

PASTA NEWSLETTER

51 - December 2006

PASTA is the acronym of the Professional Association of Student Representative Council Teacher/Advisors. Founded in New South Wales, Australia, in February 1995, our Association exists to support in whatever ways possible those who work with and support programs of student participation, representation and leadership.



SEE OUR MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION AND APPLICATION FORM ON THE WEBSITE

PASS THE PASTA

As the end of the year approaches, it is a good time to reflect on what you (and your SRC) have achieved over the last twelve months. What have you (as an adviser) been able to do to ensure that the members of the SRC have been able to use their leadership skills to their best advantage? What has the SRC as a group been involved in that shows that they have contributed to the growth of the school community? How have they been able to influence the decision-makers within the school to consider the needs of the students when issues that affect their daily well-being are being discussed? What positive changes have they been a part of?

It will also help to look at what might need improving next year. What was attempted that didn't work as well as you would have liked? What changes will need to be made so that a better result is achieved next time? Are the needs of as many groups as possible within the school being addressed? If not, how can that be addressed in the future? Are all of the staff, students and parents aware of what the SRC has achieved? How does the recognition of leadership compare to that of academic or sporting excellence?

While these questions (and many more) are common across most schools, the answers will depend on the individual school's approach to developing and supporting student leaders as they attempt to find solutions. Are they spoon-fed the answers? Are they thrown fully on their own resources? Or are they supported and advised throughout the whole decision-making process?

As Dave Conlon (CASAA) says when reminiscing on his 30 year class reunion: "The feeling that I was left with after all the fun and memories is that you and I are helping to create the 'oh yeahs' for the students of

today. My leadership kids are running activities and events that stick in people's memories much longer than any chemistry or grammar lesson. These were the good times and we fondly remembered the activities of school rather than the schooling of school. Keep that thought as you work with your kids this year and keep making the yearbook shots that people will look at in the future with the 'oh yeah' look of remembrance."

Are the memories that you are creating going to be vital and memorable ones? Are your own mentoring efforts recognised (and given proper time allowances to do effectively) by your school and your system? Is your motivation strong enough to continue doing a job that is still often seen as 'extra-curricular', therefore less important, for long into the future? Are you committed enough to these principles and projects to demonstrate your belief in their value and the need to talk with others and lobby for improvements statewide and nationally by becoming a financial member of PASTA? (A membership form for that purpose is included in this issue.) Will you effect action on those adviser and SRC needs and respond to the many requests for input / dialogue / recognition that you are out there, doing noteworthy things and, like us, are pointed towards the same positive outcomes? Then perhaps this NSW *and* nationally incorporated voluntary association - or a new one of another name with other active people pursuing like-minded goals, can grow and be one of many traveling into the future together rather than on separate paths.

Finally we wish everyone the compliments of the season and hope that you begin next year charged with enough enthusiasm to carry through the important role that SRCs fill.

Ken Page
PASTA President



Check out 'How To Join' page on our Website:
<http://hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/>

Reporting, Rewarding & Responding

Kelso High School 2006 Co-Captain Nick Williams had served on the Kelso High SRC for all of his six years at the school. In the third term of his senior year, the school he had so wholeheartedly become an active leader of was nearly completely destroyed in a fire. Fortunately, no one was hurt. Nor was it caused by arson. But the result, a difficult challenge for the whole school but especially for those soon to undertake their HSC, was enormous.

As he had done for the six years of using his innate talent and developing his growing leadership and communication skills on the SRC, Nick was a key organiser and spokesperson for the public meetings and intensive negotiations with the NSW DET and the local council which, in Term 4 of this year, led to the start of construction on a modern, replacement school. As well, it initiated the long overdue and forward looking creation of the newly named Denison College, a joint senior college with Bathurst HS, the only other government high in the same city. Together with other members of his school's 'Leadership Team' (a body additional to but working in tandem with the SRC, as all such should) PASTA Australia congratulates them and their school for such an example of putting fine words into real actions. With the permission of the school, we here reproduce a recent article on Nick's achievements from its regular newsletter.

Order of Australia Award to Nick Williams

Kelso High School Captain 2006, Nick Williams has been awarded an Order of Australia Certificate for community service. Only 21 students in NSW received this award. Nick (was) presented with the certificate by the Governor of NSW, Professor Marie Bashir in a ceremony at Government House on 22nd November. This is a prestigious award and recognises Nick's outstanding contribution to the school and community.

Nick has a long history of involvement in leadership at school and in the local community. He has worked with the local branch of the Red Cross to establish the Breakfast Program and the Red Cross Youth Challenge. He was a finalist in the 2006 Lions Club 'Youth of the Year' Public Speaking Competition and was awarded a 2BS Rotary Youth Citizen of the Month. Nick has served on the Kelso High SRC for the last six years.

He has been a member of the Cirkus Surreal troupe and makes a remarkably attractive old lady. He has been awarded Citizenship Awards for the last four years at Kelso and he has also won the 'Central West Community College Award for Outstanding Achievement by a Year 10 Student' in 2004. Nick has also been involved with the Anglican Church in supporting the elderly and in helping with primary school sport programs.

In the last year Nick has played a significant role in the re-establishment of Kelso HS. He was a member of the Bathurst Consultation Committee and worked with students, parents, teachers and the Department of Education to develop a new senior college model. He organised a raffle that raised over \$5000 for the school and represented the students at many functions and official engagements.

'I've enjoyed the surprise,' said Nick on hearing the news of the award, 'I didn't set out to achieve it. It has been something I've enjoyed doing.'

The Order of Australia Certificates of Commendation are separate awards given by the Order of Australia Association.

Speak Out!

(An irregular but sincere place for individual PASTA members to express their point of view. This issue's recognitions, meditations and cogitations are from Charles Kingston, Bathurst.)

The February 2005 edition of *Connect* contained, as part of its non-PASTA Newsletter pages, an article I wrote then to recognise *Connect's* 150th issue.

Furniture for the Future - Architecture for the Ages - Looking Beyond A Century and a Half of Connect - had, amongst its lengthy arguments and lofty ambitions, the following italicised text. Some additional text, updated to December 2006, is inserted (in non-italicised style) at the relevant place in the reproduced text below. I believe, at the end of another difficult, disappointing year for communications from others, that it is still relevant, and timely.

The section of it here emphasises the need to properly credit students for the real action-oriented curriculum many of them engage in but which gets little or no mention on normal school reports.

It also implies that SRC advisers be properly accredited and recognised as, at the very least, the equivalent of Year Advisers; at best, teachers of a real subject in their own right.

While the achievements of Kelso HS student, Nick Williams (now an HSC alum) are briefly but properly recognised in the accompanying article, and with a prestigious government honour, his HSC report and, should he choose to pursue that path, his university admissions scores, have no adequate provision to credit them. Not on 'official' paper, nor in the wider media, do we as a society daily acknowledge (as we do with Maths, Science, Technology - and sometimes even our own reporting to others) their implicit value to whatever life path he and other students choose to pursue.

Such recognition, such inherent respect from systems and communities for something so vital to our society as positive participation in civic affairs, needs to go beyond the fine but limited audiences of a school newsletter, or a poorly communicated, if at all, government bureaucracy that keeps such matters close to the chest and seems fearful of reaching out to others who share their ultimate aims.

Hopefully Nick's example will provide a more positive direction to all who read both, and consider that what they might have done, they can still do. It only takes a change of heart and an open mind.

... As metaphor, as symbol, as acronym, the perspective possible from a 4-legged swivel chair provides the 'TRIPLE A' rating these areas of education so vitally still need, viz. the seal not just of acceptance, not just of approval but, justly, of widespread and widely recognised acclaim for these activities as essential curriculum, as vital life and career empowering self-governance, as real self-generated citizenship projects about real issues.

In addition, a 'Triple A' acronym label also works as practical reference points:

- Administration;
- Accountability;
- Advertising.

In other words, three essential features of educational institutions and practices. It is a sad irony that, already nearly half way through the first decade of the 21st century, the optimistic promises of 'the new millennium' continue to be thwarted, not alone as nightly reported in the news, but daily, in so many nation's schools.

*And this state of affairs still largely applies. a quarter of a century on from 1979, the International Year of the Child - in which the premier Australian student magazine for youth participation, **Connect**, was first published; nearly two decades on from 1985, the International Youth Year, in which the first attempt to physically connect with like-minded participation people and projects in North America met Australian institutional rejection ...*

but generous, innovative and professional development welcome abroad.

And, significant once more now in 2006, more than 11 years, more than a full decade since the following three potential catalysts for real progress in this area were held or began, we are still searching for signs that there has been a real change in attitude, a real effort at communication, a real meaning to the fine words, both written and spoken, at these times:

- **1995:** the International Confederation of Principals 2nd Conference, in Sydney, which applauded loudly the speeches, displays and greetings of the score or more of student leaders from NSW who addressed them then;

- **1995-96:** the appointment of a full-time officer in NSW, since expanded to a senior position, to support the work of student councils and student leadership, a role which seemed at the time the most hopeful sign yet that progress on the status and conditions for advisers would at last permeate our schools and ignite effective recognition, time, training and resources for them;
- **1996-97:** the incorporation of PASTA as a voluntary association to work in tandem with the above and with similar inclined people, especially advisers in others states and abroad.

There were many other promising initiatives, both before and after that time to whom this personal opinion applies: I believe, more firmly than ever the longer we wait to hear from the people involved in them, that there have been too many largely wasted opportunities, too many instances where otherwise good and skilful individuals have let emotion and ignorance get in the way of reason and information. And that this has happened, on the part of so many, including in some instances myself and those most closely associated with us in PASTA. The old saying, "No news is good news" may have positive relevance to our private, personal lives. In our collegial and community pursuits, it has no place. Whether deliberately or by neglect; whether through jealousy, fear or oversight; whether by stealth or incompetence, too many people for far too long have simply squandered the many chances staring them in the face for cooperation.

*... In spite of these multiple and repetitive past rejections, both personal and public, it remains a fond, not foolish optimistic desire that the next 25 years (**UPDATED CORRECTION: NEXT YEAR!**) will see that sad irony transformed into this happy paradox: the 'work load' for everyone lessened because nearly everyone - most especially students - have both been enabled to and, personally and as a generation, taken to heart their 'rights' to exercise in practical ways their and our 'mutual responsibilities' for:*

- school, departmental and professional association **administration** being shared in practical, persistent and pertinent ways throughout each year;
- school, departmental, university, local, state and federal government, parental and business **accountability** concerns about education recognising, incorporating and accrediting, in specific systemic as well as special ways, the invaluable significance of these activities to the total development of each individual child and to the creation of an aware, educated citizenry;
- school, departmental, community and media reporting and publicity (ie '**advertising**') being genuinely, creatively and regularly (in the case of the media, this means daily) designed to emphasise and educate about the positive achievements and benefits of these active citizenship activities.

SRC Evaluation Tips

The following tips may help you evaluate the successes you have achieved throughout the year:

Decide what you want to evaluate

- Achievement of goals
- Strength of the project
- Project outcomes

Decide how the results will be used

- To refine or improve
- To prepare a report
- To help develop new processes
- To help gain broader support

Decide when to evaluate

- At different times while the project is running
- At the end of the project

Decide who is involved in evaluating

- Students
- Teachers, executive
- Parents, community members
- Others

Decide on the information required

- What is to be used?
- How is it going to be collected and sorted?
- How is it going to be analysed?
- Who is going to do a report? Who for?
- How/With whom are the results going to be shared?
- Are independent reviewers going to see the results? If so, what will be done with their feedback?

When going through an evaluation process, keep in mind that it should have the following characteristics. It should:

- Be constructive
- Be continuous
- Be directed towards action
- Be simple and uncomplicated
- Contribute to the purposes of the group and school
- Record strengths and weaknesses
- Measure what it says it measures
- Be reliable and valid
- Point toward future action

(Adapted from *Leadership*, May 1999)

PASTA MEMBERSHIP

Tax Invoice: ABN 49 398 096 539

PASTA membership gets you a full year of regular publications (including a subscription to **Connect**), access to resource modules and professional development opportunities, while at the same time showing your real support for our main job of lobbying for more time, training, resources and recognition for SRCs and advisors.

- PASTA memberships for 2006-7 are now **overdue!** A full membership form is on our Website's 'How To Join' page at:

<http://hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/>

- Or, for now, just complete the details below and send payment to:

**The Secretary, PASTA
50 Balmoral Drive
Gorokan, NSW 2263**

NAME: _____

CONTACT DETAILS:

TYPE (inc. GST):

- Student/Concession (\$27.50)
- Ordinary (\$55.00)
- Organisation (\$88.00)

(indicate which)

The *PASTA Newsletter* is edited by Ken Page for PASTA and distributed bi-monthly as a supplement to *Connect* magazine.

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