Did you know?

The Victorian State Government has a commitment from the last election to “promote effective models for student participation and representation in schools such as Student Representative Councils” and to “Student Voice - to identify and promote opportunities for greater student participation in School Councils”.

The VicSRC will be working with the Department of Education to make sure these commitments are implemented! We'd like your ideas and involvement too!

Wanted!

VicSRC State Executive Members

The VicSRC is looking for secondary students to be part of an interim student executive committee for the first part of 2007. This will provide management and oversight of the VicSRC up until the VicSRC Congress next year.

There was to have been an information session for interested students last December, but this was postponed and will now be held on 21st February from 4.30 pm at the YAC Vic Office in the centre of Melbourne. Assistance with travel is available for students travelling long distances.

The gathering will be an informal chance for students to get to know each other and learn more about the VicSRC. There is no obligation for ongoing involvement; students can decide for themselves how they would like to be involved. The information session is open to interested secondary students from government, private and catholic schools.

For more information or to RSVP your attendance, please call James in the office on 03 9267 3744 or Toll Free from outside Melbourne 1300 727 176 or email: vicsrc@yacvic.org.au

VicSRC Cluster plans for 2007

The VicSRC is talking with several other groups who are interested in forming SRC clusters in 2007. We have cluster plans in place in Bayside, Campaspe, Darebin, Glen Eira, Kingston and Maroondah, and interest from Ballarat, East Gippsland, Frankston, Hume, Macedon Ranges, Melton, Nillumbik and Whittlesea.

www.yacvic.org.au/vicsrc
The NSW SRC is the peak student leadership group supported by the NSW Department of Education and Training. As a proud member of the 2006 NSW SRC, I believe we have achieved much this year.

The NSW SRC Constitution states that our goal is ‘to take action to improve the quality of school life for all students’. Now, it isn’t possible to make this happen in the blink of an eye, but this year we have certainly lived up to that statement in many ways.

An important part of our role was to implement resolutions passed on to us by other students. 130 students from across NSW attended the 2005 State SRC Conference and discussed 10 recommendations at a Student Forum held at the conference. The resolutions passed became the business of the 2006 NSW SRC during its term of office.

Two recommendations passed onto the 2006 NSW SRC were to:

- encourage every educational region in NSW to hold a regional SRC conference annually on the same theme as the State SRC Conference. The NSW SRC wrote letters to all Regional Directors to encourage them to take part in this resolution. We received a reply from each Regional Director telling us about what they were doing at the moment and how they will work towards this shared goal. The 2007 NSW SRC will continue to monitor this;

- create a resource in collaboration with MindMatters to provide strategies and awareness to assist student leaders in supporting students with mental health issues. The draft resource is filled with fun activities that student leaders can use with other students and it encourages students to connect with each other and build resilience. The resource is now in a final draft and should be ready for trialing in some schools soon. The 2007 NSW SRC will promote this resource in NSW Government secondary schools when it is completed.

The 2006 NSW SRC also worked on other matters such as ways to improve primary/secondary links in schools through student leadership. Individual members told school stories about programs that smoothed the transfer of students from primary to secondary school. These stories will soon appear on the NSW Department of Education and Training’s student leadership website at www.schools.nsw.edu.au/studentsupport/studleadsrc/index.php

The 2006 NSW SRC also ran a successful student-led school environment competition called Enviro Inspiro! SRCs were invited to use media to tell about their successful school environment projects. The winning school this year was Great Lakes College, Tuncurry Junior Campus. Enviro Inspiro! will run again next year in NSW Government secondary schools.

Members of the 2006 NSW SRC also liaised and formed strong links with inter-agencies such as the NSW Youth Advisory Council, the NSW Commission for Children and Young People and consulted with groups such as the NSW DET Aboriginal Programs Unit and the DET Student Wellbeing Unit. The NSW SRC was even consulted on the draft NSW State Government Plan!

Members were also invited to co-host special events such as the Student Partnerships Conference and some members ran workshops at educational conferences such as the NSW DET Middle Years Conference and the NSW DET 15-19 Year Olds Conference. Student leaders taught adults about the importance and benefits to school communities of effective student leadership programs.

We also started a NSW SRC newsletter called the Student Voice and have relayed important information back to our regions. Have a look at: www.schools.nsw.edu.au/studentsupport/studleadsrc/studentvoice/achievements/index.php

The 2006 NSW SRC has tried to benefit the students in NSW. This has been through providing a student voice in education decision-making processes or through acting on behalf of other students to improve the quality of their life in and, also this year, out of school.

I am so glad I had the opportunity this year, not just because of what I’ve learnt and achieved, but also for the greatest bunch of friends I have for life. I’d like to wish the 2007 NSW SRC good luck next year.

Rizwan Nawaz
Member of the 2006 NSW SRC
Airds High School

South Western Sydney Region

Democratically Elected

- The SRC at Airds High School is chosen fairly. It is democratically elected and representative of the whole school.
- Students complete a written application outlining skills and activities they are involved in to demonstrate their leadership qualities. The application is signed by a fellow student and a teacher for verification.
- Candidates formally present the reasons why they should be elected to their year groups.
- Year advisers discuss the importance of the election. They encourage students to vote for those they think will represent the student voice, raise student issues and provide feedback to them.

Broad representation

- The school has a diverse student population and SRC membership is for everyone. The SRC includes students from differing cultural backgrounds, Aboriginal students and students from the school’s special education unit.

School support

- SRC members are well supported. They attend roll call together and use this time for planning and organising SRC activities. Leadership training is organised and conducted by the SRC coordinator.
- The SRC has an important role in making real decisions. The Principal discusses school issues with the SRC regularly and the SRC make recommendations to the executive. The school operates from a values platform that is directly linked to the school management plan. The SRC also operates from a values platform.
- There are many SRC working parties of involved students including:
  - Sports: to encourage students to be active. This group organises lunch time games and raises funds to purchase sports equipment that students can borrow.
  - School dance: organise three school dances a year. “Students are taking on more and more responsibility for organising these and there has been a real culture shift ... initially the school dances involved me in a lot of work but now the students do it all.” (SRC Co-ordinator)
- Youth week: organise activities to run over the week such as assemblies to showcase student performers, sporting activities and games.
- Fundraising: raise money to support student activities. The group has sponsored a student to attend the National Leadership Conference and subsidised costs for students to attend the National Young Leaders Day. They also support Stewart House and one other charity each year. Students select the charity after investigating its work and purpose.
- SRC website: this is a new group responsible for designing and developing a SRC section on the school website.

Some comments:

- “Everyone was working together just like a sports team and we were promoting physical activity and fitness.” (SRC President)
- The SRC has made “new activities for the school like: sport equipment borrowing at lunch time, Youth Week activities and performances” (Year 8 Rep)
- “I believe that the election process is one of the best in the area. In order for students to select the best candidates, the students must get nominated by students/staff. They must give a prepared speech to their year group.” (School Captain)
- “We have a say about the school system and what is happening such as uniform and environment. We work as a partner with the school executive, school council and P&C.” (SRC President)
- “A lot of things have been brought up at our SRC meetings; some of these have come from the students and others from the executive team.” (Year 8 SRC Member)
- “It gives new ideas and lots of strengths.” (Year 11 Rep)
- “You see different points of view from all years including the support unit and different (cultural) backgrounds.” (School Captain)
- “I am enjoying being on the SRC because people are now listening to what I have to say.” (Year 10 Rep from the Support Unit)
The voice of students is heard on school improvement and other important issues. The school runs a diverse student leadership program and uses the student voice for school improvement around important issues.

A range of leadership roles
The formal student leadership structure includes a captain, two vice captains, house captains and seven senior prefects who each lead a portfolio. Each portfolio includes two other prefects and a number of students from younger year groups. Portfolios include:

- School Assembly
- Performing Arts
- Media and Events
- Transport
- Social Justice
- Environment
- Sport

In addition to the Year 12 Prefects, a democratically elected SRC ensures that involved students participate in a variety of meaningful activities. Other informal student leadership structures operate within the school in an effort to ensure that SRC activities are for everyone and are based on a philosophy of including students in making real decisions.

School staff identified a gap in student leadership opportunities for Year 7 and 8 students and initiated a junior student leadership program. This is an informal, inclusive and voluntary group that meets at lunchtime. These students are particularly well supported with training and participate early in diverse leadership activities.

In Term 1 they are trained in presentation skills. In Term 2 they visit local feeder primary schools. The student leaders conduct such activities as drama with Year 6 students. Students from this group coordinate and chair the school Open Night held in Term 3 and are ambassadors when visitors come to the school. These are just some of the ways in which the work of students is appropriately recognised.

Students’ views are canvassed in numerous ways to provide evidence to inform school decision-making. Students have participated in school research projects. They are trained to conduct focus groups. They have input into the design and development of survey questions. Students contribute to community forums to discuss findings and present information and recommendations at staff development days.

Year 10 students are also well supported. They are trained to conduct discussion sessions in student led roll call groups. These occur two to three times a term. The student leaders seek information on important student issues and then make recommendations.

What some students say:
“I want to promote social justice and equality in the school community to ensure that everyone is treated fairly.”

“It is important to raise awareness of other cultures within our school and the wider community.”

Being a student leader involves:

- "giving advice and receiving it from others’’;
- "gaining leadership skills while having fun and learning to interact with people in other grades’’;
- "having a chance to gain confidence and practise public speaking and organisation skills and you can make a difference’’.

“The school values students’ opinions and contributions… leadership at Asquith GHS is about the meaningful processes of leadership, providing structure and guided experience.” (Principal)

Photo: A student focus group exploring learning issues in Stage 4 at Asquith Girls High School.
Involved students making real decisions

Student leadership occurs through the parliamentary model: “Cromer public school believes everyone can be a leader if given the opportunity … some students are natural leaders as some are natural mathematicians … we teach mathematics to all students so we need to teach the skills of leadership to all students.” (Principal’s comment)

The school uses the parliamentary model as a basis for student leadership. (Comments are from Year 6 students):

• “For election, the school makes it as fair as possible. There are no posters allowed and no bribes. For positions in parliament you are nominated.”
• “Year 6 vote for who they think should get it. I think this is working.”
• “School parliament has given me the confidence to speak in front of large audiences and learn how parliament runs.”
• “It is good to have parliament so that the Year 6 have a say in what will happen.”
• “School parliament is a good thing to have because we discuss things happening around us. We can bring up ideas and anyone from any grade can get their voice heard. It is also a fun way to learn about how Australian Parliament is run.”
• “I think it’s good to have school parliament because everyone gets to learn what John Howard and other politicians actually do. We get to participate in this with the grade and teachers bringing up motions and other things. It’s good because everyone is allowed to say something and nobody gets left out as it is fun but serious at the same time.”

A school wide public speaking program from Kindergarten to Year 6 has a significant impact on students’ ability to speak in public with confidence. In this way students’ involvement in leadership opportunities is well supported.

Student leadership is for everyone. All Year 6 students participate as parliamentarians.

• “School parliament has helped me with speaking or quick thinking as I wasn’t that good at thinking fast because in parliament you don’t really prepare what you say, you just make it up as you go (sometimes).”

Those who occupy cabinet positions are chosen fairly. Elections are conducted by a process of nomination, speeches (both prepared and impromptu) and voting. This occurs at the end of Year 5. The two school captains are the Prime Ministers and there are two deputy Prime Ministers. There are ministers and shadow ministers who are assigned portfolios. The positions of whip and speaker are also filled.

• “Our school makes the positions fair because every term someone different gets a turn at a different position.”

The parliament meets weekly in school time and issues are raised, debated and voted on. The parliament generates its own budget through student organised fundraising activities throughout the year. This budget is used as a legacy from the outgoing Year 6 students to benefit the rest of the student body. When the time comes to make real decisions as to how to spend the budget, the decision is the subject of a parliamentary debate. Previous legacies include display boards, public address systems and Big Books for Kindergarten students.

The cabinet meets with the Principal each fortnight. Ministers’ portfolios are Education, Environment, Community Relations, Health and Safety, Culture Leisure and Recreation, Creative Arts, Student Welfare and Technology. The Health and Safety portfolio for example, includes responsibility for organising canteen rosters and Clean Up Australia Day and involves occupational health and safety training.

• “For Clean Up Australia the buddies got together and cleaned up different sections of the school. We cleaned up a lot of rubbish and had fun.”

The Culture Leisure and Recreation portfolio includes responsibility for a school newsletter and organisation of the Easter Hat Parade.

The school runs an Eminent Speakers Program and, twice a year, well known leaders are invited to address the students about leadership issues. Previous speakers include the Hon R.J.L. (Bob) Hawke, former Prime Minister, Ms Linda Burney, MP and Professor Di Yerbury, Vice Chancellor of Macquarie University. The Governor of NSW, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AO, has been invited to give the next address.

The parliamentary model of student leadership gives students a meaningful context in which to develop and enact the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are required for socially responsible citizens. It offers a broad range of real life experiences and opportunities to all Year 6 students.

• “School parliament has given me more confidence in speaking because as Vice Captain I have to present a report each week and when we discuss motions we are encouraged to present our opinions. In the future I hope to be able to speak more fluently off the top of my head.”
Everyone in Year 6 now has a leadership role

Four years ago the school decided to move away from a traditional model of student leadership based on the election of prefects to one that gave responsibility to everyone in Year 6. In consultation with students, teachers and community members, a leadership model was implemented in which all Year 6 students undertake the role of prefect for 3 weeks.

“It’s good because you get to see what it’s like being a leader.”

“Everyone gets treated the same way.”

“It’s good, because you don’t have to do it for the whole year.” (Year 6 students)

Students are well supported as they take on this task. In Term 4, Year 6 students workshop the role of a student leader with Year 5 students. Early in Term 1, the whole of year 6 attends a three day leadership training camp where they are taught the skills of effective communication, decision making, problem solving, collaboration, assertiveness, and how to achieve their personal best.

“It teaches self confidence.”

“People can learn how to be more grown up about things, be a better leader and a good role model.”

“We learned that when you talk, if you face each other it’s more fluent. We learned how to cooperate with other people.” (Year 6 students)

Students exercise their skills in many places. The Year 6 students organise Stage 3 daily fitness activities and successfully run morning assemblies. They organise tabloid sports activities for the younger students, are involved in Kindergarten orientation and are responsible for many aspects of community liaison.

What happens if students misbehave?

If students have behaved inappropriately they do not lose the opportunity to participate. Instead their turn is postponed.

Results

“I think it is good because we are sharing.”

“Bullying is a big no no!”

“We learn how to deal with problems.” (Year 6 students)

The system has proved to be extremely successful. All Year 6 students gained confidence and lived up to the responsibility to carry out prefect duties effectively. Students are able to articulate the goals of the student leadership program to school visitors and the program is appropriately recognised and highly regarded in the local community.

There has been a dramatic improvement in behaviour both in the classroom and the playground. As a result of their increased positive self image, students are prepared to take more responsibility for their own learning and have become more engaged learners. The rotation of leadership roles maximises opportunities for all Year 6 students to demonstrate their capabilities and experience success.

The leadership system has been incorporated into the school’s culture and becoming a school leader is an automatic expectation of being in Year 6.

All Year 6 students model social responsibility. This impacts positively on the rest of the student body.
The SRC and SEC inform decision-making in many places within the Ulladulla High School community.

SRC and SEC members:

- organise the posting of messages on the schools ‘brag board’ that recognise student achievements and promote the school;
- have participated in a construction project that included raising funds, investigating, developing a plan, detailing costs, seeking approvals and liaising with the construction class to complete the project;
- have input into the school management plan and are involved in the school review;
- attend staff meetings to raise awareness of student issues and make recommendations;
- meet fortnightly with the school principal;
- have worked in partnership with staff and parents to formulate a whole school mission statement and school exit outcomes.

Students collected information to inform themselves and present at these meetings.

They did this by:

- visiting local high schools and viewing their buildings and layout;
- seeking student input at year assemblies and reporting on what they have been doing;
- collating ideas posted in a SRC suggestion box while SRC members were also approached individually;
- conducting scheduled SRC meetings; and
- attending community functions.

- “Being involved in school visits meant we could say more about planning meetings and know what we were talking about.”
- “The SEC is new. We are enjoying having a say on what the future of our school will be like. It feels good to be included.” (SEC members)

The SRC and SEC are well supported and undertake a skills development program.

- “It’s students who act for students instead of teachers who act for teachers. Our peers come and talk to us about anything they thing is important to them.”
- “It gives everyone an opportunity to give something back to the school and a chance for people to get involved.”
- “Involvement in the SRC has allowed me to take part in activities that require a mixing of all year groups. I’ve also gained more confidence in front of large audience.”
- “The teachers can find out about what he kids want when the SRC talks to them.” (SRC Members)
**Participation Research Project**

The National Youth Affairs Research Scheme (through FACSIA) has funded a really exciting project to examine the factors that assist and prevent young people from participating in community and government decision making.

A key part of the project involves the input of young people (18 - 25 years) through a **Youth Advisory Group (YAG)** that will provide advice and feedback to the research team. We’d really appreciate your help raising awareness about the opportunity to take part in the YAG.

The research is particularly interested in understanding the things that help or prevent the participation of:

- Indigenous young people;
- Young people with a disability;
- Young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds;
- Culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including emerging communities;
- Young people who have been under the guardianship of the Minister.

If you know any young people who identify with one of the above groups, and who might be interested in joining the YAG, we’d really appreciate your assistance passing an Expression of Interest form to them.

One of the key roles of the YAG will involve providing advice about the best way to consult with young people during community audits in Sydney, Shepparton (Vic), Darwin and Townsville (Qld). It’s especially important that young people from these locations are involved in the YAG. So if you have connections in these communities we’d really appreciate your assistance!

Ask us for an Expression of Interest form and a one page info sheet on the research project and the details of the YAG. Expression of Interest forms for the YAG are due in by Sunday February 4th and we’d really like some young people from your organisation to be involved! If you have any questions please call or email me.

**Johanna Bell**
Research Consultant
CIRCA: Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia
Level 1, 93 Norton Street, Leichhardt, NSW 2040
Tel: (02) 8585 1353 Fax: (02) 8585 1325
johanna@circaresearch.com.au

**Youth Workers in Schools**

Tim Corney is carrying out a study of the role of youth workers in schools. He is interested to interview youth workers, particularly in Victoria, who have such a role. If interested, contact Tim on: trc@incolink.org.au

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**Last Chance to Share in $12,000 in Cash Prizes**

The competition deadline for this year’s **Play Now Act Now** Creative Competition is Friday 23rd February.

If you live in NSW, are aged 16 to 25 years and have a story to tell about alcohol and other drugs, you should start filming, writing or designing NOW.

**Play Now Act Now** recognises that young people do and will drink alcohol and use other drugs, and sets out to minimise the harms associated with this. As a health education initiative, **Play Now Act Now** invites NSW residents aged 16 to 25 years to produce creative resources that examine issues around the usage of alcohol and other drugs eg health, social, political, moral or ethical issues.

There are four main categories in this year’s competition: Film/Video, Creative Writing, Graphic Design and Mobile Movies. Now in its fifth year, this competition is an exciting opportunity for young people wanting to express themselves through film, design and writing. Finalists from each category will be premiered at the Competition Launch on Wednesday 18th April 2007 @ the Chauvel Cinemas Paddington, before heading off on a statewide tour. Finalists also have a chance to win a share in $12,000 in cash prize.

Entry is free and open to NSW residents aged 16 to 25 years.

**DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES: 23RD FEBRUARY 2007**

For entry forms and more information contact **Play Now Act Now**: Katrina Douglas, Project Manager on: phone: 02 9361 5318 or k.douglas@metroscreen.org.au or check out the website www.playnowactnow.net.au

**Play Now Act Now** is a collaboration between NSW Health and Metro Screen.

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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** and **Student Action Teams**.

Check in occasionally!
Friends of Connect

By subscribing at a higher rate, the following have helped keep Connect going. We gratefully acknowledge receipt of the following contributions since the last issue of Connect:

Supporting Subscribers ($50 for a year):
- Helen Butler, Smiths Gully (Vic)
- Julie Fisher, Tasmanian DoE, Hobart (Tas)
- Peter Mildenhall, Kangaroo Ground (Vic)
- Tony Knight, North Carlton (Vic)

Sustaining Subscribers ($100 for two years):
- Matt Davis, Knox City Council, Wantirna Sth (Vic)

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**MATERIALS:**

Back issues of *Connect* ($4 single; $6 double issue). Circle issue/s required: $ ...........

- Cross-referenced index to contents of *Connect* back issues ($3) $ ...........

***SPECIAL OFFER: Any calendar year of Connect back issues (6 issues) ($12) *** $ ..........

Miscellaneous Resources:

- 2005! Student Councils & Beyond ($33; $27.50 for *Connect* subscribers) $ ...........
- 2006! Student Action Teams ($33; $27.50 for *Connect* subscribers) $ ...........
- NEW! Reaching High ($33; $27.50 for *Connect* subscribers) $ ...........
- Democracy Starts Here! Junior School Councils at Work (1996) Case studies of Primary School SRCs ($6.60 or $11 for two copies) $ ...........

Foxfire Resources:

- Sometimes a Shining Moment (Wigginton) ($22) $ ...........
- Foxfire: 25 Years (Doubleday) ($22) $ ...........

Documents:

- Photocopies of the following documents: $ ...........
- Cross-referenced Index to photocopies of documents ($3) $ ...........

(All prices include GST + postage and packaging within Australia) Materials Sub-total: $ ...........

**TOTAL ENCLOSED:** $ ...........