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& Incorporating the PASTA Newsletter #47
It was with great excitement that I recently took the finished layout of the Student Action Teams book to the printer. And, as this issue of Connect was being put together, the proofs of the front and back covers were returned for checking. They’re the images you see included on these pages.

This book is based on the experiences of some primary and secondary schools in Melbourne’s northern suburbs, but also draw on many other Student Action Teams for their reflections - particularly the cluster working in the City of Manningham around Values Education. In all of these cases, we continue to learn about what works well, and what isn’t as effective. This seemed a useful point to draw together the material and summarise what has happened.

The initial manuscripts for this book were produced as a summary of an approach to Traffic Safety Education - both as a way of being accountable to those who supported and funded that approach, and also as reflection of our excitement at the very real learning that took place. As we worked on it, we realised that the important story wasn’t really about Traffic Safety Education, but about a teaching and learning approach that could be used in many other contexts and around many other topics.

Two recent seminars in South Australia explored ways in which schools in other areas might take up these ideas and apply them in their own circumstances. The ideas of community connection and of groups within the community ‘commissioning’ Student Action Teams to carry out research and action in areas of common concern, are powerful ones. They also pose challenges for schools.

So, for example, one school raised a possible example: students are concerned about the state of the toilets in the school - they’re even passionate about it! As we talked, we started to think: how could we broaden this, so it was a community issue, and not just an in-school issue? Could there be a role for the Occupational Health and Safety people in the local Council? The Plumbers Union is passionate about healthy toilets in the community - could they be involved? In the UK, students developed a ‘Bog Standard’ campaign - could we learn from that?; perhaps students here could develop criteria for healthy toilets and then classify their school’s toilets and issue certificates - even ‘star-ratings’ - when they comply. We just need to think creatively.

Then the question becomes one about the strategy to introduce such possibilities and to ensure that the students’ passion is translated into student-owned and student-run research and action. After that it’s all ‘easy’.

That’s just one example. Hopefully publication of these stories from Student Action Teams will encourage more schools to think creatively and support meaningful, productive and purposeful student action and learning.

Roger Holdsworth

**This Issue:**

**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:**

Student Action Teams: the cover of the new Connect publication.

**Connect:**

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**NEXT ISSUE: #159: June 2006**

Deadline for material: end of May 2006
This new book from Connect outlines practical ways to implement Student Action Teams. It tells the story of a group of primary and secondary schools in Melbourne’s northern suburbs that is currently organising such Teams and reflecting on their implications for their teaching and learning.

The basic ideas about Student Action Teams are fairly simple – but with profound implications for schools and communities. Student Action Teams are just what the words suggest: 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.

These Teams are:

- **Purposeful**: the learning that takes place is seen by students to have immediately useful purposes; and
- **Productive**: the work that students do produces practical and significant outcomes over and above individuals’ own learning and beyond the classroom.

Individual schools and clusters of schools have recently been developing local examples of Student Action Teams around issues such as safety, the environment, values, recreation, bullying, health and so on.

The Student Action Teams in this cluster of 10-15 schools have been researching and acting around traffic safety and the environment. The book outlines the basic principles of Student Action Teams, summarises what has been learnt about their practical operation, and tells the story of successful approaches and outcomes in these two projects. The principles and approaches outlined here can be used to guide developments in any school - acting alone or in a cluster.

Copies of Student Action Teams: Implementing Productive Practices are now available from Connect: 90 pages of ideas!

Order your copies now for $30 each (including postage). If you’re a current financial subscriber to Connect, copies are available at a discounted rate: $25 each including postage!
Student Councils and Beyond is an exciting 108-page publication from and for Australian primary and secondary schools to support more effective and relevant participation of students in educational decision-making. 

Connect magazine brings together a collection of ideas that challenge you... to go beyond criticisms of ineffective Student Councils. Student Councils and Beyond enables you to find out what students, teachers and schools have implemented around Australia: exciting and practical ways that you can take the next step to go beyond tokenism ... and make a difference.

Copies of Student Councils and Beyond are still available from Connect for $30 each (including postage). Current financial subscribers to Connect get copies at a discounted rate: $25 each including postage!

Complete and return the order form in this issue (or on the back page of Connect) with your payment.

“Student Action Teams are about supporting young people to question, construct and develop the sorts of multiple communities in which they live and wish to live.”
Lead the Way!

As a student in Year 7 in 2002, I joined my school’s Student Representative Council (SRC), hoping to make some changes and some new friends. Now, in 2006, I’m in Year 11. After four years of hard work and attending meetings held during school time, I have finally been given the opportunity to be elected onto the New South Wales Student Representative Council (NSW SRC).

The NSW SRC represents all students in secondary schools in the state. It is the peak student leadership body in the state. Candidates are chosen by their peers in regions or selected through an application process, to have a place among some of the state’s best student leaders and to work alongside young people who want to make a difference. The very thought of this was overwhelming for me.

The main purpose of having a NSW SRC is so that we can effectively support as many students in as many schools across the state as possible. Having a NSW SRC also maximises the action that can be undertaken throughout the regions, and helps to keep each part of the state informed. We constantly review the status of what SRCs are doing in our respective regions and organise an e-group (a group access account, where documents, emails and so on are shared), which is the main way the NSW SRC keeps in contact as we live so far apart. Meetings are held at least once every term, but in between these times, there is a lot to be done.

I didn’t know what to expect from our first meeting. Twenty two students from schools all across the state, including myself, attended the NSW SRC Training Days and Inaugural Meeting held in Sydney from the 23rd to the 25th of November in 2005. The conference was guided by Noel Grannall (Coordinator of Student Leadership and SRCs), Stuart Hearne (Leader, Values and Student Leadership) and Veronica Carroll (SRC coordinator for the South Western Sydney area). A glance at the agenda confirmed that we were all going to be incredibly busy for the next three days.

The NSW SRC’s main focus is to take action on resolutions passed at the annual State SRC Conference, which is organised and conducted by a State Working Party made up of students. Last year’s theme was School Harmony - Communities Working Together. Four resolutions were passed and it now became our job to ensure that we maximised progress on these resolutions over the next year. These resolutions included trying to make possible conferences in all regions, creating a new student resource, creating school forums and encouraging SRC advisor period allowances.

We also set our own goals, besides the resolutions set out for us from the 2005 State SRC Conference. This year, these goals involve improving primary and secondary links and improving school environments. These goals each have their own importance and the NSW SRC selects new goals each year, as we begin our terms. Once we have chosen our goals, we split into however many groups are required and plan the action we are going to take over the next year. The ‘improving primary and secondary links’ goal group hopes to hold SRC regional meetings with primary student leaders present. The ‘environmental’ group is holding a state-wide multimedia competition for government schools called Enviro-Inspiro, which is based on students filming projects they undertake themselves to improve their school community.

As for the busy agenda, it was packed with representatives from many groups such as the MindMatters program, the Department of Education and Training Aboriginal Programs Unit and the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG). The NSW SRC regularly consults not just the students of the state, but groups that can support what we are attempting to achieve. In the short space of three days, we gained various insights on what it means to be a student representative and how we can become more effective as a whole. As dedicated teenagers with full schedules, membership on the NSW SRC may seem like a lot of work but, in reality, because we get to work with so many
inspiring people and with the assistance of a never-ending supply of adolescent energy, the meeting time is approached with enthusiasm and diligence. 

On the last day of our first gathering as NSW SRC representatives, after participating in a day-long meeting with government officials at Parliament House in Sydney, we exchanged heartfelt goodbyes. I was exhausted, but immensely proud of what our group had done in three days. We had participated actively at meeting times and somehow, in such a short space of time, formed strong bonds that extended over geographical barriers. I look forward to attending many more meetings with the rest of the NSW SRC; I also look forward to us helping to improve the links between school communities and students, who are the very core of what our student representative councils are all about.

The NSW State SRC will keep you posted on the work we are doing this year. So keep your eye out for future Connect articles from us.

Sharmaine Aguanta  
Year 11, Girraween High School  
and NSW State SRC  
Representative
We know that students learn best when they are very enthusiastic about their learning and can communicate that enthusiasm to others. We have used our involvement in the student voice project to design a range of opportunities for students to build their enthusiasms, their interests and their aspirations into the curriculum.

In the middle school, the formal vehicle for this was the Voice IT project: a student voice consultation designed in partnership with Youth Work students from TAFE SA. As a result of the Voice IT program, the school developed the middle school Dance Group, the Groovy Girls program and a Pedal Prix team. Our Year 8 S&E students developed their own anti-poverty action plans which were brought together in a Poverty Awareness Day.

For Year 10, the chance to develop students’ projects means the chance to work with community ‘experts’ to develop projects that will improve their learning and contribute to the wellbeing of the community. Students are involved in projects ranging from computer building through to catering, where students were able to go the Adelaide Show to demonstrate their wares.

For SACE students, it has expanded the range of subjects that allow students to be involved in developing significant projects and developing an approach to personalised learning that makes links across subjects. This enables students to build significant partnerships with outside agencies.

Sport and Recreation partnerships have seen students design and maintain web pages, as well as support national and state sporting competitions as a significant part of their SACE.

From our work in the student voice project we are exploring how to develop personalised learning plans that will allow students to build their passion into their schooling. Over the last term we have been talking to students in Year 11 and 12 to map and plan their learning. The aim is to ensure

Amanda is passionate about saving the Local Food Co-op and so, when she had to find a project for her Extension Studies, she was able to build her passion into her South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE).

Lara’s Language and the Community assignment allowed her to display her extensive collection of Tomb Raider games and associated products. She was able to talk about her passion to Year 8 and 9 students and was invited to set up her display as part of the school’s Youth Fair held in second term.

The Youth Fair involved students from all year levels designing a section of the fair that brought together youth groups, fun activities and provided a showcase for student initiated projects such as the middle school dance group. Students from Year 8 showcased projects they had designed and initiated in their Science and Technology class as part of the Science component of the fair. Also students from Year 10 gave free tastings of the tomato sauce they had made as part of their enterprise project.
that more students can link their learning, their passion and their future aspirations.

The development of each student’s learning plan is based on a rich dialogue. This forms a learning web that enables us to plan to include student’s work, their passions and their interests into their learning.

The learning plans we are developing will form the basis of subject offerings and selections for next year and beyond.

Positives of the approach we have used

The positives of building students’ passion and enthusiasm into the curriculum is that we get constantly amazed at what young people can do and the commitment and skills and expertise they show. Even on days where it doesn’t look like it will come together – like 11:00 o’clock on the day of the Youth Fest when the yard looked bare – by 12:00 it was a hive of activity and everyone joined in and got into the spirit.

It has given us a lot of information about our students: what they do outside of school and what they aspire to. For individual students it has meant that they are engaged and connected to their learning in a way they hadn’t before. For some this has had an effect on the whole of their learning.

We have been able to build students’ community life and work into the curriculum in ways we haven’t had success at before and have developed learning partnerships that have gone beyond the walls of the school. Success of the programs breeds success; one of the first student initiated projects we began was a bike maintenance course built around the skills and enthusiasms of two particular students, that grew to encompass more students who then, through the Voice IT project, lobbied for a Pedal Prix Team. The school now has three different programs built around bikes.

The biggest positive is that, for many students, what was once outside of the curriculum or peripheral is now accredited and a strong part of their curriculum.

The Struggles We Have:

Traditional structures of schooling and reporting and accreditation are based on a single teacher being in charge of a class that meets in a set place, at a set time. Our school structures are no different and this is the major struggle we are having. We are constantly struggling with so much going on – so much change happening – as we respond to the changing needs of students. For our senior students, we are continually remaking their curriculum; this means we are
Greetings from Radio Pupitre, Spain

First, I would like to thank you for including in the cover of Connect magazine No. 157 (February 2006), a cartoon of our radio workshop “Radio Pupitre” (that means: Radio Desk – school desk). I used that cartoon for greeting purposes last Christmas.

Even though we haven’t been in contact lately, I would like to tell you what I am doing. This school radio station is being used by the “Teachers School” (the professorship, the place where people study to become teachers) and other regular schools of our community “Vega Baja” as a radio workshop. Any teacher or professor who wishes to do a radio show with students can come here to practise and broadcast. For that purpose, I first go to their school, practice with them, and work on ideas for their program by looking at their curriculum courses, such as: English, Geography, History, Second Languages, Religion, etc.

Why do I do this? Because since 1997 I am working as a consultant and advisor at the Audiovisual Media Program ("Medios Audiovisuales") in the Formation, Innovation and Educational Resources Centre (CEFIRE) of the community of Orihuela. Therefore, I am not able to daily broadcast with the students of the school where I have my teacher post and where the “Radio Pupitre” is located. So what I do, is organise workshops to encourage teachers to use media in general, and radio in particular, as another pedagogical tool … it is hard, isn’t it? Anyway, that’s what I am doing. I keep my vision alive because I’ve always believed in this communication medium – the radio – to improve my students’ education.

I would like you to keep me informed of what you do with Connect, as well as if you are working in any radio show or station. If you want, I can send you a CD with programs we have done with schools that have visited and broadcast their show – both primary and secondary students.

Antonio Navarro Martinez
antonioriola@hotmail.com

En primer lugar quiero agradecerte el detalle de colocar en la portada de la revista CONNECT nº 157 de Febrero… una caricatura de nuestro taller de radio “RADIO PUPITRE” que utilicé para felicitar las pasadas navidades.

Aunque estamos tiempo sin contactar quiero que sepas que hago actualmente, pues esta emisora escolar está siendo utilizada por el profesorado de nuestra comarca de la Vega Baja como un taller de radio, a donde acude cualquier profesor que desea elaborar y emitir su programa de radio con sus propios alumnos… para ello voy a su centro y hago prácticas con ellos, les propongo ideas para llevar a su programa lo que día a día van aprendiendo a través de las áreas curriculares básicas como: Lengua, Geografía e Historia, Idiomas, Religión… etc.

Y por qué hago esto?, pues porque desde el año 1997 estoy ocupando la asesoría de Medios Audiovisuales en el Centro de Formación, Innovación y Recursos Educativos (CEF.I.R.E.) de Orihuela, y al no poder emitir diariamente con mis niños en el colegio donde tengo mi plaza como docente y las instalaciones de Radio Pupitre… lo que hago es organizar cursos que animen a los profesores a utilizar la prensa y la radio como una herramienta pedagógica más… difícil, no? pues en ello estoy y mantengo la ilusión pues siempre he creído en este medio para mejorar a mis alumnos…

Me gustaría que me mantuvieras al corriente de lo que haces desde CONNECT así como si trabajas en alguna emisora… si quieres te puedo enviar copia en CD de algunos programas realizados por grupos escolares que han visitado y emitido su programa, tanto de Ed. Primaria como de Secundaria…

Antonio Navarro Martínez
asesor de Medios Audiovisuales del CEFIRE de Orihuela (Alicante)

Thanks to Hernán Cuervo for translation into English.
Students, teachers, administrators, consultants, parents - all those interested in democratic education - are invited to the:

International Democratic Education Conference

IDEC 2006
10-16 July 2006
St Ignatius College
Riverview, Sydney

Full week live-in rates available including accommodation and registration; or 1-day and 2-day rates - with and without accommodation

Information:
www.idec2006.org

Contact: enquiries@idec2006.org

This is an important international conference, being held for the first time in Australia. All those with an interest in democratic and participatory education - particularly students from schools throughout Australia - are warmly invited to take part.

The program for the Conference will be available shortly, and includes a presentation from four young people from the NSW Commission on Children on Young People of a session on “Participating in Decision-making” on Friday 14th July.

IDEC 2006 is organised by the Australasian Association for Progressive and Alternative Education (AAPAE). This is an Australian organisation for all those interested and involved in progressive, alternative and democratic education. It is for learners and educators, regardless of age. It is for all in the community who wish to share and extend their experience and knowledge of such education. Those working in AAPAE are deeply interested in building the capacity and passion of individuals and helping develop a community and society of citizens able and willing to actively participate in creating healthier, more equitable and sustainable societies, people skilled in and committed to participating in democratic processes.

www.aapae.edu.au