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Student Councils & Beyond

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& Incorporating the PASTA Newsletter

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Why does Connect exist?

Connect has been published since 1979.

It aims to:

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

Cover:

School Councils and Beyond.

Information in this issue: pages 13-14.

This Issue:

It was with considerable excitement that we took the final layout of the new Connect book ‘Student Councils and Beyond’ to press this month! We’ve been working on this book for some time, carefully selecting and editing articles from about the last 15 years of Connect.

The motivation for this publication arises from strong interest in more effective ways for students to be able to organise and play a significant role in school decision-making. To some extent, these ideas were focused in Connect 145-146 (February 2004) where we were “challenging Student Councils to take the next step”. Some teacher and student workshops around this issue were also evidence of dissatisfaction with traditional approaches and a commitment to develop and support new forms of student participation in school governance.

But in putting that issue of Connect together and in preparing for those workshops, it also became apparent that the themes had been emerging over a longer period: in work on Student Council structures, in the development of Student Action Teams, in ruMAD?’s commitment to ‘change not charity’, and in much earlier training approaches that challenged tokenistic and limited practices. We kept referring back to earlier articles from Connect, but these were scattered through many years and were perhaps hard to find ... and some more recent subscribers may not have had access to these at all.

So, Student Councils and Beyond unearths and structures these existing stories and resources. In most cases, they are presented as they first appeared; in some articles, we have taken the opportunity to update the writing slightly or to add perspectives from further experience. The core of the book remains the challenges and strategies compiled in 2004, but we’ve added training materials from the early 90s, some meeting guidelines that go back, in their original form, to the early 80s and so on. It’s a substantial book: 108 pages, spiral bound to allow copying of resource material for your use with Student Councils.

Information on pages 13 and 14 of this issue tells you how to get a copy. We’ve kept the cost as low as possible (just covering the printing and postage), and we’re offering current subscribers to Connect a substantial discount. (If in doubt about your subscription status, check your Connect wrapper, or e-mail or phone to ask.) Please also spread the word about the book; we don’t have the capacity to do a big publicity push. It would be great to sell out the initial print run and have to reprint!

Meanwhile, school practices keep developing; this issue contains a long and detailed account from a primary school in Adelaide which could well have been included in School Councils and Beyond.

The next issue of Connect will be a big double issue, but delayed a little until October. We’d love to read there about what you are doing!

Roger Holdsworth
In 2002, Student Voice at Brighton Primary School consisted only of a very traditional Student Representative Council (SRC), which was ‘bogged down’ in tokenism and the never-ending cycle of fundraising for charities. Things needed to change and what follows describes the journey we have taken over the past two and a half years towards improving Student Voice in our school.

Brighton Primary School is located 16 km from the Adelaide GPO in the beachside suburb of Brighton. The school is composed of students from Reception to Year 7 and enrolment numbers hover around 500 students. The school includes a Centre for Hearing Impaired Children and approximately 25% of students are School Card holders. The school prides itself on its service to the local community and on the ties it has established with that community. It holds to a tradition of open and democratic decision making in all areas of school life.

The school also has a strong tradition of methodically teaching a Civics course to all students based on a scope and sequence that was developed from the *Discovering Democracy* Kit materials that were distributed to all schools in the late 1990s. This course work develops the students’ understandings of the history, notions and philosophies of the Australian democratic system of government.

To complement this work, the school wanted to implement a practical and ‘hands on’ way of giving students the opportunity to put the Civics theory learning from the scope and sequence, into meaningful practice.

Civics and Citizenship Education at Brighton has been steered by a small team of teachers who have undergone training and development in this area. The composition of team membership has altered over time, but has been steered by the same person over the course of the development of the Student Voice program. In 2002, the team investigated models of Student Voice programs in other school sites. Data and information were collected from these study visits and used to construct home grown training and development for our own staff.

Following this, staff discussed the idea of commencing Student Voice at the school and it was decided, to begin with, that a new model of Student Voice would run alongside the existing SRC.

In 2003, the Student Voice groups established were classroom based and facilitated by the class teacher. Only years 4-7 were included in the Student Voice program at this stage. Groups met at a time convenient for the class teacher and involved themselves in gardening, intra school sports, monitoring the use of power and energy, recognition awards to other students for achievements, supporting the RSPCA, supporting an orphanage in Bali and refugee awareness and support. At the end of the year, the work undertaken was reviewed, (taking care to include student viewpoints!) and recommendations were drawn up for the continuation and expansion of the Student Voice program for 2004.

Staff and students felt it necessary for the SRC to continue alongside the Student Voice groups, now known as Student Power groups (a name chosen and adopted by the students by popular vote), but its role and function began to change in order to dovetail into the Student Power groups’ roles and functions. The accompanying diagram (next page) describes the way the SRC now works at Brighton.

One of the most significant changes to the SRC was the way in which it was elected. The services of the Australian Electoral Commission were sought to conduct an education program about the running of democratic elections in Australia and the preferential voting system, for all students in years 3 to 7. Following the education program, the AEC conducted real life elections complete with ballot papers, electoral rolls and polling booths. Students nominating as Class Representatives for the SRC ran small election campaigns within their own classes and stood for election. Junior primary students conducted their own election campaigns within their own
classes. Once an SRC team was elected an induction program was undertaken by these students as outlined in this second chart.

**SRC Induction Program 2004**

- Introduce each other — toss a ball/bean bag. If you catch it, tell the group your name, class and something about yourself.
- Read the Cockatoo Island materials. Draw out how an SRC is like a Parliament of Birds and the rationale for such a structure. Brainstorm what it is that SRC should do. DEFINE the role of SRC for 2004 in the light of Student Power group functions for this year. Define how the SRC form the links from the Student Power groups to the other governing bodies of the school i.e Staff, Principal and Governing Council.
- Chairperson, Minute Taker and Observer — do we want to elect these people or create a roster and share the work around? What are the roles/responsibilities of these people? Other people to be elected to the roles of "ambassadors" to Staff, Principal, and Governing Council.
- JP SRC Chairperson and Minute Taker — do we want to elect permanent people (on a termly basis) to do this or roster to share the work around? What are their roles and responsibilities?
- The Class Meeting Books — explain how these work and the importance of insisting your class hold regular meetings and that SRC Reps need to bring these books to meetings without fail.
- Question Time: Any notes taken during this session to be typed up for recording purposes of the SRC.
The use of the Cockatoo Island materials, produced by the Australian Parliamentary Office, played a pivotal part in the induction program. During the induction, students were given opportunity to discuss the nature or roles within the SRC and the inherent responsibilities that go with them. It was stressed that the role of SRC was not to become overly involved in the job of fundraising for charities as a major focus. The SRC is encouraged to organise fundraisers and to place monies raised into the SRC fund. It then becomes the task of the SRC to write to the charities or groups they are interested in supporting, requesting them to apply for a donation from the Brighton Primary School SRC Fund. In effect, the Brighton Primary School SRC has become another brand of Student Power group.

The Student Power Year 4-7 groups for 2004 were:

- **Power Softball**: Students learn the skills involved and then teach to other students in lunch time sessions.
- **Peer Tutors**: Students work in co-operation and collaboration with JP class room teachers to help younger students in their learning.
- **Power of Music**: Students learning music and songs to perform at special community events and local Kindergarten.
- **Weather Watch**: Students involved in using meteorological equipment to measure temperature, rain, wind velocity etc and using the data to report to television station NWS 9.
- **Dance Group**: Students developed health hustles to teach other students and to lead them in the warm up for Sports Day. They also developed small concerts to perform at assemblies.
- **Asia Group**: Students learned about Asian arts and crafts and the cultural relevance of these. They taught their skills and developed activities for other classes to be involved in.
- **Gardening Group**: Students designed and redeveloped a garden in the school grounds after researching plants and gardening through contact with the local Council and visiting officers at the Belair National Park.
- **Sports Forum**: Students taught skills and developed tournaments held at lunchtimes for volleyball, hockey, hand tennis, hand ball and basketball.
- **Peer Mediators**: Students undertook training sessions and provided mediation at lunchtimes for the student community.
- **Lost Property**: Students sorted all property and attempted to reunite lost things with owners. Data was collected about lost property and used in school newsletters to inform parents about the problem.
- **ITAG (Information Technology Action Group)**: Students in this group were responsible for assisting younger students during their computer sessions. They maintained the cleanliness of the computer suite, performed trouble shooting activities, set up ICT stations around the school and worked on developing the school web site.
- **BPS Ambassadors**: Students conducted tours of the school for new and prospective parents and students, developed a new school brochure, logo and colours and worked on organising sponsors and prizes for the school Walkathon.
- **AUSLAN Group**: Students learned signing and how to sign to songs to perform publicly. They taught some signing to other classes.
- **Library VIP Group**: Students in this group were responsible for organizing the 25th Anniversary Party for Mem Fox’s Possum Magic. They also conducted the Book Week Assemble, ran the annual Book Fair, helped in organising the Premier’s Reading Challenge, assisted with lunch-time borrowing and in purchasing fiction material for the Library collection.
- **Environmental Group**: Took on the care of the Brighton Primary School Peace Garden by weeding, repairing, and tidying keeping the environment safe and healthy for all to enjoy.
- **School Image Group**: Covered the events in other groups and reported them in the school newsletter.

Junior Primary (JP) classes initiated Student Power Groups in their own classes, with class teachers facilitating groups at times convenient to their class programs, similar to the model used for Student Voice in 2003 for year 4-7 students. Junior Primary Students were involved in ‘Acknowledging the Achievements and Successes of Others’, developing ‘Play Boxes’ to be used in class work shop times, and ‘Gardening’.

Beliefs underlying all of the work done in Student Power are that:

- Students are able to make serious and important decisions;
- Students need the opportunities to develop and nurture the skills need to do valuable things for their school and wider communities;
- Students’ work in Student Power groups forms a valuable part of their learning;
- Students need to be supported to carry out work in their Student Power groups;
- Students need to be provided with opportunities to explore and develop their leadership and organisational skills in creative and innovative ways;
• Students need the opportunity to participate in the life of the school and to share in the decision making processes.

• Students learn to respect others by being respected and are given opportunities to be heard and valued, opening the door to life-long learning.

To support the facilitation of Student Power Groups, all teachers were supplied with a pack of materials which included a copy of *Acting for Change* manual (Australian Youth Research Centre, Faculty of Education, University of Melbourne) and a blank copy of the Brighton Primary School Student Power Group Action Plan. This planning document allowed everyone in the Student Power group to state the group’s aims and objectives, rationale for the group, how reporting to others in the community would occur, strategies, responsibilities and timelines for completing tasks, ways of linking with other groups both inside and outside of the school, listing resources needed and how evaluation will occur. The document also provided a checklist of possible skills that might be developed by students through their involvement with the group.

The skills include:
• Looking up phone numbers
• Making telephone calls
• Taking notes
• Finding an address
• Writing letters and e-mail
• Managing funding
• Using a microphone
• Speaking confidently
• Using effective body language
• Writing for publications
• Drawing up surveys
• Presenting data
• Liaising with school administration
• Identifying school decision makers and approaching them

Civics and Citizenship Education
Policy Development Sheet

Record on the Y chart ideas that relate to what is happening at BPS in Civics and Citizenship Education.

**LOOKS LIKE**

- Celebrations/ assemblies
- Excursions, guest speakers
- History ... mechanics
- Student driven, cross age groups
- Reports—newsletters (language development)
- Planning — strategic and manageable
- Time lines
- Active participants

**FEELS LIKE**

- Voting (AEC)
- Consensus
- Decision making
- Interviewing
- Prioritizing
- Purposeful discussion
- Problem solving
- Negotiating
- Goal setting
- Celebrations/assemblies

**SOUNDS LIKE**

- Sense of realism
- Discerning
- Evolving and in flux
- Risk taking
- Developing connections
- Valuing differences
- Sense of achievement
- Authentic
- Ownership
- Empowerment
- Self esteem
- Confidence
- Positive feedback
- Being valued
- Respect
- Celebrations/assemblies

The document also provided a checklist of possible skills that might be developed by students through their involvement with the group.

The skills include:
• Looking up phone numbers
• Making telephone calls
• Taking notes
• Finding an address
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• Managing funding
• Using a microphone
• Speaking confidently
• Using effective body language
• Writing for publications
• Drawing up surveys
• Presenting data
• Liaising with school administration
• Identifying school decision makers and approaching them
To gauge the success of the Student Power program at the school, students and staff participated in surveys which involved the use of Y charts and using De Bono’s Six Thinking Hats. The data collected was presented to the school community to discuss as a policy development statement sheet, also presented as a Y chart as in the diagram on the previous page.

Students were also asked their opinions about the success or otherwise of Student Power by way of a survey. Further, remembering that parents and caregivers are an important part of the school community, information sessions were offered to inform them about the philosophies and practicalities of Student Power and to allow them the opportunity to put forward, along with staff, their ideas towards developing a vision of Student Voice in the school.

All the data collected helped to formulate the Brighton Primary School Civics and Citizenship Education Agreement. This Agreement describes our belief that Civics and Citizenship Education assists students to understand the heritage and relevance of Australian political and legal systems to everyday life, and that it develops their capacities to be active and effective citizens now and in the future.

The Agreement outlines the way we run a simultaneous ‘two pronged’ program, one ‘prong’ focusing on Civics Knowledge, and the other on developing the skills needed to be an effective citizen.

The Civics knowledge entails:
- The teaching of units of work, usually collaboratively planned and taught via RBL methodology based on those featured in the Discovering Democracy kit and web site.
- Creatively teaching these units of work R-7 according to the Brighton Primary School Scope and Sequence Document, enhancing studies with the use of excursions, guest speakers, hands on experiences.
- Recording the units taught in the Civics and Citizenship Passport document kept in each student’s school record folder.

The other prong of the program entails the following points as they relate to Student Power:
- The establishment of Student Power groups which are cross age, R-3 and 4-7, overseen by all staff members and meeting once a fortnight for one hour at an agreed time to conduct business.
- Staff being supported by training and development at the beginning of the school year, access to web sites such as R.U.Mad?, the Student Action Teams support book-let, and teacher support pack issued at the beginning of each school year to aid facilitation of meetings.
- Using the Australian Electoral Commission to conduct training sessions and polling for students’ executive body elections.
- This being a student driven program.
- The Student Power Program being authentic, dynamic and constantly in a state of flux, where students are encouraged to be risk takers with high self esteem and who have a sense of achievement. They are confident, empowered, discerning, able to question, interview, discuss, negotiate and reach consensus, problem solve, set goals, prioritise and organise. They are also able to value difference and to learn respect.
- Reporting to parents and caregivers and the wider community via displays, the school web page and school newsletter.
- Regularly reviewing the program.
- Celebrating successes by way of displays, special assemblies and other events.

It is also stated in the Agreement document that a Civics Team is set up with a driver to meet as the need arises to deal with any issues or problems issuing from the running of Student Power and to be responsible for the documentation of all aspects of the Brighton Primary School Civics and Citizenship Education program.

It is imperative to the further success of the Student Power program that attention is paid to the fact it is a dynamic program and is always in a state of flux, dependent on continual regular review which seeks input from all stake holders in the school community. Its success depends on the commitment of staff to support the program and to maintain their own professional development in this area, as well as committing time and energy into enthusing students to engage in these groups. Giving attention to the failures and difficulties of the program, as well as celebrating its many successes, is crucial to the future well being of Student Power.

New Student Power groups have been formed for 2005. Many of the groups on offer to students to participate in were available in 2004. New or different groups are:
- **BPS History group**, which focuses on the history of the school and the local community;
- **Canteen group** which assists in the Canteen in serving as well as beautifying its surrounds and assisting with food ordering etc.
- **Animal Care group** which will learn about pet care and teach it to others as well as being involved in activities to support the work of the RSPCA.

- **Free Time Activities Group** which learns bridge and other challenging card games, to teach to others in a lunchtime club.

- **Front foyer decorators** who contribute to a display including a Power Point presentation detailing the learning that happens at Brighton for viewing by parents and visitors to the school.

- **Science group** which covers weather watch, power consumption and conduct science activities for others in the school to participate in.

- **Brighton Primary School Student Newspaper** who assume responsibility for covering events at school to document and present to the rest of the student community as well as providing other activities for students to do that would normally form part of a newspaper.

- **Senior Primary (JP) groups** have expanded this year, but are still being conducted by class teachers in their own class rooms at times that suit them best. Groups that JP students are involved in this year are:
  - **The Mini Ambassadors** who make new students and their families feel welcome at Brighton. This group comprises two classes working together.
  - **The Jump Rope for Heart Group** who will learn fitness games with skipping ropes and teach them to others and hold a special day in regard to this. This group involves four classes teaming together.
  - **The Entertainers group** who will learn songs, dances and perform plays etc to entertain other classes and people in the wider community.
  - **Sport for Peers group** who will learn various PE skills and teach to others.
  - **The JP AUSLAN group** who will teach the signing they learn to others.
  - **The Lost Property group** who will repeat the role performed by members of this group in 2004.

As for 2004, students listed preferentially the names of the groups they wished to join in 2005. The Civics Team sorted students into groups trying to place them in a group which was one of their preferences. In 2004, this process was an extremely smooth one. However, in 2005 it was disastrous. From their experiences in 2004, students had formed ideas about which would be the most popular groups to join. As a result, some students did not get any of their preferences and were allocated to smaller groups needing numbers. This upset many teachers and students alike and it became necessary to set in place a strategy for allowing students with a grievance to change groups. This was achieved by open staff communication and consensus, which is essential to the success of the program.

The Civics Team needed to be attuned to occurrences and issues emerging from the Student Power program. A good example of this is the current issue of changing the name of our Student Voice program from Student Power, which could carry some negative connotations, to another more positive sounding name. Student and staff input has been sought in suggesting nominations for a new name. These will be voted upon shortly by all in the school community in a referendum.

Overall, Student Power at Brighton Primary School has been a resounding success. This has rested upon the fact that it has been included as part of the School’s Site Management Plan and is highly valued by the entire school community. It has also been dependent on the work of the Civics Team, which has provided training and development to all staff, informed and educated parents and caregivers of the benefits of Student Voice, and tirelessly consulted with the school community and sought feedback and data to inform decision-making about the future directions of this most worthwhile program and documented is growth.

It is a program which everyone at Brighton recognises as being in a constant state of change and evolution, but it has the enormous capacity for equipping all students with the skills, knowledge and experience they need to be active and effective citizens both now, and in the future.

**Julie Murray**
BPS Civics Team Co-ordinator
Brighton Primary School
1 Highet Avenue, Brighton SA 5048
jmurray@brightonps.sa.edu.au
The last weekend of April saw us preparing the group that will represent Australia at the 69th National Student Council Conference in America. Although only a small group this year, it was still an intense time. We started Saturday afternoon with a full afternoon of briefings for the whole families as to what the purpose of the trip was, what the delegates would be doing whilst overseas, and what we expected of them as our representatives. It also gave the parents an opportunity to ask questions about issues that concerned them.

That night after the families had left, it was further briefing for the delegates. This involved exploring individual strengths and weaknesses, what they needed to do to ensure that school work was not missed, group and individual expectations, more detail of what was involved in attending the American National Conference, and what they needed to do for the presentations that they would be making to other students whilst at the conference. Sunday saw more work on presentations and an in-depth look at what they could expect from the National Leadership camp.

A number of delegates from both the 2003 and 2004 SRC tours were able to assist us with this preparation and I would sincerely like to thank them for their invaluable input into this vital process.

Early May saw me visit Riverside Girls High School in Sydney to assist their SRC with a training day. This was a very enjoyable day, and a lot was gained by all who attended (see page 10 for a review of the day). As with all such days, the only complaint was that the day wasn’t long enough. If you or your school is interested in a similar day, then feel free to contact me. Contact details can be obtained from our website (see below).

May also saw me attending a meeting of the NSW Central Coast SRC as a guest speaker. A highlight of the day was the report given by the students of Berkeley Vale Public School on the leaders’ breakfast that they had conducted at their school. Special guests included local politicians and other high profile members of the community. Hopefully next issue I can include their full report.

Following up on the success of Fresh Start earlier in the year, we have decided to run an in-service for NSW advisers on Friday, 28th October in Sydney. A draft program, together with cost, etc is available and can be obtained by emailing me (suepage@ozemail.com.au) or the PASTA secretary (esheerin@ozemail.com.au). The advice we received from the participants at Fresh Start was that this was probably the best time for this activity so we hope to see you there.

Ken Page
President
When I arrived at school on Tuesday 10th May for our SRC Training Day I never expected it to transform our Student Representative Council. Since our day with Ken Page from PASTA, the SRC coordinators, along with the vice-captain and I, have worked together to implement some of the great ideas that were brought up on the day to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our SRC.

The workshop allowed us to explore what it means to be a student leader and evaluate our own personal leadership styles. It also gave us the opportunity to reflect on our own SRC and evaluate its effectiveness.

Ken offered us very worthwhile suggestions about improving the running, structure and reputation of the SRC from his experiences in being an SRC coordinator at other schools. Ken also proposed many initiatives to help our SRC be more ‘in tune’ to what our student body wants and needs at school. He also proposed ways we can make our SRC run more smoothly as well as how to establish the SRC within the school, making it an effective and productive body.

The day brought up many suggestions about the running and structure of our SRC, which our girls readily absorbed and developed into their own ideas that suited our particular situation at RGHS. It was a fantastic opportunity for our SRC to be exposed to new ideas about leadership and about the way other SRCs function.

Thank you Ken! We have all benefited greatly from such a fantastic and informative day. I am only sorry that this year will be my last and that I won’t be around to see our new initiatives to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our SRC become ‘culture’.

Sally Macintyre
School Captain

As an inexperienced teacher and new to student leadership, it was fantastic to get Ken Page involved in the training of our SRC. Ken is the President of PASTA (the Professional Association of SRC Teacher Advisors) and through the publication Connect, Riverside Girls’ High School joined PASTA to take advantage of opportunities such membership provides. Ken conducted a leadership training session over three 75-minute periods.

Session 1 included fantastic ‘getting to know you’ exercises and ice breakers. Many students on the SRC do not know members from different years and this created a group dynamic that was positive and supportive of all members. The exercises also encouraged introspection about what happens in leadership, the qualities that are required and some of the problems that exist for leaders. For example, in some exercises students had to work as a group, some students took a lead, but all had to work together to achieve an outcome. Difficulties that became apparent in these exercises were how to deal with competing needs and demands from so many people/directions.

Sessions 2 and 3 involved discussion on how to represent your constituents. How do SRC members avoid the issues of ‘privilege’, gain trust amongst students, canvass their needs and promote issues? Lots of great suggestions arose from the group and they seemed much more inspired. It gave them something concrete on which to build, to take ownership of the roles and responsibilities and organise themselves for now and future student bodies. We also outlined how a meeting should be run to be effective, and canvassed organisational options for the SRC to consider.

As the coordinator I took a lot from the sessions also: how best I can organise groups, what my expectations of the SRC are and how I can assist them. Lots of follow-up is to occur but we are developing a much better sense of where to from here.

So, thanks Ken heaps: a most worthwhile training day. In hindsight, a full day would have allowed for some resolution of the issues/concerns raised by the group but then again the onus is now on them – perhaps where it should be, as it is their SRC.

Paul Jones
SRC Adviser, RGHS
The key to the learning process in any activity is not necessarily in the activity itself, but in the discussion that follows after the actual activity. This discussion, or ‘processing’ is what ties together the lessons that are learned in the activity. By discussing what happened, the group should be able to summarise what they personally learned from the activity, as well as provide some new insights of which they weren’t aware while doing the activity.

Because processing is so dynamic, here are a few hints:

1. Begin the discussion by soliciting comments about things that happened during the activity. Often, this will get the discussion flowing very naturally. A question as simple as: “Mitch, when this happened, you responded by doing such-and-such. Why?” can lead to many interesting insights. Other good questions that may be used by the facilitator include:

   **Describing:**
   - What went on?
   - What did you see?
   - How do/did you feel about it?
   - What are the facts?
   - Could you be more specific?
   - Who says so?
   - Who else had the same experience?
   - Where is it reported?
   - Who reacted the same/differently?
   - What did you hear?
   - What did you observe?
   - What is most real?

2. Use good listening skills throughout processing. Eye contact can do much to encourage group members to feel comfortable during discussion. Also, just as you make mental notes during the activity, make them also during the discussion so that you can refer to specific comments later.

3. Reiterate important points during the discussion. By paraphrasing what the group members are saying, it emphasises these points and shows that you are genuinely listening to what is being said.

4. Try not to have too much of a pre-set agenda going into the discussion. Wandering discussion can sometimes lead to some very good points. If certain points aren’t brought up that you feel are vital to the activity, you may want to steer the direction back that way, or simply mention them at the close of the activity.

5. Don’t fear silence during the discussion. Often, people need a few seconds to think after a question is asked, so give it time to set in. Although it may seem difficult, silence can be valuable. It will put pressure on some quieter group members to speak up when they see that the usual discussion leaders aren’t dominating the discussion.

(The final instalment will look at the role that games can play in teaching your students about themselves and the people they work with.)

Charles Kingston
USA to OZ Exchange Visit 2005: Part 2

Last issue, the members of Narara Valley High School gave their thoughts on the experiences they shared with the American delegates on their recent visit to Australia. This issue, two students from Asquith Girls High School give their perspective on this visit. Our thanks go to both schools for their contributions.

On Saturday 26th March, a plane arrived in Sydney carrying 16 loud and keen American students from New Jersey, California, New York and Pennsylvania. They were met by Narara Valley students and spent the Easter Weekend on the Central Coast.

On, Monday, they traveled down to Hornsby to ex-student Amy Bott’s house for a BBQ. We all headed to Amy’s place with great anticipation about meeting the strange creatures from the other side of the world. After starting to mix around and talk to them, we discovered that they weren’t really alien at all. They were just like us, except they spoke funny! (and for some reason seemed to think that we were the ones who needed to learn to “speak properly”, as American student Tyler put it!). This was quite an exciting time for everyone as we got to meet our new brother or sister for the week.

“The billet who stayed with me was Michelle, and we stayed up half the night talking. Still, we were up bright and early Tuesday morning so I could take her to meet my friends.”

They next time everyone met again was on Tuesday, where the American students and host families, as well as various other students from a variety of schools came to Asquith to spend a day participating in leadership activities as well as talking about and comparing all of our schools. It was rather interesting and benefiting especially, and that opened all of our eyes to the fact that we are similar to them in the things we do at school especially, and that you can become quite good friends with someone in only a few days. While they were staying with us, we got to take them to our sporting, dance or other outside-of-school commitments, which gave them a chance to see what sorts of activities we participate in in Australia. It was great experience, and I know that some of the other AGHS host family students are keen to do a tour to America in the next few years. Having an extra student around the house was a good experience and if you get the chance you should go for it!

Ashley Edmonds: Year 11
Libbi Brickley: Year 10
Asquith Girls High School, NSW

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 and distributed bi-monthly as a supplement to Connect magazine.

http://www.hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/
A new and exciting publication from **Connect** builds on themes that have recently been developed and documented in this newsletter and in training and professional development days throughout Australia.

Many people (students, teachers, administrators and consultants) who have been involved with supporting the active participation of students in education decision-making have been increasingly concerned that traditional Student Councils in both primary and secondary schools have often failed to deliver. They have been criticised as:

- exclusive and elitist bodies;
- bogged down in token issues;
- unconnected to the broad body of students, school decision-making and other student groups;
- sitting outside the curriculum; and
- being ineffective.

However, current educational theory and practice indicates that it is extremely important that students are active participants and partners in all aspects of school decision-making – in both curriculum and school governance areas.

**Connect** magazine has documented and resourced all these aspects of active student participation for over 25 years. Now **Connect** brings together a collection of ideas that **challenge you** to go beyond criticisms of ineffective Student Councils.

This book brings together in one volume all those important articles that you’ve searched for, but have been scattered through back issues of **Connect**. These articles were originally published between 1990 and 2005, and are now collected as 108 pages of stories, strategies and worksheets.

**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.

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Primary and Secondary School
Student Action Teams Tackle Environment Issues

Students from ten primary and secondary schools in Melbourne’s Darebin area have come together to identify and tackle local environmental issues. At a recent Student Forum, teams of six students from each of the schools began a process of forming Student Action Teams (within specific classes or through their JSCs/SRCs) that will research, teach and act on issues identified by their schools.

A smaller group of five of these schools had already begun the process by working with local government and community environmental organisations. Each had identified an environmental area (water, waste, air etc) in which they were to become ‘experts’. These expert groups studied their issues at school and then met to work out how to introduce these ideas to the other schools at the first large Student Forum.

The Forum in May started with a mapping exercise: students first located their schools within the Darebin Local Government Area. They then drew a rough map of the area around their school, locating streets, streams, factories, parklands and so on. Against these, they began identifying and mapping possible environmental issues. Littering, air pollution, and water quality were consistent observations, but students also stressed the importance of biodiversity through local parklands and the need to preserve this.

In inter-school groups, the students then brainstormed about the impact of these environmental issues - at personal/family, school and whole community levels. At this point, each school group made a commitment to work around these issues, with the belief that they, as students, could have an impact on local and wider practices.

Finally each school group began to formulate plans to research and investigate the critical environmental issue or issues they wished to pursue. They made some guesses as to what the main issues were in their schools, but also posed this as a research question: what are the issues that others within our schools think are most important and why?

The groups will now carry out research around these questions, and then into the nature and causes of their environmental issues, reporting back at another Student Forum in August. It is planned that this will then lead them into an action phase later in the year, before a third Forum to report on and celebrate achievements.

This approach builds on Student Action Team approaches used by and within this group in 2003 around local Traffic Safety issues (see earlier issues of Connect for reports on this).

For more information about this project, contact:
Leigh Black
Bell Primary School
Oakover Road, Preston 3072
or e-mail: black.leigh.r@edumail.vic.gov.au

WE HAVE A VOICE

St Charles Borromeo Primary School in Templestowe (in Melbourne’s north east) has begun a Leadership Professional Development program for Grade 6 students who are responsible for the Student Representative/Junior School Councils of schools in the Manningham Local Government precinct. The primary schools involved are Our Lady of the Pines, St Peter and Paul’s, St Kevin’s, St Clement of Rome, Templestowe Heights Primary as well as St Charles. Each school is represented by six students and a staff member who is responsible for their school SRC/JSC. This program has been made possible by funding through School Focused Youth Services.

The first student forum, held at the end of May, saw the students present information about the current student representation in their particular schools, listen to students from the other schools, discuss what makes a good representative, and brainstorm what is working and what changes they would like to make.

Roger Holdsworth has facilitated this process of student participation and action. He has been assisted by Kate Wilde from Manningham Youth and Family Services. The students have been challenged to look at best practice and decide for themselves what direction they see as positive for their particular school communities.

They have also chosen what professional development they would like from the second student forum. This includes committee organisation, time-lining of action and responsibility sharing.

The feedback from the first forum has seen the students very positive about the possibility they have to make change happen in their school community. They see that they have a voice.

Sue Cahill
St Charles Borromeo Primary School
scahill@stcharls.melb.catholic.edu.au
ruMAD? in Tasmania!
Are You Making A Difference?

The Tasmanian Centre for Global Learning is working with the Education Foundation to trial a student-led, values-based education program, ruMAD?, in Tasmanian schools.

Last year ruMAD? ran in 300 Victorian schools reaching over 50,000 students. Now, five schools have been selected to pilot MAD Projects in Tasmania and over 2,000 students participated in Tasmania’s first ever MAD Day on Friday 13th May.

The Program fits closely with the Tasmanian Essential Learnings curriculum framework and develops student engagement in school and community-based social action as part of the school curriculum and generally runs over a full year. ruMAD? develops student engagement in school and community-based social action, involving parents and local business in ‘real world’ action projects. It raises awareness around community issues, giving students a chance to brainstorm, research, plan, organise and run community projects that achieve visible outcomes.

Schools running MAD Projects use MADDay, a designated statewide day, to celebrate ‘making a difference’ and promote their projects; other schools use the day to raise awareness of the concepts behind ruMAD?.

School Support
There is a range of resources available to assist schools in implementing MAD activities. These include detailed curriculum manuals, a website (www.rumad.org.au), professional training, a School’s Coordinator and an Advisory Group. The manuals and website have been developed by the Education Foundation over a number of years. The Tasmanian School’s Coordinator and Advisory Group are based at the Tasmanian Centre for Global Learning in Battery Point.

The Advisory Group members represent a range of community organisations and sectors (youth, environment, global education, human rights and social justice, education, Essential Learnings) and have volunteered to provide resources, advice and mentoring to participating schools.

Pilot MAD Projects
Youngtown Primary and Riverside High in Launceston, and Princes Street Primary, Rose Bay High and Taroona High in Hobart were selected to pilot MAD Projects. Princes Street is unusual in that all teachers decided to implement projects, all of which are being undertaken by teams of two or more classes to utilise the existing school ‘buddy’ system.

The ruMAD? curriculum is designed to help students identify what it is that they would like to see changed in their community - to identify how they can ‘make a difference’ in society. They start with a values workshop to determine their shared core values and their common areas of interest. From this they speculate what they would like the world/community/school to look like - their ‘big possibility’. Students are then led through ‘hypotheticals’ which allow them to look behind symptoms to underlying causes and to reflect on possible actions and whether these might alleviate the symptoms or the causes – the ‘charity or change’ challenge.

The table opposite summarises the results for two of the seven project groups at Princes Street Primary School and shows how they publicised their projects on MAD Day.

Other budding MAD Projects at the school include: a music and drama performance on war and its effects; responsible pet ownership; improving the local environment through composting and worm farming; making a difference to children in the local hospital; and water conservation at home and at school.

Having established their topic, the students will be going out into the community to undertake research, investigate needs and possible solutions. They will then be able to plan their projects and enlist community organisations and local businesses to their cause.

The students at Princes Street Primary have adopted the ruMAD? Program with enthusiasm and, given such a diversity of topics, their MAD Projects are sure to create great community interest. A most encouraging and exciting start for what promises to be a very MAD year.

Contact:
Helen Hortle or Karen Reid
The Tasmanian Centre for Global Learning Inc
4 Battery Square,
Battery Point
Tasmania 7004
Ph: (03) 6223 1025 or 0400 824 261
Email: tcgl@vision.net.au
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning teams (classes)</th>
<th>Areas of interest</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Mission statement Big Possibility/ Guiding question</th>
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| 2W and 2/3J             | People in community – aged people and homes for the aged. | • Freedom and people’s rights  
                         |                  | • Tolerance  
                         |                  | • Acceptance of age and respect  
                         |                  | • Connectedness | How can we make a difference to the happiness and worth of the elderly? | Interviews of grandparents. Memory displays. Timelines. Old people’s faces. Letters to Mrs Ling. Photos of Jacquie (volunteer from St Ann’s) talking to the classes. |
| 5/6A and 5B             | Social responsibility of looking after water systems and using water more wisely. Measuring pollutants in Sandy Bay Rivulet. | • Clean air  
                         |                  | • Clean water | How can we inform the public about the pollution in the local rivulet?  
                         |                  | | How can we make a long-term difference to the local rivulet?  
                         |                  | | How can we initiate our own grey water system?  
                         |                  | | We are the Water Warriors! | Display of German grey water system writing and postcards. Murals of pristine Mt Wellington landscapes and human impact and urbanisation. Homemade water catchers, tank of water bugs, photos of pollutant findings. |
School Canteens and SRCs

Video Education Australasia (VEA) has been producing videos for schools for nearly 20 years. It is about to make a program for Food Technology students (Years 10-12). The program will focus on the following areas:

- Food availability and selection in School Canteens;
- Nutrition;
- Influences on making informed choices;
- Redesigning food;
- Designing, implementing and evaluating;
- How modification of food can be made to suit nutritional needs of individual groups.

Ideally the program would like to focus on a case study of a school, preferably at the secondary level, where the SRC has revolutionised the selection of food being offered in the canteen to better reflect a healthy diet. If your school has undergone such a change please contact:

Mark McAuliffe
Executive Producer VEA
(http://www.vea.com.au)
markm@vea.com.au

Count me in!

Count me in! is a guide on conducting social research with children and young people. It looks at a range of issues and practicalities that should be considered when undertaking a research project.

Researchers can use this guide to:

- get a better understanding of the sorts of values that participatory research is characterised by and the skills needed to do research in a participatory way;
- get practical ideas about involving children and young people in all stages of the research process;
- share the meanings of research ideas and terms with children and young people and their carers;
- discuss research processes with children and young people;
- build on ideas about appropriate research methodologies with children and young people;
- inform other researchers.

The guide assumes basic knowledge of social research. It builds on that knowledge to provide practical ideas about how to make research methods participatory for children and young people. It will be useful to both experienced researchers and those with less experience who want to research in a systematic way as part of their everyday work.

Count me in! was developed as part of the NSW Commission for Children and Young People’s TAKING PARTICIPATION seriously kit. This is a resource kit for individuals and organisations who want to help children and young people speak up and participate. The kit is made up of a number of booklets and information sheets full of practical ideas to help organisations get kids involved.

It includes:

- Sharing the stage: an overview of participation;
- Conferences and events;
- Meeting together - deciding together: involving young people in meetings where decisions about their lives are made;
- Checking the scoreboard: checking how well participation is working;
- All aBoard!: involving young people on boards and committees;
- Count me in: involving children and young people in research;
- Involving kids in staff selection;
- Participation: references, models and resources.

You can find these resources at: www.kids.nsw.gov.au/publications/taking.html or by telephoning the Commission on +61 (02) 9286 7276

Jennifer Walters
NSW Commission for Children and Young People

Australasian Association for Progressive and Alternative Education

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2005

4 - 6 July; Preshil School, 12-26 Sackville Street, Kew 3101 (Melbourne)

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Speakers: Professor Stuart Hill (UWS), Professor John Fien (RMIT); Ms Jenny Macklin (Shadow Minister for Education Science and Training)

Details: www.aapae.edu.au

Contact: Christine Price, C/o Currambena, 205 Longueville Road, Lane Cove NSW 2066
or Cecilia Bradley (President AAPAE): 02 6251 3136; president@aapae.edu.au

News and Reviews
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:

AAPAE Newsletter (Australian Association for Progressive and Alternative Education, Lane Cove, NSW) No 7, April 2005

AEU News (Australian Education Union, Vic) Vol 11 Issue 3, February; May 2005

Education Connect (Hunter Institute of Mental Health, NSW) Issue 1; March 2005

Education Views (Department of Education and the Arts, Qld) Vol 14 Nos 6-10; March-May 2005

Immigrants in Time: Life-Patterns 2004 (Dwyer, Smith, Tyler and Wyn) Australian Youth Research Centre Research Report 27; April 2005

Network of Community Activities (Surry Hills, NSW) Annual Report 2004

Participation: Count Me In! (NSW Commission for Children and Young People, NSW)

TLN Journal (Teacher Learning Network, Abbotsford, Vic) Vol 12 No 1; Autumn 2005

Yikes (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic) Vol 4 Edition 3; June 2005

International:

Comparing Learning Systems: the good, the bad, the ugly, and the counter-productive (Roland Meighan; Educational Heretics Press, Nottingham, UK)

Life Learning (Toronto, Ontario, Canada) May-June 2005

Documents

The documents listed in this column may be of general background interest. A photocopy is available for research purposes. The length and cost (to cover copying and postage) is listed. Please order by code number.

A full, computerised index of these documents is now available from Connect for $3; this can be accessed and printed by topic, key-word etc or simply sequentially.

Code Description/Pages/Cost

562 The Significance of Students: Can Increasing ‘Student Voice’ in Schools Lead to Gains in Youth Development? (Dana L Mitra, Penn State University (USA) - Teachers College Records, Vol 106 No 4, April 2004: pp 651-688) (38 pp; $3.80)

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  Case studies of Primary School SRCs ($7 or $12 for two copies) $ ..........
• Students and Work - 1985 Connect reprint booklet #5 ($5)

Foxfire Resources:
• Sometimes a Shining Moment (Wigginton) ($25)
• Foxfire: 25 Years (Doubleday) ($25)
• A Foxfire Christmas (Doubleday hardcover) ($25)

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