourne, Vic) 01; Spring 2008
Learning Matters: Beyond Badges on Blazers (Catholic Education Office, Melbourne, Vic) Vol 13 No 2; 2008
National Youth Participation Strategy (NYPs) in Mental Health: Scoping Project Report (Australian Infant, Child, Adolescent and Family Mental Health Association, Stepney, SA) 2008
YACVic Annual Report (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic) 2007-2008
YAPRap (Youth Action and Policy Association, Surry Hills, NSW) Vol 18 Nos 10, 11; October, Nov-December 2008
Yikes (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic) Vol 6 Edition 4; October 2008

International:

Democracy and Education: Creating Safe and Caring Learning Communities (Lewis and Clark Graduate School of Education and Counseling, Portland, OR, USA) Vol 18 No 1; October 2008
Education Revolution (AERA, Roslyn Heights, NY, USA) Vol 20 No 3 (Issue #54); Fall 2008
Personalised Education Now (Nottingham, UK) Issue No 9; Autumn-Winter 2008-9

Democracy & Education: Call for Manuscripts


More information: contact Connect (see page 2)

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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.

Order now: $33 each ($27.50 for Connect subscribers)

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Connect has a website:
http://www.geocities.com/rogermhold/Connect

Slowly growing with information about subscribing, some back issue contents and summaries of Student Councils and Beyond, Student Action Teams and Reaching High.

Check in occasionally!
Connect 174:

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