Connect
supporting student participation

Students Participating...

in SRCs, JSCs, Networks, Mediation, School Councils...

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This Issue

I recently spent a little time with an enthusiastic group of students in a secondary school in a Victorian regional centre. The students had produced - totally from their own efforts - a magazine to give voice to their frustrations with their education:

... teenagers, who are ultimately going to run society, have nowhere to voice our opinions; and if we try, people tell us we are wrong or crazy ... I really feel that while the school is split into two separate groups, we cannot solve the really big issues which affect us as a whole ... (Strahan Anderson, Voice)

From that frustration and anger, and through the creation of their own voice, the group is now proposing initiatives to transform aspects of their school's practices, and is exploring ways to develop whole-school and classroom collaborative approaches:

... feel that students should have more say in the running of the school and about what we want from an education. Maybe through a student committee set up to deal with issues which concern us such as discipline, welfare, class sizes etc - this way issues which concern us could be raised and then taken to the appropriate committee by representatives of the student body. (as above)

Yet there were substantial paradoxes. First, all of this learning, this production, this enthusiasm, is happening outside classes, in the students' own time. They were pessimistic about their immediate chances of working on these issues as part of their curriculum, but were starting to raise these as issues for longer-term solution. Secondly, and in the context of the vision of the above statement, they were dismissive of the current role of the SRC, seeing it as limited in scope and dealing only with peripheral issues within the school.

The students are highly motivated to take their voices and action further, and have been invited to tell others about their progress. Watch these pages!

In these pages

Some of these issues are specifically addressed in the case studies, accounts and resources included in this issue of Connect. In particular, I wish to pay a special tribute to the ongoing work and writing of Charles Kingston, whose contribution to this issue has been enormous. Charles has been a dynamo within NSW student participation/governance/leadership for over 15 years. During a recent period of serious (and at times life-threatening illness) Charles has been laid-up in hospital, but with his ever-active mind churning out articles, hopes and plans. These are helping to drive the development of a Professional Association (PASTA) as well as the school-based initiatives described in these pages.

We wish Charles a continuing and speedy recovery, and are assured that as he 'gets back on his feet', his productivity, vision and drive will not diminish!

Roger Holdsworth

NEXT ISSUE: #100! - August 1996
Deadline for material: end of July
Mornington Peninsula, Vic

STUDENTS P.A.S.S. TEST

In an historic first for Victorian school students, fifteen Mornington Peninsula secondary schools joined forces earlier this year to form the Peninsula Association of Secondary Students (PASS). The Association held its inaugural meeting at the Community Room at the Frankston Library in March.

PASS was formed in response to the massive interest generated at last year's Youth Forum, when all of the Peninsula's Secondary Colleges sent student representatives to discuss youth issues with experts from around Australia. Karingal Secondary College Student Development Leader, Ross Appleby, organiser of last year's Youth Forum, said that PASS is the result of students "wanting to meet students on other campuses to discuss school and community issues". Mr Appleby said that there was enormous leadership potential in our schools which was not always utilised.

"Whilst many schools have SRCs (Student Representative Councils) these days, in many cases these are not much more than social service fund-raisers. While this is a legitimate function for SRCs, it is not enough if we are to produce the next generation of leaders," he said.

PASS Presidents Kate Le Plastrier (Karingal Secondary College) and Daniel Ussher (Mount Eliza Secondary College), both in year 12, said they were "ecstatic" about PASS.

"We didn't really know what to expect from the meeting; we didn't even know if people would be interested enough to turn up, but we ended up with over thirty students meeting for over three hours until well after ten o'clock at night, and that's some commitment!" said Daniel.

Kate Le Plastrier said, "We expect to have close to twenty campuses represented at our next meeting. St Paul's schools from the private and government systems can have one effective voice. This will not only benefit the student members individually by honing their organisational, public speaking and leadership skills, but it will also have an enormous benefit for the individual schools when these PASS members go back to their own campuses and involve their own fellow students in the decision-making process. Watching these students work with such poise, professionalism and goodwill, having known each other for only a couple of hours, gave me a great sense of pride as an educator."

The Peninsula Association of Students is interested in hearing from organisations or individuals on the Peninsula who may want to 'tap in' to a potential student audience of nearly 10,000 students. President Daniel Ussher said, "There's a great opportunity for us to liaise with lots..."
of community groups; the police, health providers, social groups ... the potential is enormous - and very exciting!"

The Peninsula Association of Secondary Students (PASS) can be contacted through Karingal Secondary College and meets on the last Wednesday of every month at different venues - hosted by the constituent schools.

Karingal Secondary College SRC
Ashleigh Avenue,
Frankston North Vic 3199
Phone (direct to SRC):
(03) 9776 7268
Fax: (03) 9789 0177

Glenmore State High School, Qld

STUDENT REPRESENTATION AT GLENMORE

Since its establishment, Glenmore High School students have accepted the responsibility of contributing to decision making on matters affecting the school community.

The school's current chief decision-making bodies are the School Advisory Council, the Parents and Citizens' Association (with their subcommittees for the Tuckshop, Swim Club and the Ladies Auxiliary Apparel Committee). The major student forums are the formal areas of the Student Council and its associated Senior Committees, and the less formal participatory spheres of the Senior Leaders, Sports Leaders and Inter-Year Leaders.

Student Council

The Student Council is a committee of students for the students. Its main purpose is to give the students a chance to put forward ideas on what they would like to see in their school. It is also a way for the administrators of the school to share their ideas with the student body to try to gain an overall opinion or consensus.

The Student Council consists of the President (who chairs the meetings), the Secretary, the Treasurer, the Senior Committee Representatives and Year Level Representatives, as well as anyone else who would like to attend the meetings. The Council discusses issues involving the school's operation, and also events involving the community such as fundraising.

It is then the duty of the Year Level Representatives to report back to their respective year. These representatives are elected by their year level at the beginning of the school year.

Once the Student Council has made a decision, it then has to be endorsed by the Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C). This is a group of parents, teachers and members of the community whose main role is to fundraise and confirm the school's budget. The P&C also sends feedback to the Education Department on what the school is doing and what is working and what isn't. The P&C runs the Tuckshop and this is where it receives the majority of its income. The money is often spent on student resources or aids in funding sporting teams that have to travel to a competition in another town.

Senior Committees

Each year, Senior Committees, made up of volunteer members, are formed according to student suggestions, each serving a specific purpose. The executive and committee members set aims for the year. In 1996, the Senior Committees and activities are:

Community Service:

collections for Red Shield, Red Cross, World Vision 40-Hour Famine, World Vision Sponsored Child, Care for Kids, Heart Foundation and the Endeavour Foundation;

Environment:

fundraising through the Sunsmart Multi-Draw Raffle, ID production, Sunsmart Walk and grounds improvement;
**Graduation:**
fundraising through an Easter raffle, Silver Circle and car washes, organising and running of the Year 12 Graduation;

**Magazine:**
publishing the 1996 Year Book;

**Social:**
organisation and operation of school dances, and pool party;

**Sport:**
preparation, organisation and clean up of football, athletics and swim carnivals, and the production and sale of icy-cups at the Cross Country.

In addition, the Student Council itself organises and runs other activities.

These committees give seniors a sense of responsibility, cooperation and opportunities for interaction amongst all of the year levels as well as achieving worthwhile academic, social, community and environmental goals. All but a handful of the year 12s are on at least one committee.

This year, Glenmore has changed its student leadership structure in contrast to previous years. A group of seniors fulfilling the criteria of upholding the Code of Conduct, the Dress Code and maintaining a reasonable academic effort, were selected as Senior Leaders. This enabled students to receive the recognition that they deserve for their leadership qualities within the school. The introduction of two School Captain and four School Vice-Captain positions further enhanced the leadership opportunities. Leaders have to complete a Performance Plan for their leadership activities in this, their final year of school.

**School Advisory Council**
Students at Glenmore are represented on committees formed by staff or parents. The School Advisory Council (SAC) is no exception. Since 1993, Glenmore High School has been one of the state schools involved in the Queensland Education Department's trial program of SACs. The SAC is formed of elected representatives of parents, administration, teachers, ancillary staff, community members and students. The SAC advises the P&C and school community groups, like the Student Council, on decisions that need to be made. For example, after considerable discussion in the local schools with the community and government departments, the SAC was consulted on various changes to the local transport arrangements. The most recent of these is the building of a pedestrian/cycle tunnel under Highway 1 beside the school.

The students are therefore involved in many decision-making spheres at many levels. These roles are not restricted to School Captains or committee executives. Any student with desire can represent students on one or more of the Glenmore High School decision-making bodies. Glenmore students are valued for their contribution to their school and their community.

**Stuart Devenish, School Captain**
**Stacey Elmes, School Captain**
**Craig Limkin, SAC Student Representative**
**Narelle Dayton, HOD Social Science**
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**Bathurst High School, NSW**

**Students:** P**U**RSUE **P**OLICY **M**AKE **M**INUTES **R**EPRE**S**ENT **R**ESPONSIBLY

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**A Case Study of Bathurst High School Council**

**School Council: “It’s Not the SRC”**

School Councils are not SRCs. Nor P&C’s (Parents and Citizens Associations). Nor are they the ‘controlling’ bodies of schools in New South Wales. Not every school has one, though more and more NSW schools have established them since their tentative beginnings in the mid-80s.

Where they exist in NSW, they consist of staff, parent and community representatives, the Principal and P&C representative as ex-officio members, and - sometimes - students. It is the focus on active student representation on Bathurst High’s School Council (in the Central West area of NSW) that is the subject of this article.

School Councils consult on educational policies affecting their schools. Some policies we have examined are state government mandated, such as anti-racism, computers in schools and boys’ education; others - such as sponsorship and discipline/welfare matters - are left up to individual schools.

School Councils may view, as we do, the annual budget and make recommendations. Unlike the P&C, we do not have any money to spend, nor brief to engage in fund-raising. But we may influence the Principal and Executive of the school in how the budget is distributed.

Two examples are the proposal early in our existence to purchase a school bus and, more recently, the long-term goal of constructing a gymnasium. The former proposal was hotly debated, however after extensive research into other schools’ experiences, bus and maintenance costs, insurance etc, the proposal was rejected.

(One of the student representatives who was adamantly in favour at first, changed her mind after doing some of the research.) The gym project, which has the support of the P&C, the SRC and the staff, is a more long-term commitment, but one which School Council was keen to endorse and contribute its time and skills.

In other ways, School Councils can make an impact on their schools. We annually give out awards to those who’ve made outstanding contributions to the school community. Many are to parents who otherwise receive no public recognition. Others have ranged from one of our own student representatives (Natasha Downson who served two terms and finished as Secretary of the Council), to the entire Steering Committee who spent two years framing the School Council Constitution. We have also investigated occupational health and safety matters, surveyed and prioritised maintenance needs, discussed and made recommendations on welfare, curriculum and whatever else the Council felt important at the time.

June 1996
School Councils may even, as we did in 1993, make a videotape about students on School Councils (see below) to show that it can be done successfully. Significantly, this initiative was taken in conjunction with the SRC and after the Council had unanimously endorsed a policy supporting student participation, representation and leadership as vital components of the overall curriculum at Bathurst High.

"Yes - Even our Secretary is a Student"

Bathurst High School has had student representatives on the School Council since it officially began in April 1993. Sometimes only one has attended a meeting; sometimes, as in the first meetings of 1996, six or seven students have been present. There are, of course, real differences between 'being present' and 'being a participant'. I will discuss this later as part of the challenges students face on committees involving adults.

There are two significant clauses in the School Council Constitution which assure that this student representation is not just casual. One specifies that there be three student representatives and three alternate representatives. The other makes it mandatory for a quorum that a student representative be present.

Whereas in the beginning, alternate representatives only rarely attended, put off more by the term 'alternate' (substitute for the 'real' representative) than any lack of encouragement, over the period of three and a half years that the Council has operated, the distinction has faded. Any or all of the six representatives may, and do, attend. (Meetings are open to the public anyway.) Like other SRC officers, School Council representatives (alternates included), each have their own pigeonhole in the SRC office, assuring that the agenda and other information gets to them as it gets to staff representatives. We know that if an issue came to the vote, the distinction between representative and alternate would have to be called upon, but as most issues have been resolved by consensus or not needed any vote as such, the 'problem' has not as yet arisen.

The quorum clause - even more significant - states clearly that there can be no official meeting unless there is a quorum of nine, which must include at least one parent representative, one staff representative and one student representative. (It was impractical to require the presence of a community representative since there are only two of them and they are appointed rather than elected by any particular constituency.)

Over time, the significance of this clause to student representation has been better understood by all, thereby assuring the commitment of the student representatives. Since meetings are held from 4.30 to 6.30 on a Wednesday afternoon (and sometimes longer), eight times a year, it has been a crucial factor in maintaining student representation.

It was 'tested' very early in our School Council's development. As one of five officially elected staff representatives (one of whom is an ancillary staff member), I had an unofficial dual role assisting the development of active student representation on the School Council. At an early meeting, no student was present. It was my job to say this when the President (a parent) started the meeting. Instead, another parent pointed it out. No official meeting proceeded, such was the commitment to student participation already established. (A student did turn up fifteen minutes later and we proceeded. However, there has been at least one meeting which was cancelled because of this clause in the Constitution.)

"Everything Has a History"

Awareness Raising

The degree to which students are actively involved in Bathurst High School's School Council did not happen by accident. Nor could it have been sustained and grown without several key people and critical developments.

First of these was and remains the Constitution. A committee of staff and parents worked over a period of two years to draft a document which (after many drafts and larger meetings open to the public) they felt reflected what the Bathurst High School community wanted. It was a good document. And it did include provision for two student representatives - the number recommended at the time by the Department of Education Guidelines.

Time and people and their attitudes, of course, change. As we incorporated in our video (see later) and would recommend to anyone just starting the process, it would be best to have students in from the beginning framing the constitution. Clearly, this was not done at Bathurst High School. (Nor, as far as we know, anywhere else - though we welcome being proved wrong on this.) However, the willingness of the Steering Committee to have students examine the final draft showed that they wanted all parties
concerned to take part in the Public Meeting to adopt it with sufficient knowledge to make such a decision worthwhile.

Thus the SRC’s first look was at an already nearly finished document - good in terms of learning, pressured in that we had a relatively short time to do both the learning and the strategic preparation for the public meeting. The whole SRC (many of them then only recently elected) had a mini-workshop (two periods) wherein we looked at why a constitution was needed, how they are normally structured and what, indeed, this whole School Council business had to do with them. (NB: The fact that the SRC has a constitution doesn’t necessarily mean elected representatives understand it or refer to it. Such awareness has to be reinforced each year with each newly elected group.)

Membership became the key focus once the generalities were out of the way. The most interested and astute SRC members quickly pointed out that 60 staff were represented by five representatives, but 800+ students by only two. The issue of who should elect (or worse: select?) the two was mooted. The upcoming public meeting to adopt the draft constitution was explained to the SRC as the best opportunity to make changes. Timing was crucial.

Preparation

A committee of five to seven volunteer students, myself and Mike Chancy, our Careers Adviser who had been active on the Steering Committee, then spent the next month or so doing three things:

- Checking with the government guidelines and with the Steering Committee to see if there was anything or anybody which would stop the students from increasing their representation by putting forward motions at the Public Meeting. We had in mind not only written restrictions but also the sensitivities of the Steering Committee members and the parents and community members (not least the Department of Education representatives) who would attend. Mike assured us that the Committee would welcome further suggestions. Student representatives had not just been a priority area for them. They simply went along with the guidelines. If you are just starting, note again the importance of having student representatives and an Adviser (SRC or otherwise) involved in the process from the beginning.

- Secondly, with the student committee, we looked in detail at membership, voting, terms of office, duties of members and the proposed calendar for the Annual General Meeting (AGM). The rest of the Constitution, from broadly based statements on the purposes of the Bathurst HS School Council to fine details of meeting procedure received a cursory look but were of less concern.

- These students were not all that confident with formal meeting procedures. There’s no better training than that in a real situation when you have something you really want to say...

- Our third task, therefore, was to prepare a strategy for the meeting. It was simple, unless ...?

As Advisers, our fundamental principle (reiterated frequently to the committee and to the SRC, when the Committee sought its approval to represent them at the Public Meeting) was that we should say nothing about the student motions. It was understood that Mike, as a key spokesperson for the Steering Committee, would likely have to respond to the motions on its behalf. For myself (and other teachers identified with the SRC), we pointed out to the students two facts of political life:

a) if something is going to get done, then those who are affected most need to articulate and pursue their cause until it is done to the best of their ability; and

b) as there are bureaucrats, there are also parents and community members who have and would misinterpret or deliberately stereotype any comments we adults might make, assuming that we teachers - not the students - were simply 'using’ them to further our own radical agenda or career. (I believe I resisted - at that stage at least - the temptation to explain that RASG - the Regional Association of Student Government in Western Region - was 'done in' in 1986 by the Department of Education for that very reason.)

The wording of motions and arguments for and against having been agreed upon, the self-selection of students to speak to each and the order in which they wanted to present them decided, we then re-examined these once more with some of the staff and parents who we knew would be at the meeting - a type of lobbying. No changes were made as a result, but we tried to 'cushion' the students to be prepared for what several of us thought would be a defeat - especially on the membership increase.
The Meeting

In the end, we were scratching our heads wondering why we had been so cautious. I don't recall having to say anything except (when no-one else did) asking the Department of Education representative if the guidelines were 'etched in concrete'. With a decided twinkle in his eyes (we had been lucky to get Mr Steve Buckley, whom I had known for years as a supporter of student participation and who, shortly thereafter, was to become Regional Director of South Coast Region, which now has a highly developed regional SRC network), he said simply that, to his knowledge, no-one had tried it before.

There were members of the public there who then questioned why it was necessary and whether students had the time or would maintain their interest. There were also technicalities re having to rewrite the Constitution to accommodate the change. But our students handled all that. Moreover, they received support from parents and staff present.

The key motion passed.

In retrospect, maybe they should have gone for four? But then, they might not now have six actively involved!

The other motions followed with competent explanations, giving the students thereby a chance to show they had done their homework and considered the issues thoroughly. Moreover, they were articulate, adamant and diplomatic. There were no objections.

And the Rest is History

... The history of a Principal, Mrs Jan Gerard, who came on the scene with all that lead-up done, bringing with her an already well-established philosophy supportive of student and staff participation in decision-making. Her active encouragement and acceptance of students as partners in the learning environment (which definitely includes the organisation and development of the school as a whole) has been invaluable in sustaining it in the School Council.

Since Bathurst High School became a National Schools Network project school, restructuring of many things has created other opportunities, such as the more recent Stage Management Teams (Senior, Middle, Junior). These too have student representatives, though they are not all involved in the SRC.

Clearly, too, of most impact on parent and community members, the students who have served on the School Council have, by and large, been consistent, persistent and willing themselves to be part of a team. Their history has created the climate wherein now, three and a half years since its formal acceptance at that much-feared Public Meeting, student representation is taken for granted by most of the staff, parents and community.

But by the student body as a whole? Well, that is one of the challenges!

- representing others - does it really happen? How do students find the time/acquire the skills?
- student body awareness - how much does the general student body need or want to know?
- the profile of the School Council and of the SRC amongst the student body and the community.

Treating these as challenges rather than problems is useful. Discussed positively with the School Council as a whole and the SRC, strategies and specific tasks for each member will emerge. This is essential for student representatives on either body so they have a practical goal to pursue and the belief therefore that they are entrusted with the responsibility to carry it out. Obviously, the support of adults - parents as well as teachers, other staff as well as advisers - is needed to make it successful and provide continuity from year to year.

Acceptance

Attendance doesn't necessarily mean participation. Where people sit (cliques or mixed?), how they speak (with/ to/at students?), the degree of jargon used (global budgeting taken as understood, or explained in context of the budget by the Principal?) - all can affect the degree to which anyone, student or adult, feels comfortable and willing to speak freely. The worst example (well-documented as common where new joint bodies involving students are being developed and there is little history of such) is that awful pause after a long adult-dominated discussion, when the Principal or President or any other adult suddenly turns and looks at the lone student present, for the first time usually, and says grandly: "And what do you think?" Usually the answer is nothing, and the adults go away thinking how pointless it was to have the student there. WRONG!

What all such joint groups - especially those making real decisions about the management of a school - should aim for is acceptance of each other as joint partners within the group. This means perhaps the need for some informality. Is there really a need, for instance, to have students continue to address their teachers?
by 'Sir' or 'Mr' or 'Ms' when we are using their first names and working within a team environment?

Here are some useful strategies:

- The Principal and the President of the School Council (or whoever are in the equivalent positions of 'power' in other such groups) have crucial roles to perform whenever anyone new is brought into the group. With student members it is critical (whether first names are used or not) that there be not only introductions of everyone and a brief but frank 'history' of the group (preferably to which everyone who has been involved contributes), but that a candid statement is made about the equal partnership philosophy. If some adult or student members have reservations about it, feel uncomfortable or confused, the best time to acknowledge this is at the first meeting. Remember that it is just as likely that new adult members could feel out of place or even intimidated.

- Spend some time, at various meetings, just getting to know each other. How often do we just plunge head first into business, continue with that until we're exhausted, then leave, having done a lot of 'work', but coming away as strangers. Not good. Time just finding out what people are like, especially in the beginning of a new group forming, is time well spent. Make it part of each meeting.

- Check your seating arrangement. If all your students sit together (and your parents and your staff), revise then suggest a move for people to talk informally for a short while and start the business when you have a decent mixture. Or, as we did once or twice, have a few adults and students deliberately come in late (not too late) and sit themselves so as to create a good balance.

- Assume as best you can that there is more than one student there. For most people, it's hard as a longer at any time, harder still if you're the only young person amongst 'the oldies' (or worse, confronting 'the heavies'). Besides, there should be times in some meetings, when different constituencies (parent representatives, staff representatives, student representatives) need to consult with each other. Difficult to do alone.

- Student and staff representatives need also to be aware that they will need to rid themselves of any stereotypes and previous negative experiences they may have had with another member of the group. The Principal may have acted with firm resolve in a recent disciplinary action with a friend of yours, but be much more relaxed - almost a different person - when openly discussing the discipline policy. That staff representative who gave you a poor mark on your recent project may be just the one who is going to support you when you bring up an issue you feel strongly about. Or vice-versa: remember that your vote or verbal support counts the same as that of a staff representative.

- Have a meeting with a feed. See if the Principal will shout a round of pizzas or hamburgers from his/her hospitality fund and finish off the meeting with dinner. (Or, if you're just starting out, there is in NSW, at least, $1000 initial funding given to new School Councils. It's not meant to be blown all on food, but one dinner meeting a year wouldn't hurt.) Alternatively, actually, go out. We took our year 7 Management Team meeting to Pizza Hut one week. We had more students than staff but, amongst the gluttony, some great ideas emerged from the students.

- Finally, give it time. As each new group of student representatives joins the School Council (in our case, once each year in September) the steps suggested should be repeated. Over time, the word will get around. The students (some of whom may be back for a second go at it) will be aware of the accepting philosophy of the group. Just as critical is the same be done when the whole Council is newly elected. An 'in-service' orientation / getting to know each other session could then be run by students.

Principal: "Our global is limited, and the D of E's computer directive mandates that we implement it by the specified deadlines."

Staff Representative: "Well, if TAS and HSE KLAs did a joint T&D application for all non-users to access OASIS, that could ameliorate their Hypercard report time problem."

Though admittedly somewhat extreme and out of context, there are four strands of language difficulties here that would and do regularly confuse not only student representatives but sometimes parent, community and even staff representatives at once:

- abbreviations and acronyms: 'D of E', 'T&D', 'TAS';
- jargon: general educational jargon such as 'global', 'directive', plus subject jargon like 'non-user' and 'access'. (Ironically, it is computer jargon that most students will understand better than many adults);
- general vocabulary: 'mandates', 'amendment';
- assumption of prior knowledge: 'specified deadline', 'report time problem'.

In all, there are about fifteen possible places for misunderstanding to occur in whole or in part in one short interchange.

So, how to deal with it? For students: as with all these challenges, use common sense, be prepared to take advice from the people who you know what the issues are and what, if anything, materials you should preview or bring with you. During: call a brief 'time out' if necessary to consult or, if it's merely a word or two that needs clarification, have your adviser sitting near you so this can be done.

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Understanding

An SRC Adviser or other staff representative with the particular responsibility to ensure active student participation in the School Council should help to maintain the accepting atmosphere. He or she is crucial, however, when it comes to assisting students with a second major challenge - language and educational jargon. Particularly for junior students, the often quite detailed and sophisticated nature of the printed material being examined, and/or the language in discussion being used by the adults can stop communication immediately:

Principal: "Our global is limited, and the D of E's computer directive mandates that we implement it by the specified deadlines."

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quietly but quickly. After: ensure that within no more than a week after the meeting you have together reviewed the minutes (if they’re printed by then), shared your impressions amongst yourselves and prepared your own brief report for the SRC.

b) Provide all members with a ‘jargon’ dictionary. (Believe me, the adults will appreciate it too.) If none exists, create your own. Check with the English staff: they may want to make it a project. Check back issues of Connect and other student participation publications for explanations. Write to PASTA (the Professional Association of SRC Teacher/Advisers) c/o myself at Bathurst HS. Our ‘Leadership Curriculum’ package has an extensive appendix which includes some jargon explanation pages. Bring a dictionary (a standard one) to the meeting.

c) Ask questions. Certainly this is the best way. Try saying things in another way - paraphrase - to see if you’ve got it right”. Besides, it acknowledges that you’re listening.

d) Accept that you won’t understand everything, surely not during the first few meetings. You’re not expected to know it all when part of the whole experience is a learning one. (Accept too that some of what you may be given to read or listen to is not worth spending a lot of time on.)

However, always, before a decision is reached, whether formally through a motion and a vote or by consensus, ask for clarification. Meaning: you understand what it is you are voting for and can therefore agree or disagree according to your best judgement of what the majority of students would want if they knew all the facts and arguments as you now do.

e) Let the adult members know about some of the jargon that is currently being used by students at the school. Such language changes all the time and it could be both fun and enlightening for adult/student groups to learn about it. There’s always the possibility too that you’ll use some of it in discussion and not be understood! So clarify.

f) For your SRC report or simply as a useful exercise, get together as a group of representatives and rewrite the minutes (or any other useful but relatively brief document) in simpler terms you think an average year 9 class could cope with. Years ago, when West Wyalong SRC students were revising their constitution, they decided to do two versions: the mandatory formal one, and a much shorter one that students could understand, phrased very informally. (An excerpt of this is in Chapter 2 - ‘Constitutions’ of the 1982 publication A Hitch-Hiker’s Guide to Student Government by Les Vozzo and myself.)

**Representation**

I have called this whole section ‘Representation is a tricky business’. ‘Tricky’ is not meant here as deceitful. Magical perhaps - only because it is quite difficult.

Politicians (elected to represent our views) can spend a lot of their time when Parliament is not sitting talking with members of their constituency and, in other ways, attempting to assess the majority view on particular issues. Backbenchers (those with fewer official duties) obviously have more time to do this than Ministers and therefore may be better representatives in the strictest sense. However, Ministers have more chance to influence decisions because of their position. By contrast - whether backbencher or Minister, that is, having influence to a lesser or greater extent than others - politicians can virtually ignore those who elected them and vote or argue according to their personal beliefs or be influenced by the most vocal individuals or lobby groups.

As a student (or parent or staff) representative, you need to look personally and seriously at what ‘representation’ means. A starting point may be to list what it does not mean. It does not mean ignoring the views of others who elected you; it does not mean the chance to put forward just your own personal views to the exclusion of others; it does not mean keeping things to yourself, or just within your representative group or among your personal peer group.

Clearly, to ‘represent’ requires some effort on your part to know ahead of time what issues or projects might be discussed. Then canvass - that is, inform and consult and find out the opinion on the issues of as many students as possible. Some issues may be important enough to do a full-scale survey of the whole student body. Revision of the welfare/discipline policy or a major change in school uniform would benefit from this approach. (Always seek advice and clerical assistance when conducting surveys as results can be quite inaccurate if samples are not plotted properly, questions are poorly worded, or the probable outcomes - how the results will be used - are not explained properly).

For other issues, it may be sufficient to consult with the SRC alone - that is, if the rest of the SRC by and large is also properly skilled in representing others. Or get other SRC members to systematically canvass opinions from other student body members, collect these and then meet as a group to see what, if any, guidance this gives you.

Most important (and difficult), avoid sampling opinion from your year only and concluding that it represents the views of most students. It is too easy to be myopic, that is, to see things narrowly in terms of the interests of your year. The younger you are, the more difficult it often is to:

- see the older student’s point of view and relay this in a meeting (sort of like taking a side in a debate with which you strongly disagree; as a representative, you are obligated to at least communicate alternative points of view if you know they are legitimate)
- physically meet with older students who often can be intimidating. (Start with SRC representatives and work outwards or ask them to do the sampling for you.)

So, how do you find the time, the will, the confidence and the skills to represent others? Here are some suggestions:

a) Make it a theme for a full SRC workshop. They need to be representing others also. Work with your advisers and experienced older students, invite some decent politicians in (try local ones) or good lecturers in communications or political science from a nearby university (if you’re lucky enough to be near one), and make it a full day of skills development;

b) Have a similar workshop with the entire School Council (being a smaller group, it would likely be shorter);

c) Study survey techniques and do one as a class project. Have it assessed. Then carry out one (using sampling) for real, using a real issue;

d) Practise role plays with the School Council, the SRC, or with people you are comfortable with, which simulate the communication situations you would face in talking with younger students, older students, interested peers, students who give the impression they don’t care etc. (There are several of these dramatised in our video - see later.) If you take Drama, suggest these as situations when role plays are being done. If you don’t, seek out the Drama or English teachers for advice and practice;

e) Just ask people. Make the issues you deal with as a representative part of a lunchtime conversation;

f) Use a range of publicity techniques to give a high profile (recognition factor)
to your positions and the School Council in general. Also, on a regular basis, highlight a particular issue and ask for feedback. (At least the offer would have been made.) Use billboards, newsletters, the local newspaper, a photo board (with your photos), assemblies, school radio - anything that works.

j) Report back to the SRC of course (and before a meeting, canvass opinion and ask for issues they may wish to bring up), but also negotiate with different teachers to have some time to explore an issue with your class or subgroup within your class. English, History and Social Science and Personal Development classes are often good ones to use because the activity and/or issue can be justified as part of the overall syllabus outcomes. However, you may just happen to have a Maths teacher you really get along with or a Language class which would really benefit from such a discussion for a part of a period. If so, go for it!

h) Have an office - well, at least a SRC office as we do at Bathurst HS. Make it centrally located and signpost it so the staff and student body know it exists. If possible, have it big enough so at least small group meetings can take place there. Keep your own files and general records of the School Council and SRC in a filing cabinet, easily accessible when you need them. Go a step further, as we have, and make it a project to build your own cabinet of pigeonholes for your mail. Like the staff, as School Council representatives, yours will be personalised and you’ll get mail!

i) Finally, don’t be put off by negative responses from many students. Much of what you’ll be discussing and making decisions about will be remote and too boring or abstract for a majority of your student body, especially the more junior members. In the end, as much as you try to represent a wide range of views, you are the one present and listening to the pro and con arguments. It may very well be that (as in our case, with the decision over whether or not to purchase a school bus) your representative position is one you judge in the circumstances to be the best for the student body and the school as a whole. This may, in the end, not match the majority view. As long as you are prepared to explain to the SRC and the people you consulted why you reached the decision you did (and do it) then you’re being a representative.

NOTE: The final two challenges relate to raising student body awareness and improving the profile of both the School Council and the SRC. The practical suggestions for action discussed in this section apply directly to these two areas as well. By being a good representative, you are raising awareness and improving your image (profile) in the school.

Awareness

Specifically: that of others. Most particularly: that of the student body you represent. How much do ‘they’ really want to know? How much need do they have to know? About what? When? How?

Surprisingly, sometimes this occurs when you least expect it, and in unexpected ways. With a large student population (Bathurst HS currently has 850 students) and a diverse, significantly varied age and maturity range such as you find in a comprehensive high school, hoping that all students (or even most) will take an interest in either the School Council or the SRC is wishful thinking. All you can really do is make the effort, through all the techniques outlined already, but especially through regular (and regularly placed!) publicity. Make them conscious of the existence of your representative groups, who you are, and how to contact you. Reminders, through daily and weekly notices and through both whole school and year assemblies, that another meeting is on (with some idea if feasible of what will be discussed, followed by your names and years) may trigger that unexpected contact or new idea. It may simply reinforce the awareness that there are students ‘out there’ making decisions about something. Both are positive outcomes. (It may, of course, never be seen or heard by the student - sometimes not through his or her fault - which is why doing this publicity regularly and often is so important.)

Most of our Bathurst HS students identify the SRC with the Coke machine, which it has had as its major source of income now for a year and a half. (Prior to it, a large number of students could not tell you what the SRC did.) When the Coke machine ‘plays up’, which it does frequently, the SRC gets blamed. When it works, little if anything is said. Not to worry. At least there is awareness that the SRC is doing something. It does a lot more, of course, but many students don’t feel a need to know.

An S.R.C. neighbourhood meeting with students from many schools

June 1996
Now, ask yourself: What do they identify the School Council with? Unless you can specify a particular issue or pinpoint a particular attitude, whether negative or positive, you have some awareness raising to do. Get on with it then!

Profile

Like our previous two challenges - representation and raising student body awareness - methods of creating a good profile for the School Council are similar, take time and effort and will succeed eventually provided the School Council stays active and is meeting student and staff and parent needs to the extent of its abilities. They will only become 'problems' if ignored.

One very big advantage School Councils have over SRCs in many schools, including Bathurst HS, is that they have no profile. For a whole host of past - and sometimes present - reasons, the common profile of the SRC is, in a bluntly, that of a bunch of dogmocrats or 'nerds' (or worse) who are either out to 'suck up' to the teachers or never do anything anyway. For many students, the SRC is totally irrelevant and a bit of a joke.

While at Bathurst HS this image is gradually being eroded and a more positive one emerging, the effort has taken a number of years and placed considerable strain on both the most dedicated students and their advisers. The yearly changes in membership of the SRC, while good from the standpoint of greater participation and fairness (it's less of an 'exclusive club'), also mean that new members, without having had the chance to prove themselves, inherit and have to deal with a negative attitude which they had no part in creating. Not easy.

School Councils, on the other hand, are - generally - new, less obvious and therefore perfectly positioned to work towards creating a positive profile or image amongst all four groups it represents: students, staff, parents and the community. At Bathurst HS we have tried to do this (with, I believe, some considerable success over a relatively short time) by, as individuals, talking to people personally about the School Council and explaining what it can and cannot do. It is important this be done in the first term of the Council's existence. People need to be able to see there is a difference (see the start of this article again) between this group and the Parents and Citizens' Association and (especially for students, because they are so similar in name) between a School Council and a SRC.

Especially for students, therefore, our newly elected School Council representatives are inducted (brought on stage, introduced and their role explained) at the same school assembly where the School Captains and Vice-Captains are inducted. Since these traditional positions have a high profile (are popularly elected by the whole student body) the presence of the School Council representatives on stage with the newly elected Captains is an important first step in recognising their important position and, annually, attempting to create an image of the School Council which will be respected by the student body.

In schools where the traditional Captain and/or Prefect roles have been abandoned, and SRC Presidents or some other equivalent leadership positions exist, the same method can be used. (We would be interested in hearing about such situations.)

The School Council awards mentioned earlier are given out at the Annual Presentation Ceremonies at the end of the year and provide another public forum where the School Council can show its positive face and thereby create a higher profile. Regular publicity is, of course, always useful. As with the SRC, School Councils might even wish to consider special badges for members. Many SRCs effectively use labelled clothing - jackets or jumpers - to create a special feeling.

Resources - How Can We Help?

There are some resources available to Bathurst HS which your group might find useful. Likewise, information from other sources can be accessed by writing to those organisations. For printed materials from Bathurst HS, please be specific as to what you need and we will invoice you for the cost of paper and photocopying. If you wish a copy of the video (below) please send a blank VHS tape with your request.

From:

Bathurst HS,
Hope Street, Bathurst NSW 2795
Fax: (063) 322 302
Phone: (063) 313 755

Video (about 30 minutes): 'Students on School Councils'. Produced in 1993 by the Media Unit of NSW Western Region; scripted and acted by students and staff and parents of Bathurst HS's School Council and SRC, and by students and staff of Orange, Oberon and Kelso High SRCS.

The video takes viewers through steps in the process of developing active student participation on School Councils from the formation of a Steering Committee to work on a constitution, to the first meeting of the successfully established Council.

Includes aspects showing the SRC's involvement and a series of short vignettes highlighting some of the problems and challenges students may encounter.

It was put together in response to a funded request for information on how to involve students from the Western Region Association of School Councils to the Regional SRC.

There are notes and focus questions for discussion which accompany it.

The same tape master has media clips on the National Schools Network Student Futures Conference in Bathurst in 1992, an interview with State SRC Conference participants from the Derryn Hinch Show in 1994, and the classic SRC film from the NASC in the USA titled 'Together'. Specify if you want these also.

- Bathurst HS School Council Constitution (or excerpts re student involvement - please specify which).
- Bathurst HS SRC Constitution.
- Sample policy agreed upon by School Council - topic: 'Sponsorship'.
- PASTA Membership Forms and outline of activities.

In addition, you may wish to write to the Principal, Mrs J Gerand, to myself or to any of the following 1995/1996 student members of the School Council: Greg Arrow (year 10, Secretary), Christine Thurtell (year 10), Felicity Martin-Porter (year 9), Stephanie Young (year 9), Lisa Lloyd (year 9), Rebecca Fry (year 8) or Karen Fraser and Elizabeth Phegan (year 12, past members).

Other (re)ources:
- Western Region Association of School Councils
- New South Wales Association of School Councils
- 'Guidelines for the Establishment of School Councils', NSW Department of School Education, GPO Box 33, Sydney NSW 2001
- Articles from Connect on joint adult/student committees
- Any nearby schools (primary as well) which have functioning School Councils
- PASTA (Professional Association of SRC Teacher/Advisers)

Charles Kingston
SRC Adviser, Bathurst HS
Acting Vice-President, PASTA
(National and International Affairs)
Peer Mediation

...training students as mediators

As a Parent/Adolescent mediator at the Noble Park Family Mediation Centre and not long out of school myself, I saw the need for an alternative dispute resolution program within our secondary schools. I had a lot of faith in mediation as a way of dealing with conflicts, and had seen it work with all kinds of disputes, from work place conflicts to sibling conflicts.

I was aware of peer mediation programs being run in America and New Zealand but knew of no such programs in Australia. In the process of researching existing programs I had contact with the Student Welfare Coordinator at Lyndale Secondary College, who expressed an interest in piloting a peer mediation project at this school. After discussions with the SWC, it was decided to train Year 10 students so that they would have at least two years as mediators, and would be able to assist in future training.

Initially a meeting was held with all Year 10 students and teachers to inform them of what peer mediation was and what would be required of them if they chose to participate in the training.

Peer mediation is described as a process in which neutral third parties, in this case two peer mediators, help students to resolve interpersonal differences within the school environment.

It allows students in dispute to:
- clarify their problems;
- examine a range of options for a solution; and
- resolve their disagreement through negotiation.

Conflicts in schools often occur because students have diverse needs and interests, and often the needs of each individual are felt to be under threat. Conflicts between students can range from relationship problems to verbal/physical fights.

Most students respond to conflict in inappropriate ways. These may include: pretending it doesn’t exist, bickering, talking to others, verbally/physically abusing others, withdrawing, rebelling/retaliating, or submitting/complying. Outcomes are tension, misperceptions, stereotyping, disagreements, or negative behaviour.

Australian schools have typically responded to severe disruptions by students by imposing detentions, suspensions, or even expulsions. Peer mediation is seen as an alternative, more effective response and has proven to be an effective way to help students resolve their differences so that both parties feel heard and understood.

Student mediators work in pairs and must be neutral and impartial. The mediator’s role is to help the disputants establish their own solutions, not to decide how to solve the conflict.

The objectives of peer mediation training are that students will:

a. demonstrate knowledge of the principles of mediation;
b. demonstrate a broad understanding of typical student conflicts;
c. be able to assess appropriateness of clients and their presenting issues for mediation;
d. have the ability to conduct a structured mediation session following all the appropriate steps;
e. be able to demonstrate mediation skills such as:
   - active/reflective listening;
   - open-ended questioning;
   - dealing with power imbalances; etc.
   
be able to deal constructively with conflict in their own lives; and

have greater self-confidence and be able to communicate assertively.

Peer mediation training at Lyndale SC involved fourteen students, eleven girls and three boys. They were withdrawn from one class a week (on a rotating timetable), over a twenty five week period, and were required to catch up on any work missed in their own time. Parental permission and a referral from one teacher was required. Applications were assessed by the SWC and the year co-ordinator. The only selection criteria were past school attendance and the apparent commitment of the student to the project.

Topics covered in the training included: general conflict resolution skills, assertiveness training and listening and questioning skills needed specifically for conducting a mediation session.

Assessment of peer mediators was based on a pass or fail system which was determined by class attendance, successful completion of three class tests, completion of set exercises and homework, and performance in role-plays. This did not mean however, that if these requirements were not met, the students could never become peer mediators. They were encouraged to attend on-going training sessions and practise role-playing to continue developing their skills to be able to become an effective mediator.

Throughout the twenty-five weeks the students were also required to keep a weekly conflict diary stating if they had been involved in any conflicts that day and how they had dealt with them.

It was hoped that through the tests, exercises and conflict diaries a steady improvement in each student’s conflict resolution skills would be seen at the personal level. This was achieved as in group discussions students explained how they had tried different approaches to situations of conflict with family, friends and also teachers.

It was extremely satisfying to see the way the students were practising what they had learnt in...
"real-life" situations, and how confidently they saw that the skills they had learnt would benefit them in all their relationships. Their following statements support this:

"Peer Mediation has been great! It has helped me to sort out my conflicts with my family and friends".

"Peer Mediation is a really good experience. It gave me a chance to learn how to resolve conflicts without abusive behaviour".

"Peer Mediation taught us how to work with people around us (other Mediators)".

"It started off just being a bludge, a way to avoid the teachers from hell, but we found this course was more than fun, for teaching us this, we thank you Mel".

"I believe that Peer Mediation in schools should be compulsory. It would help those people in conflict sort out their problems, and bring them to a compromise that they can live with. I think I will achieve a lot out of going through this course, especially self-discipline, which can help me in everything I do later on in life".

In terms of setting up your own peer mediation program there are a few important issues which need to be looked at and decisions made:

- What does the school hope to achieve from the establishment of a peer mediation program?
- How does the school define conflict and what are different kinds of conflict presently dealt with in the school?
- Who will co-ordinate the program?
- What kind of environment is available for training peer mediators and for conducting the mediation sessions? eg how likely are you to be disrupted? Is there a suitable filing system?
- What structure will the training program take? e.g. will it fit easily into the school’s routine/time-table?

All of these questions need to be explored and answered before you can even begin a peer mediation program. Knowing these answers will basically set you up for success from the outset of the program.

The program I ran at Lyndale Secondary College consisted of 1 period a week for 25 weeks however others have run for shorter periods of time. I have run a 4 day training program at Prahran Secondary College and am soon to begin another program which consists of one full day training and then a one and a half hour class each week for the next 10 weeks. The structure of the program varies depending on the individual needs of the school and/or the students, so it is essential to be flexible in your training approach due to the diverse natures of schools within Australia.

If you require more information about peer mediation you can contact me at the Noble Park Family Mediation Centre on (03) 9547 6466.

Melanie Pearse
Peer Mediation Co-ordinator/
Parent-Adolescent Mediator

Peer Support and Peer Mediation

... as opportunity and challenge

Sarah Reynolds, a grade 6 student at Comet Hill Primary School, Bendigo, said she was nervous about training to be a mediator. “I felt unsure; I didn’t know how to help other people with their problems.”

Three days later, after having participated in team building activities, role plays, communication skills exercises, and learning mediation procedures, it was a different story. “I feel a lot better because now I know what I am doing. I can’t wait to start,” Sarah said.

Mrs Lois Cawtham, Assistant Principal at Comet Hill Primary School, had invited me to train grade 5 and 6 children in the skills of mediation. This was done over three consecutive days and included teachers and one parent.

After the training each day, other teachers and staff attended separate sessions to hear about the program and ask questions. To complete the three days, the mediators planned and executed a session to include the 100 grade 5s and 6s who had not been included in the training.

I was impressed to see them applying their skills, so recently acquired, to volunteer disputants.

What is Mediation?

Mediation is a chance to solve conflicts with the assistance of a person who has been trained to listen without taking sides. Thus the mediator is able to facilitate an agreement between opposing sides in an argument, the desired outcome being for the disputants to work their way through their own problems to reach a mutually satisfying agreement.

Peer mediation in a school generally refers to students mediating students.
* develop empathy and the skills of listening, negotiating, oral expression and critical thinking;
* become skilled at using an approach to problem solving where no-one loses;
* address problems of hostility and aggression in a peaceful way;
* The mediators not only develop more effective ways to help others, but also more practical ways to use conflict resolution skills in their own lives;
* The mediators become more confident in themselves and their self-esteem is enhanced.

Do you train secondary as well as primary school students?

Yes we do. Not only that - staff members and parents have been trained together with the students, so they can fully understand the program and train students for subsequent programs.

Do you offer training workshops solely for adults?

Because of requests for this kind of training, we are considering offering three-day workshops for staff and parents.

Why have peer mediation? Won't this usurp the role or responsibilities of the teacher?

I can answer this in two ways: advantages for the school, and advantages for the children involved in the mediation:

Proven advantages for the school:

Teaching young people in school to use conflict resolution skills is producing significant results in reducing school confrontations and violence. These results are being observed in Australian schools from Cairns, to the ACT, to Sydney, to Melbourne.

It is important to point out that particular disciplinary and legal issues are always the province of the staff, the issues to be dealt with by student mediation are decided by the staff and, up to now, have included friendship conflicts, rumours, being teased, and threats.

Proven advantages for the students:

* Peer mediation is a voluntary and cooperative process, giving students an opportunity to contribute to the school community;
* Mediation training empowers students at any age to:

Do you suggest any procedures to follow to set up a student mediation program?

A successful student mediation program is multi-phased. A shortened version of the necessary steps is, in outline:

**Step 1:** Key school administrators, school counsellors and others are informed about the time and energy and costs involved;

**Step 2:** The program concepts and practices are presented to the staff and interested parents. At the presentation, staff and parents are told how the program works, how and when the student training will be conducted, and how the mediators are chosen.

**Step 3:** Training the student mediators (12 - 18 hours);

**Step 4:** Evaluating the training;

**Step 5:** Evaluating the on-going mediation program.

Is it necessary for a school to have the Peer Support Program before implementing Peer Mediation?

We understand from schools with the Peer Support Program that mediation arises very naturally because the school ethos embraces the concept of senior students being trained to look after small groups of younger children. Having said this, there are many schools without the Peer Support Program which have successfully trained student mediators to make a difference in the school yard.

We understand that the process we use in Peer Support or mediation training, based as it is on cooperative learning and addressing each child's learning style whilst having fun together, has much to do with the success of the final outcome, be it a Peer Support leader or a student mediator.

Given responsibility with training, young people can become capable, confident and responsible, because they have people who need them. Both programs appear to fill an important need for young people - that of knowing they are needed.

Is it possible to combine with other schools as an alternative to an in-school workshop?

Yes, this is done frequently.

Ann Stroh
Peer Support Foundation Victoria
from the Peer Support Newsletter April 1996

For further information about Peer Mediation, please contact the Peer Support Foundation office at PO Box 17, Ashburton Vic 3147. Phone: (03) 9883 8956
Every morning for the first twenty minutes of the school day, I sit with the Student Delegation at Federal Hocking High School. As principal, I also advise the student government. I thought long and hard before taking on this task. I am not at school every day, and I don’t want to have an undue influence upon the decisions this group makes. On the other hand, I wanted them to have immediate, daily communication with me about the school and student issues.

This is only part of what we do to try and make our high school as democratic as possible. In addition, students and staff share in all decisions about hiring, the curriculum, our schedule, and the other issues that affect how humane we are as a school. But it isn’t just the formal structures that determine how democratic we are; it is just as important that we use the informal tools that are the hallmarks of democracy - casual conversations in the hall, listening carefully to dissent, questioning assent when it comes too easily, refusing to allow rumour to replace research.

The reasons it is so important for school to behave as democratically as possible are twofold. First, I believe the process makes the best decisions possible; and yet I can imagine a supposedly democratic structure making very bad decisions for a school. An elected and selfish site-based committee could make very bad decisions for children, especially when the kids themselves are not consulted. That’s why the second reason for democratic behaviour in school governance is far more important than the first, more structural reason. The real reason for democratic governance is a moral one - behaving democratically conveys to all involved that the values of democracy are important, that they are practised, that they can help us live a humane and decent life.

I am concerned that much of the discussion about democracy in school governance is only about process. These processes are just the tools, not the heart and soul of democracy. What matters is that the tools are used for democratic ends. The tests should be:

- Does the process yield results that facilitate the good work of children in school?
- Do we engage our students in democratic processes so that they learn democracy, not just so they assent to our wishes?
- Can we see ways in which the process has made our school a more humane place for students?

Only when we can see democracy yielding these results can we argue that democratic governance is a good that we all should pursue.

In the latest issue of Democracy & Education (Volume 10, Number 3; Spring/Summer 1996 - see below) we have asked individuals involved in thinking about democratic school governance to share their experiences with you. This summer at the Institute for Democratic Education (IDE) conference, we will be bringing together these and other practitioners to look at how to make whole school democratic changes a reality. We hope you can join us for what will be an exciting time, as we not only confer but explore building a network of democratic schools nationwide.

George Wood
Co-Editor, Democracy & Education
from Democracy & Education Vol 10 No 3, Spring/Summer 1996
Civics and Citizenship Education or Civics and Citizenship Participation?

Peter Carey

Summary: If Civics and Citizenship Education is to be successful, students need to be placed in an active role, engaging them with the 'real' world. Active participation of students has the potential to facilitate the development of active and informed citizenship with the knowledge, skills and attitudes and processes to behave ethically, to question and challenge injustice and to participate as equals. While Civics and Citizenship Education through participation promises to reinvigorate the domain of social learning in schools, citizenship education should not be about compliance in students or prescribed outcomes. We must remember that the type of curriculum we prescribe determines the type of citizen we produce. This paper reflects on these important issues.

In a western democracy, citizens need knowledge about the system to enable the decision about participation to be made. Participation and knowledge which enables participation is important for any healthy functioning democracy (Saunders 1996). There is a strong case for student participation on the grounds of education in citizenship and the values of a democratic society (Holdsworth 1986, Taylor 1987 and Carey 1995). Educators have a role in teaching about our democratic community, being a model for and part of that community. Student participation will make these notions clear by developing in young people the capacities to participate actively within the social, political and cultural life of the community.

While (1983: 18) further explains that there is a 'duty to participate' and that it is 'a matter of getting people to appreciate, through political education, that they have both moral rights and, more pertinently here, moral duties in an area where it may not have occurred to them that they did, or where they are reluctant to acknowledge them'. If students are encouraged to accept participation as a moral obligation inherent in our social relations, then it is likely that as adults they would want to participate. Participation is a moral obligation that should be seen as an educative objective.

Citizenship, that 'duty' of every member of the community to participate actively in a democratic society, is not something that suddenly happens after a student leaves school. It is learnt. It is learnt through a student's active lived experiences (McKay 1994). The question is how well are we working towards the democratic educational goal of active and informed citizenship by developing in all young persons the capacities to participate actively within the social, political and cultural life of the community? How well do we allow students to assert their presence within the world? What do students learn about citizenship from their experiences of the institution of schooling?

Taylor (1987: 5) makes the point that 'research consistently shows that increased participation leads to high morale, commitment to the organisation and its values, improved quality of decision making, reduced absenteeism and increased productivity and learning'. Such consistency, according to Taylor (op cit), is very rare in social research. Various educational programs have recognised that successful achievement of their aims, particularly when these aims require change, need democratic participation of affected parties. For example the guidelines of the Participation and Equity Program stated that teachers, parents and students 'should be represented in decision making through a democratic process which ensures that changes being made in schools have the support of broadly based parent, teacher and student organisations'. In Brennan's view 'recognising an active role for students in defining the culture and organisation of the institution of schooling has been a major omission which has long term consequences for schools as institutions and the kind of messages they give to students about citizenship' (1993: 10).

Citizenship education for a democratic society depends upon democratic schools (Thompson 1996: 48).

Unfortunately, the role of the student has become an increasingly passive one and divorced from action. Student Participation adopts an approach that builds a valued role for students, and that develops models for community participation. It fosters responsibility, independence and productive capacity (Coleman 1972 and Pearl 1978).

What type of teaching/learning best meets the social learning needs of young Australian students for participation in civic and community life?

Studies in the US and UK have found that attitudes and skills associated with civic participation are more likely to be developed in courses which stress open discussion of issues, inquiry-based and activity-oriented teaching, and participation in democratic processes of decision making (Avery, Bird, Johnstone, Sullivan and Thalhammer 1992; Conrad 1991; Ferguson 1991; Harwood 1992). A 'participatory citizenship' then will be enhanced by a participatory education. Recognising this, the Civics Expert Group (1994: 69) endorsed 'active citizenship projects ... as one way of ensuring that students are able to apply knowledge gained to meaningful contexts in both school and the wider community'. For example, according to Robertson and Hart (1993), environmental education has been highly successful in engaging students in active citizenship. The various environmental movements have involved forms of co-operation, collaborative action and community approaches to social organisation and welfare. The commitment of the young to environmental issues is also evidence of their potential for citizen participation. Another area to involve students in active citizenship is that of cultural, and especially media studies. The Civics Expert Group (1994: 96) highlights the importance of the media as a source of information.

McTear (1975), Schug, Todd and Beery (1984) and Susskind (1984) advocate the need for teachers to consider students' views toward content and methodology when making curriculum and methods decisions. Their research
shows that the needs of students are not being taken into account by teachers who, in spite of the strong child-centred and action-oriented policies existing in social studies curriculum, continue to employ teacher-centred instructional practices.

If citizenship education is not going to be just another knowledge-based subject (more of the same) for students to know and do, we must consider making them ‘partners rather than clients, part of the solution, rather than the problem ... our professional values and practices must be included in Civics and Citizenship’ (Thompson 1996: 52). Student learning by participation will be important in the Civics and Citizenship curriculum. Students are unenthusiastic about ‘theory’, at least not until they have ‘experienced’ it, and are familiar with a process they wish to utilise. Only then can they value its significance. First, teachers may have to convince students that getting involved ‘will make a difference’ to the outcome of some issue which they consider important to them.

Kraft (1967), Lingard (1994), and Starr and Moore (1994) are among many educational analysts who strongly advocate the use of curriculum in engaging young people as informed, skilled and active participants in the struggle for social justice. It is an engagement which needs to extend beyond the school into the wider community (Kraft 1967, Starr and Moore 1994).

The emancipatory potential for students will be limited, however, if students are not actively participating in the management, operations, and establishment of policy for their own school community. Such interaction will bring students into direct, real and non-artificial encounters with their school environment and thus allow them to question the human values and psychological processes of human interaction which relate to social justice issues (Kraft 1967). Such a curriculum orientation and its process may cause tension between students, teachers, administrators and parents. We should not be concerned about this; it should be seen as an educative process which teaches students the difficult process of deciding where one’s sentiment lies on important issues and how difficult it is to implement one’s contention when one is part of the community.

Teachers need to devise experiences which involve making available to each student the opportunity to make a contribution to the enrichment of co-operative life. It is only through considerable political learning that students recognise their potentialities, capable of deliberating about what they are doing, setting goals and priorities for themselves; in effect, taking charge of their history-making (Dewey 1975).

Importantly for Dewey (op cit: 57-69), this learning is not an individualised practice; it requires constant negotiation and collective judgement. Only public deliberation allows citizens to become aware of their powers and responsible agents and judges. Dewey maintains that it is through participation that the needs of all and the unique judgement of each, can be taken into account. Student participation is part of a process of political and moral education: it is an education in responsibility. This could be developed by students having a share in participation.

The prevailing model of political participation seems to be that of a ‘rational decision maker’. This approach stresses the development of cognitive abilities to process information about politics, law and social life. Students’ inquiry into social issues might involve them actively in debates with peers and adults in and out of schools, but the promotion of specific action other than study and reflection is not considered a central task of education. Neumann (cited in Heather and Gillespie 1981) advocates the ideal of ‘community participant’ which he explains is evident in a variety of proposals which stress the application of study and reflection in such activities as volunteer service, political advocacy and democratic self-governance in schools. This approach:

emphasises students taking responsibility for action that affects the lives of others - to bring educational benefits to students (eg in cognitive or ego development), but also to make contribution to society. While programs vary in the context to which they encourage service, advocacy and research in the community, they share a common commitment to the cultivation of participation skills that take students beyond the classroom to interact with the non-school world (Neumann 1981: 149-150).

Brennan (op cit) explains that much of the elocution of devolution in public education systems has centred on the opportunities for greater participation, but unfortunately, prominence has been towards improving management structures and practices. The effect of this is that students, in particular, have not been able to participate effectively in school decision making whilst the emphasis remains on managerialism. Brennan (ibid: 11) further explains that ‘if students themselves are actively involved in the reorganisation of schools so that they embody a range of public values, then it should be possible for them to be much more active in the public reconstitution of the variety of public forms and forums which are gradually replacing or reforming the existing institutions of the nation’. These are responsibilities all citizens need to take part in, not only those sanctioned by age and standing.

The centralisation of curriculum and assessment has also left little room for students to participate in deciding what is to form the basis of their daily work in schools. Students can either go along with the curriculum decided on their behalf, or resist it. There has been little debate about negotiating the curriculum, about peer assessment or student conducted research among the initiatives to make education accountable. Almost by definition, accountability means to others outside the school.

According to Brennan (ibid: 12) such an approach to curriculum and accountability emphasises the separation of schools from the rest of society, and a lack of trust in the educational process. With the current trends towards a tighter and more inclusive central control over the curriculum, we must continue to insist upon a real scope for innovation and experimentation at the local level.

What do I think we must do?

We must invite a wide range of candidates (government officials, teachers, parents, students, the ‘experts’, the wider community) to contribute. No one candidate should be seen as ‘an expert’ on human beings. It is this looseness, this participation of all candidates which allows debate.

We must remember that ultimately, when you make a judgement about what people should learn, you make a judgement about what sort of people we should have in the future - what kind of citizenship curriculum and what kind of citizen. The government should therefore allow adequate time and give full opportunity for debate from all possible
candidates for the benefit of society. Maybe then the criteria this question should be decided upon are: Is the civics and citizenship curriculum academic, coherent, relevant, interesting, balanced, has its values included and is it ‘Democratic’? Curriculum planning should be democratic.

For the curriculum to be democratic, it must be participatory at all levels (Ashendon et al 1984; Pearl 1988) which means that its clients (students) have a real say in what they learn. At the system level, this means that it operates through processes of negotiation between, and accountability to, schools, Ministries and the community (Kimpston and Rogers 1988). This criterion is important, for another argument against a large and highly specified core curriculum is that it would exclude the possibility of student and local community participation.

While Civics and Citizenship Education through participation promises to reinvigorate the domain of social learning in schools, citizenship education should not be about compliance in students or prescribed outcomes.

The need to avoid propaganda and slogan styled teaching of civics is also important if schools wish to avoid divisive and/or destructive programs, where the beliefs and values of their students and parents are alienated or discredited, or where students are subject to confused and disparate programs leaving them with conflicting or undeveloped messages. This latter situation is a very real concern given the breadth and depth of topics under the umbrella of civics, and the dichotomous nature of a true civics program. The Civics and Citizenship program should provide students with opportunities to: discuss, debate, clarify issues and values, and participate actively in ‘lived experiences’, be mindful of their historic context, and form considered judgements. It should commission students with the confidence and views to engage in public life with a sense of hope and optimism that affirms to oneself and others: ‘yes, I can make a difference in the world’.

As Fay (1987: 14-15) asseverates, ‘the point of knowledge is not to provide the means by which one can use particular causal processes but to transcend these processes: not to get what one wants, but to get different wants: not knowledge in order to manipulate but self knowledge in order to be freed of external variables; not the ability to work with a system effectively but to alter it’.

This social science learning approach seeks to employ an educative concept of theory and practice intended to free people from the causal relationships by getting them to have different ends (outcomes).

References
Coleman, J (1972) How do the Young become Adults?, Center for Social Organisations of Schools, John Hopkins University, Baltimore, 1972 - Report No 130, May 1972
Holdsworth, R (ed) (1986) Student Participation and the Participation and Equity Program, PEP Discussion Paper No 2, prepared for the Commonwealth Schools Commission

Peter Carey, Hobart
MINI-DICTIONARY OF STUDENT PARTICIPATION JARGON

or Unveiling the Alphabet Soup of Organisations which Do or May Affect Your Participation, Representation or Leadership

National

PASTA:
Professional Association of SRC Teacher/Advisers:
“Promoting Student Participation, Representation and Leadership”
Professional Association established in 1995; now open for membership nationally. Newsletters, special purpose publications, in-services and conferences, BUT MAINLY (at least) a network of those working in the student leadership field (not restricted to SRCs - anyone welcome) to support each other and to work towards recognition of our positions and activities as legitimate parts of the curriculum. Affiliated with the Joint Council of Professional Associations, Leichhardt, NSW. First AGM and Conference - 27th - 28th July 1996 in Sydney.

Contact: Steering Committee Convenors:
Ralph Murray
Newcastle University
PO Box 123
Ourimbah NSW 2258
Phone: (063) 484 006 or (063) 485 180
Fax: (063) 484 005

Charles Kingston
Bathurst High School
Hope Street
Bathurst NSW 2795
Phone: (063) 313 755 or (063) 320 603
Fax: (063) 322 305

Connect
National newsletter/magazine supporting student participation through documentation, publication, development and review of resources; occasional national or local workshops and conferences. Published 6 times a year since late 1979. Available on subscription - currently $30 pa (organisations), $20 pa (individuals), $10 pa (student organisations), $5 pa (individual students) - from 12 Brooke Street, Northcote Vic 3070.
Phone: (03) 9489 9052 or (03) 9344 8585;
Fax: (03) 9344 8256; E-mail: rholdsworth@edfac.unimelb.edu.au

YARN: Youth Affairs Research Network
A national electronic network linking and supporting those interested or involved in youth-related research established by the Youth Research Centre at the University of Melbourne (phone: (03) 9344 8585; fax: (03) 9344 8256). YARN consists of a Mailing List (send e-mail to yarn-request@yarn.insted.unimelb.edu.au to join) and a set of World Wide Web pages (located at: http://yarn.insted.unimelb.edu.au/).

National Student Participation Conferences
National conferences/workshops of those interested and involved in supporting student participation have been held in 1980 (Melbourne), 1981 (Adelaide) and 1995 (Melbourne). It is intended that a further gathering will occur in Sydney in 1997 in conjunction with the ACSA Curriculum '97 Conference.

ACSA:
Australian Curriculum Studies Association
The Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA) was established in 1983 to provide a national voice on curriculum matters, to encourage and promote curriculum research, to provide forums for exchange of information on curriculum developments and to promote self-critical curriculum practice. It publishes a quarterly journal, Curriculum Perspectives, and holds a biennial national Curriculum Conference - Curriculum '97 will be held in Sydney.

Australian Curriculum Studies Association
PO Box 884
Belconnen ACT 2616
Phone: (06) 253 4222
Fax: (06) 253 4220

ATC:
Australian Teaching Council
Professional organisation for all teachers aimed at raising the profile of the teaching profession and providing a recognised lobby group to improve the training and in-servicing of teachers and work towards national standards.
Australian Teaching Council
Box 321
Leichhardt 2040 NSW
Phone: (02) 564 6111
Fax: (02) 564 6696

NSN:
National Schools Network
The National Schools Network is a school reform network driven by schools, with the objective of improving teaching and learning for all Australian students. The work of the NSN includes activities at the international, national and local level, designed to support the reform of work organisation in schools, coordinate action research in schools and offer an in-depth and ongoing model of professional development.

National Schools Network
Private Bag 3
Ryde NSW 2112
Phone: (02) 808 9467

AEU:
Australian Education Union
A national union for teachers which involves itself extensively in crucial education issues which affect teachers, students and systems in all states. Its current President, Sharan Burrow, is a long-time ardent supporter of SRCs and student participation, having been one of the key advisers to RASC (see below) in the mid 1980s.

AEU
120 Clarendon Street
South Melbourne Vic 3205
Phone: (03) 9254 1800
Fax: (03) 9254 1805
DEETYA
The Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA) is the Federal government department responsible for policy and program directions in education at the national level.

ACSSO
The Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) is the national body of parent and school council organisations from Australian government schools. It has a coordination, support, monitoring, lobbying and policy function.

ACSSO
Hughes Primary School
Kent Street
Hughes ACT 2605

ACEE
The Australian Centre for Equity through Education (ACEE) is an initiative of the Australian Youth Foundation (AYF) and was established in 1994 through a consortium of organisations: Educate; the Australian Council of State School Organisations; the Australian Education Union and the Australian Council of Social Service. Contact:

ACEE
Level 3, 4 Yurong Street,
Darlinghurst NSW 2010
Phone: (02) 332 3548
Fax: (02) 332 3541
E-mail: devm@ozemail.com.au

AYPAC
The Australian Youth Policy and Action Coalition (AYPAC) is the national peak organisation in the youth affairs sector. It draws representation from national youth organisations and from state peak youth councils.

AYPAC
PO Box 204
Ainslie ACT 2602

A POCKETFUL OF HISTORY
Youth Forum (NSW)
Begun during 1979, and sponsored originally by the Law Foundation of NSW, held annual conferences - 'Youth Forums' - in Sydney first, then in Bathurst for several years, then in Sydney again. School groups of four students submitted proposals for presentations based around key issues; the Youth Forum committee trained students and made decisions re the program, then ran it. Training materials developed into quite an extensive and sophisticated series of workshops which, when forums as such stopped in 1986, the Youth Forum organisation continued for many years by providing trained student facilitators for schools, especially for SREs in need of workshop expertise. Spawned many other projects such as the Macarthur Project for Unemployed Youth in Campbelltown. Still operating in modified form.

RASG:
Regional Association of Student Government (NSW)
Begun by students and staff at West Wyalong High School (Western NSW) as a result of a Youth Forum presentation and a subsequent Schools Commission grant in 1981; this was the first regional association for SRCS in NSW and perhaps the country. From 1981 to 1987, RASG ran annual senior and junior leadership camps for students of Western Region, had a developed training program for group leaders, a network of teacher/advisers and assisted schools with workshops of their own. The committee to run RASG each year moved from school to school in the region, with these schools variously organising or hosting leadership camps: West Wyalong, Dubbo-Delroy-Dubbo South (combined), Bathurst, Kelso, Broken Hill, Lake Cargelligo, Condobolin.

Resources developed by RASG were freely shared and linkages were close with Connect, Youth Forum and the Youth Affairs Council of NSW. Amongst the best-known resources has been The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to Student Government, written and compiled by Charles Kingston and Les Vozzo. While much of this is now out of date, chapters on constitutions, structure and motivation, as well as the philosophy behind the term 'student government' are still relevant.

RASG was abruptly disbanded (presumably for political reasons due to the lack of understanding by bureaucrats in Sydney and Bathurst) in 1987 - only to be followed that same year by the first NSW Education Department sponsored State SRC Conference. Ironic? Painful? Progress? Yes - all that. Contact Charles Kingston (Bathurst HS - see page 20) for more details.

LASA:
Liverpool Association of Student Activities (NSW)
Begun in the NSW Met Southwest Region by Les Vozzo and a network of key teachers and students in 1984. Initially similar to RASG, it continued for many years (under various titles) and developed quite sophisticated resources and techniques for regional and district leadership training, melding later into a strong departmentally 'approved' regional organisation. The original name was carefully chosen to avoid the stigma associated with RASC.

SASA:
State Association of Student Activities (NSW)
Short-lived organisation that developed from a conference at Kallangur High in December 1985 involving RASG, LASA and student representatives from Met North Region to lobby for a state SRC Association; Steering Committee formed and, though no formal recognition of its efforts was ever given, the then Director-General of the NSW Department of Education, Mr Bob Winder, issued a directive mid-year which for the first time instructed Principals to see SRCS as a legitimate educational activity to be supported. By the end of the year serious meetings were being held to plan a state SRC conference.

ANSS:
Australian Network of Secondary Students (National)
The Youth Affairs Council of Australia (YACA - a precursor of AYPAC - see above) received funding from the Participation and Equity Program in the mid-1980s to support the development of a national secondary student organisation - ANSS. The Network drew student representatives from state or regional student organisations, met regularly to consider policy and practice issues, and held a number of national conferences/ workshops. With the end of the funding, the national networking was not able to be sustained at this level and contacts slowly withered.
SCoFS:
State Council of Students (SA)

The South Australian State Council of Students was one of the first and longest lasting statewide student networks in the 1980's. It was a student-initiated, student-organised and student-run body set up during 1985 to work towards effective student representation at school, area and state levels within the education system, and to assist students taking action on issues of concern to them at these levels.

Student representatives from state, independent and Catholic secondary schools formed Area Councils which, in turn, elected representatives to a State Committee. A full State Council (or conference) was held each year. SCoFS received some funding support from the South Australian State Government and concentrated on the development of regional student networks, on the training of students and on having student views heard by decision makers. The Council commissioned the production of a student participation training manual, Unravelling the Maze. The Council was last active in about 1991 or 1992.

SAP:
Student Action Project (Vic)

The Student Action Project, auspiced by and housed at the Western Education Centre in Melbourne’s western suburbs, supported the development of a very active student network (the Student Working Party) in the west during the early to mid 1980’s. SAP was funded by the state Participation and Equity Program (PEP) and operated regular student training functions, supported monthly meetings of the regional student network, and assisted students in various other areas of Victoria to set up their own local networks. The Project supported the development and writing of a ‘student action resource handbook’, Take A Part, in 1986. With the end of PEP funding, the Project itself ended, though aspects of its support work were maintained by regional consultants of the Education Department until the late 1980s.

CURRENT SITUATION IN NSW

The NSW Department of Education is, in 1996, engaged in a large restructuring process (see Connect 97). It is likely that, with some modifications, the following SRC related bodies will continue with head office support, while the newly formed 40 Districts (replacing the previous ten Regions) will each have two separate officers (Student Welfare and Equity) with some part of their job to work on the development of SRCs and student leadership programs at school and District levels. Inter-District activities (involving three, four or five Districts most likely, depending on geography and past associations) will develop and feed into these state activities:

NSW SRC: A group of 20 student representatives selected/-elected from around the state to represent the views of students to the Minister, review government policies and generally act as a recognised voice for secondary school students. Supported by the Department of Education. Members change annually; four meetings a year; has a constitution.

State SRC Annual Conference: Normally held in early August; brings together 120 student leaders (evenly divided from around the state) and about 15 teacher/advisers, to examine issues, skills and recommendations which are then passed on to the NSW SRC.

Working Party: A group of ten students (may expand under restructuring) and six advisers who meet to plan the State SRC Conference. Together with trained group leaders (10) these students then run the Conference.

Stop Press: NSW Statewide Position

A position of Project Officer, Student Leadership & SRC has been advertised in NSW. The position is at the level of Senior Education Officer 1, to be located in Ryde, as a temporary appointment for up to three years. It is described as "Coordinating a student welfare project to support student welfare policies" and criteria are: "Successful teaching experience. Broad knowledge of student leadership and SRCs. Ability to develop, implement and monitor student leadership programs..." Applications closed on 14 June; enquiries to Helen Kerr-Roubicek on (02) 808 9660.
SOME RELEVANT AND GENERAL EDUCATION 'JARGON' IN CURRENT USE
(most relevant to education in NSW)

SRC: Student Representative Council

General term for student body elected/selected by students to represent them within and outside a school. Schools also use terms such as Student Council, Student Forum, Student Union, Student Association and so on.

Three key questions all SRCs should be asking themselves in 1996:

- Do we go beyond being (mainly) just a fund-raising group? (How?)
- Specifically, how do we (really) make sure we are representing the views of others (not just our own)?
- To what extent is our SRC accepted by us, by other students and by staff as a legitimate part of the curriculum? (How do you know?)

If the answer is negative to any of these, then get cracking and get real! Use your power positively!

JSC: Junior School Council

Term adopted to describe many primary school student bodies. Similar composition and role to SRCS in secondary schools.

SC: School Council

Joint body of parents, staff, students and community members, with the Principal and P&C President as ex-officio members (NSW model). Looks at policies, conditions, budget of school. No fund-raising; makes recommendations only. Exists in many schools but not all. Similar models exist in other states - but composition and powers vary.

P&C: Parents and Citizens Association

More traditional parental support group. Does raise funds for the school, organises special events, but may also discuss and comment on educational issues. Local P&Cs are affiliated with a powerful State Association.

KLA: Key Learning Areas

Term which has replaced 'subject' or 'faculty' in NSW schools to identify different teaching areas. English, Maths and Science are three which have maintained their traditional names. New KLAS which incorporate previously dissociated subjects or new areas deserving a higher profile are:

- HSIE: Human Society and Environment (formerly Social Science and History, Aboriginal Studies, Business and Legal Studies etc; in Victoria this area is known as SOSE: Studies of Society and the Environment);
- CA: Creative Arts (both Visual and Performing, with Drama and Dance now officially recognised);
- LOTE: Languages Other Than English;
- TAS: Technology and Applied Studies (the most diverse of the KLAS, incorporating all former and new industrial arts and home science courses, computer studies, agriculture etc);
- PD/PHE: Personal Development, Physical Education and Health (definitely no longer just Sports!)

Stage Teams

Some schools (Bathurst High is one) have established teams of staff, students and parents to look at the welfare, curriculum and organisation of different age groups. For secondary schools, year 7-8 is identified as Stage 4, year 9-10 as Stage 5 and year 11-12 as Stage 6. In conversational terms, Bathurst High talks of Junior, Middle and Senior teams.

'Middle' can also mean years 5 to 8 or 6 to 7 (as in 'Middle Schooling') as a way of bridging the gap (perceived or real) between primary (K-6) and secondary (7-12) schools. This is useful when considering SRC and Peer Support transition programs.

Peer Support

Peer Support programs have been set up in many schools to assist students to provide emotional or moral encouragement and support to each others. In many cases, senior students are organised into teams to provide friendly contact with and support for younger students. Peer Support Foundations provide training for both students and teachers in developing such programs.

QA: Quality Assurance

A practice begun by the NSW Department of Education a few years ago of sending a team of people of mixed background to interview people in the school community (including students), to look at school documents etc.; around programs and practices chosen by the school to be reviewed. Each of the new 40 Districts will have a person responsible for QA.

June 1996
OVER 60 YEARS OF STUDENT COUNCIL PROGRESS IN THE USA

NASSP: National Association of Secondary School Principals

This large organization of Principals has supported student leadership, particularly in the form of Student Councils, for over 60 years. This support is financial, administrative and, most importantly, attitudinal. Student Councils are an accepted part of the structure and curriculum of most schools.

NASSP
1904 Association Drive
Reston VA 22091-1537 USA
Phone: (800) 253 7746
Fax: (703) 476 9432
E-mail: ane24@prodigy.com
Internet: http://www.nassp.org

DSA:
Division of Student Activities
(Director: Rocco Marano)

The administrative branch of NASSP which deals with student activities. In turn, two of its main divisions are:

- NASC: National Association of Student Councils (run by DSA in conjunction with elected students and State Executive Directors from different geographical regions of the country);
- NHS: National Honor Society (years 10-12);
- NJHS: National Junior Honor Society (years 7-9) (Honors Societies reward academic achievement. Most schools have their own such groups which, like a club, carry out their own activities. NHS provides a network and activities on a national basis).

NASC National Conference

Held annually for over 50 years. Often accommodates from 1500 to 2000 student leaders and advisers. Usually lasts for 4 to 5 days. Host schools from around the country bid to hold the conference in their city, with a minimum two year lead-up time. Australian contact: Charles Kingston, attended the Reno (Nevada) conference in 1982; Maree Marshall, a student leader from West Wyalong, participated in the Bethel Park (Pennsylvania) National Conference during International Youth Year in 1985.

ATHS (American Technology Honor Society)

Joint effort of NASSP and TSA (Technology Student Association). Only launched in January 1996. Its 'mission' is “to promote and recognize technological literacy, academic scholarship, service and leadership in the school community.”

TSA
1914 Association Drive
Reston VA 22001 USA
Internet: http://www.tmn.com/ organisations/Tri/TSA.html

NASAA: National Association of Secondary Activity Advisers

A professional support network for teachers, run under the auspices of NASSP. Does not confine its membership to SRC advisers, as anyone who works with a legitimate club, interest area or activity (including cultural and sporting activities) may belong. Closest equivalent in Australia is PASTA.

NAWD: National Association of Workshop Directors

An adviser support network independent of NASSP. Begun by Dr. Earl Reum, one of the best known and hugely respected lecturers and camp organisers in the country. For those responsible for organising everything from a national conference to a week-long leadership camp to a local workshop.

Dr. Earl Reum
NAWD Executive Director
827 Milwaukee
Denver CO 80206 USA

Senior and Middle School Leadership Camps

Five-day camps held during the summer months (June-August) at various locations around the country. The longest-running are the ones at Camp Cheyly in Estes Park (Colorado) run by Dr. Earl Reum of Colorado and Don Larson of Wisconsin. Extraordinarily intense and rewarding experiences.

Adviser Seminars

Four to five day courses for SRC and Activity Advisers. Usually held at or in conjunction with a University and academic credit given to Advisers for completing it.

Adviser 'Fly-Ins'

Two-day specific skill seminars held at various times and locations throughout the year.

State Executive Directors

Nearly every US state has its own Student Council Association, usually sub-divided into different geographical districts. Executive Directors are voluntary, elected positions, but time and remuneration for expenses are usually provided by the state association. All State Directors are listed in the regularly updated NASC contact list. At present, three states associations (Nebraska, Oklahoma and Oregon) are on the internet.

Contact Persons: There are also State (Province) Associations in Canada, Puerto Rico and other areas which are part of the NASC and therefore on its contact list. Since 1982, Charles Kingston (then co-founder of RASG and now SRC Adviser at Bathurst HS and co-convenor of the PASTA Steering Committee) has been the Australian contact listed. This has enabled him to receive many resources otherwise unavailable in Australia, including: “Leadership”: the magazine on student leadership published nine times a year by DSA. Previous titles were Student Advocate and Student Activities. Charles has back copies.

CASSA: Canadian Association of Student Activity Advisers

Contact them at: http://www.sentex.net/~cassa

Senior High School

In the USA, normally means high schools with years 10, 11 and 12 which are separately referred to (as in College) as Sophomores, Juniors and Seniors. For NASC purposes, all three years are ‘seniors’. Some high schools have ‘Freshmen’ as well — 3 year 9s.

Junior High School

Normally years 7 to 9.

Middle School

Sometimes years 7 and 8 only; other states bridge the primary (elementary) to secondary gap with years 5 to 8.

WWW Schools Registry

Most comprehensive list of K-12 schools with web servers in the USA. You can jump to web sites by clicking on states on a map of the USA.

http://hillside.coled.umn.edu/ others.html

Electronic Student Newspaper

"A Nationwide interactive electronic high school newspaper ... part publication, part wire service, part forum ... a way for student journalists and advisers to share ideas and material ... on-line press conferences offer student journalists a chance to interview national figures ...”

Only started in September 1995.

http://www.nynet.k12nj.us/newsweb

Compiled by Charles Kingston,
Bathurst High School, NSW
MOOSE Crossing is Open for Business

MOOSE Crossing is a MUD for kids designed to help kids 9-13 learn reading, writing and computer programming. It’s free - you just need a Mac on the Internet (ie ethernet or PPP connection).

On MOOSE Crossing, kids have made pigs you can hug, a secret island where you can swim, and a travel agency to get you there. They’ve made magic eight balls, bubble blowers, grumpy walruses, and hungry penguins. Kids are building the virtual world together - and learning from one another.

Lots more information is at
http://asb-www.media.mit.edu/people/asb/moose-crossing

Hope to see you there!

Amy Bruckman
asb@media.mit.edu

PS: Big people (14 and over) can apply to be rangers.

JSC Training Day

The Preston-Reservoir (Vic) Junior School Council Network held a training day for JSC members at Norris Bank Primary School on the morning of Wednesday May 1st. About 90 students from eleven schools attended and took part in a very successful half-day of sharing information and ideas.

There were three major sessions during the morning. In the first one, each school had prepared a poster display about their JSC. In small teams, students had to complete a ‘bingo’ sheet by finding answers to twelve questions like: “Which is the BIGGEST JSC here today?”, “Find a JSC which reports straight to the Principal”, “Find a JSC which doesn’t meet at lunchtime”, “Which is the newest JSC here?” etc.

The second session has students working in mixed interschool groups to draw up agreed ‘job descriptions’ for JSC representatives - a statement of the job to be done, and a list of desirable qualities for a representative.

Finally, each interschool groups was given a separate ‘problem’, and had to discuss their responses to it - and then develop and present a role play to show the problem and the proposed solution. This activity is documented in detail in Connect 61 (Feb 1990) pp 13-14.

The Network will publish more information about the Training Day and schools’ evaluations, plus information about a JSC Camp involving four of the schools (May 29 - 31) - in the next issue of their JSC Newsletter, put together by students at Kingsbury Primary School (Maryborough Avenue, Kingsbury 3083; phone (03) 9462 2711 - contact Wayne Bolton).

PASTA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND CONFERENCE

27th - 28th July 1996, Stewart House, Sydney

PASTA is the Professional Association of SRC Teacher/Advisers. It is aimed at: “Promoting Student Participation, Representation and Leadership” and was established in 1995.

It is open for membership nationally and will produce and support newsletters, special purpose publications, in-services and conferences.

PASTA’s first AGM and Conference will be held on 27th - 28th July 1996 at Stewart House, Sydney.

For more details, contact the Steering Committee Convenors:

Ralph Murray
Newcastle University
PO Box 123
Ourimbah NSW 2258
Phone: (043) 484 342 or (043) 851 888
Fax: (043) 484 005

Charles Kingston
Bathurst High School
Hope Street
Bathurst NSW 2795
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June 1996
We went to Israel on April 11th for the Hadera Conference, the Fourth International Conference of Democratic Schools. It was a very dramatic time. Some participants had cancelled because of the suicide bombs of previous weeks...

The conference itself began on April 14th, ran to the 19th, and it had its own share of drama and excitement. There were hundreds of participants, and over 125 from out of Israel. About half of those (outside Israel) were there through connections with the (US) Alternative Education Resource Organisation (AERO). Many of the participants were children.

The AERO-connected attendees included Liz Wertheim of Hawaii, Jim Hoepner of the Alternative School in Calgary (Canada) with a group of about ten from his school, Oleg Belen of the Stork Family School in the Ukraine (later joined by a graduate, George, who is studying in Israel), Jim Murphy of West Side Alternative School in New York and a group of ten, Patrice Creve and two others from Thelem School (France), Stan Kuntner who now directs Clonlara's Compughill from Israel, David Gribble, Sean Bellamy and seven others from Sands School (England), Justin Baron of Summerhill, Barry Lamb who is trying to start a school in Australia, and Fred Bay of the Bay-Paul Foundation in New York...

In addition there were participants from Hungary, Germany, Austria, Denmark, and many Israeli Schools. The Ministry of Education was a sponsor of the conference and will reimburse Hadera for many of the expenses. They are encouraging the development of more democratic schools.

We were housed at a conference centre called Givat Haviva, which is run by a kibbutz specialising in Israeli-Arab relations. The food included wonderful fresh fruits and vegetables. The mornings were spent at the Democratic School of Hadera, a public alternative school which organised the conference. The students there had voted to cancel classes for the week so they could participate in the conference. The K-12 school is run by a democratic parliament and has non-compulsory class attendance. Yacov Hecht is the director. There are 300 students in the school, with 3000 on the waiting list!

Many of the workshops dealt with various aspects of democratic education such as the role of the adult, the decision-making process, "When Ideology Meets Reality," etc. I think it was difficult for students to participate in these.

One of the workshops I did was on table tennis, but I was disappointed that it was not until the next to last day of the conference that they got a table. People sometimes do not understand why I consider it so important to have a ping pong table... Here are two reasons: At a conference such as this one it presents an opportunity for people of a variety of ages and languages to take part in a common activity. Second, it is non-academic. But because my teacher was perhaps the best in the United States, I can show people how to improve their game spectacularly in a brief time span. Through this process students can learn that they are quick learners, and thus gain confidence in themselves as learners. After the table appeared, it became very popular. I was able to teach about 25 people. The school will keep the table.

There were also presentations by schools. Two of the most dramatic were by a democratic school on the Golan Heights, which is fighting for full approval by the Ministry of Education, and a democratic school in Bethlehem in the West Bank, the Hope Flowers School. The latter presentation was by its director, Hussein Issa, a Moslem Arab, who had barely received a 12-hour pass to come over to make his presentation. As he said, "It is sometimes harder to fight for peace than for war." He lost his mother and son in the process. The school is coeducational, and has Jewish volunteers who teach music and Hebrew. His school makes a variety of crafts to support itself, and he is looking for places in which they can market their wares. Contact them at: PO Box 732, Bethlehem/ West Bank, Via Israel.

Two unusual homeschool groups came over from Austria. One is a circus family, which supports itself by performances of unicycles and juggling, including spectacular flaming torches, which they demonstrated for us. Another group I had met at last year's Vienna conference. Fourteen of them, with children as young as seven, DROVE to Israel in two vehicles, through Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Syria, and Jordan! It took them ten days and many bribes at the borders...

There was general agreement to create a computer network centred around democratic education, and to keep in touch electronically. We plan to meet for chat sessions on Puget Sound Community Schools VEE. Send me an email at jmintz@acl.nyu.edu if you would like to join us. To get to the VEE, telnet: moo.speakeasy.org 7777. PSCS usually has a meeting at 8:30 PM Pacific Time on Wednesdays.

Jerry Mintz
from AERO-Gramme #18, Spring 1996
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) 9344 8585

STUDENT PUBLICATIONS:

Australian:
MCC News (Mount Carmel College, Hobart, Tas) #1
Voice (Sale SC, Vic) #1

OTHER PUBLICATIONS:

Australian:
Equity Network (ACEE, Darlinghurst, NSW) Vol 2 Issue 2, May 1996
AYF Update (AYF, East Sydney, NSW) June 1996
Network News (Surry Hills, NSW) Annual Report 1995
YACSA Round (Youth Affairs Council of South Australia, Adelaide, SA) March/April 1996
Rights Now! (NCYLC, NSW) Vol 4 No 2, May 1996
Orana (ALLA, Qld) Vol 32 No 2, May 1996
Starlink (Students at Risk Program, DSE, Vic) Issues 4, 5, April, May 1996
Annual Report 1995 (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Fitzroy, Vic)
Policy Platform (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Fitzroy, Vic)
Swan Hills Homeschooler’s Grapevine (Middle Swan, WA) Issue 8, April-May 1996
Peer Support Newsletter (Peer Support Foundation Victoria, Ashburton, Vic) April 1996
Curriculum Perspectives (Australian Curriculum Studies Association, Belconnen, ACT) Vol 16 No 1, April 1996
EQ Australia (Curriculum Corporation, Vic) Issue 1, Autumn 1996
Transitions (Youth Affairs Network of Queensland, Fortitude Valley, Qld) Vol 5 Nos 2/3, 1995-6

Overseas:
Democracy and Education (Institute for Democracy in Education, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, USA) Volume 10, No 3, Spring/Summer 1996
AERO-Gramme (AERO, New York, USA) # 18, Spring 1996
Communication Research Trends (Centre for the Study of Communication and Culture, St Louis, USA) Vol 15, No 3, 1995
Education Now (Nottingham, UK) Issue 11, Spring 1996
Options in Learning (ALLP1E, New York, USA) No 16, 1996

Documents

The documents listed in this column are of general background value. A photcopy is available for research purposes. The length and cost (to cover copying and postage) is listed. Please order by code number.
A full, computerised list 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
424 SRC Constitution, Karingle Secondary College (Vic) Student Representative Council - adopted February 1996 (3 pp: $0.60)
425 Seven Counter-Intuitive Suggestions on Developing Authentic Assessment, Nancy Mohr, Principal, University Heights HS, Bronx, USA - paper for the ATC/NSN Spring School, October 1995 (7 pp: $1.00)

transitions

The current issue of transitions, the magazine of the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ), is a special double issue around the theme of 'Young People's Participation'. It contains articles about youth participation in peak bodies, in schools, in service provision for people with intellectual disability, amongst young people from non-English speaking and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background, in local government, and for young people in care. Subscriptions to transitions are available from the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland Inc., PO Box 116, Fortitude Valley Qld 4006.
Phone: (07) 3852 1800; Fax: (07) 3852 1441.

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37/38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46/47, 48, 49, 50, 51/52, 53, 54/55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65/66, 67, 68, 69, 70,
71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77/78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85/86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95/96, 97, 98, 99

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

• Students and Work - 1985 Connect reprint booklet #5 ($5) $ ...........
• 'Youth Radio' issue of 3CR's CRAM Guide (1985) ($1) $ ...........
• Democratic Decision Making in Schools - Victorian PEP (1987) ($3) $ ...........

• Sometimes a Shining Moment (Wigginton) ($25) $ ...........
• Foxfire 9 (Doubleday Anchor) ($25) $ ...........
• Foxfire: 25 Years (Doubleday) ($25) $ ...........
• A Foxfire Christmas (Doubleday hardcover) ($25) $ ...........
• Shining Moments - Foxfire video (1 hour) (loan for 1 week: $5) $ ...........

• SRC Pamphlets Set (6 pamphlets; Youth Affairs Council of Victoria) ($5) $ ...........

• Photocopies of the following documents: $ ...........

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