So many schools are preparing students for a future role in society. What we know at PSCS is that students have a lot to contribute to the community now.

Puget Sound Community School ... see page 11

Education must be relevant to our world and address issues that are focuses for our future, particularly the environment.

SA Student Futures Forum ... see page 3

Young people want the Australia of the future to be a society motivated more by generosity and less by greed - one that places less emphasis on the individual, material wealth and competition, and more on community and family, the environment and cooperation. Young people want to contribute to the decisions which affect them.

ASTEC Report ... see page 4

Looking to the Future

Young people are, of course, the future and should begin to develop as the leaders of that future... At our school, some of the most active students surely brought a disposition toward social change with them, and I believe many students do. We simply facilitated a leadership quality they already had. If we are serious about the development of leaders from our youth, we have to view leadership as steeped in conflict and social action - unless we mean it to be a limp and ambiguous endeavour aimed at satisfying foundations and agencies with questionable interests.

Education Through Social Action ... see page 6

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This Issue

I guess it's the approaching turn of the millennium. There seems to be an increasing interest in involving students and other young people in discussions on "the future", and some of this discussion is represented in this issue. In addition, let's note:

- the National Schools Network Student Futures Conference, held in Bathurst late in 1992 (we still have some copies available of Student Voices, the report of that Conference);
- the South Australian 1995 Forum (see page 3), still spinning off a series of local and regional discussions.

Students' views and voices on likely futures and on future needs are one vital thing: really listening, sharing the action and reflecting those voices in change is another. Let's see what impact is made.

In recent months I've been privileged to work with several schools in Victoria and in Queensland. It has been very interesting to listen to the ways in which students have both a voice and a share of the action in these schools. What often leaps to mind, however, is a model of a continuum - both an awareness that students are active participants in these schools, but that there is still enormous scope to increase and improve that participation. (The 1985 Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA) Conference, I remember, had a workshop stream entitled Increasing Student Participation, recognising that participation is a floating rather than an absolute concept.)

I'm often aware that in talking with students, teachers and administrators, I'm walking a careful line between being supportive of their good practice, and then encouraging them to go further to better practice - without appearing negative or hectoring. "Good; and next you could ..." and "Is it now possible to ..."

I'm also becoming increasingly aware that support for student participation is not primarily an advocacy for the development of individual skills and commitment in students, but rather for institutional and structural changes that will allow and support that participation. The skills can then be increased; the commitment will naturally follow.

Much of the discussion about the future with young people has involved the organisation of search conferences, forums, dreamings, visioning, debates. The sheets of butchers paper and the tapes have been taken away and analysed and the reports written - usually by professionals. Not surprisingly, there are substantial arguments between them about the interpretations - are young people basically pessimistic or optimistic about the future?

Again, I enter my "Good, but now ..." phase. How can we support students and other young people to extend this process - to manage the consultations, to analyse the data, to interpret the diversities, to write the reports? And to seek and negotiate the changes! That means on on-going commitment to participation and consultation - of young people, by young people. Some of the schools I've talked with recently are seriously considering the establishment of student research and advocacy teams around difficult issues - as part of the school curriculum. That's one way of providing students with time, support, recognition, and an on-going structural commitment. I'd be really interested to hear of different ways in which we can push the boundaries, extend participation, move along that continuum. And, I'm sure, so would other Connect readers.

Roger Holdsworth
When we make policy and plans, we very often leave out the people who are most affected - the young people whose needs we are trying to meet.

A public education system has a responsibility to ensure that what we teach today in schools is the best foundation for living and learning tomorrow.

The Department for Education and Children’s Services in South Australia is developing a new Charter for the next fifteen years. A discussion paper called “Creating our future: towards a Charter” has already been circulated to all work sites and to many interested organisations and people.

Who could be more appropriate to begin the consultation process than students?

In December 1995, nearly 250 students from all over South Australia became the Student Futures Forum. They were randomly selected from 125 schools and from Years 5 to 11. Their task was to tell us what they thought schooling for the future should be like.

This is the first time that we have invited children and young people to become partners in our policy and planning processes. The result is a challenge to us not only to listen, but also to deliver.

Like the community at large, this diverse group of students had a variety of opinions on issues important to them. Some wanted school uniforms, others did not. Some welcomed more high tech learning and urged us to hurry up. Others focused strongly on the material world and demanded more and better coordinated environmental action. While some suggestions are clearly not possible - “students will have a lap top, marble desk, mobile phone, printer, cable TV, fax, a personal safe, stereo system and reclining chair” - about life in the fullest sense. They ask us to make more links between school and the real world - to get out more into the community, to make our courses more related to work, to use the outside world as a learning resource. School is one of the few places in the community that can be seen as “kids’ space” and it is clear that our conferees value highly the relationships that can happen, with each other and with teachers. They want to be seen, known and understood as individuals by at least one teacher with whom they can have an ongoing relationship. Above all, they want us to lighten up a bit, to understand that they are at school for years, and that it is important to have fun and a bit of a joke.

Our Challenge

Education at the turn of the century will be as equally diverse as our society, catering for the different learning styles of individuals.

Education must be relevant to our world and address issues that are focuses for our future, particularly the environment. It will employ a combination of hands-on and traditional learning approaches, providing an environment in which students are motivated to learn and from which they can gain a much broader range of skills: skills which will be required in the workplace, such as communication, time management and planning.

So, in order to take advantage of all employment opportunities, students need to be taught a broad range of subjects but also taught how to manage change and adapt.

Education will provide all students with the opportunities and resources to learn how and what they choose, with a focus on first-hand experiences which contribute to living skills.

Students at the turn of the century need to have options. Diversity is the key and education must allow for different pathways. Skills which contribute to learning, working and living must be accessible to all students throughout their education.

The system also needs to be flexible for different learning styles. Education must offer skills appropriate to all aspects of our lives, but enable students to choose which options are best for them and prepare them for their chosen pathways.

Students at the 1995 Student Futures Forum

Copies of the report are available from the Strategic Planning Unit, Department for Education and Children’s Services, GPO Box 1152, Adelaide SA 5001.

Phone: (08) 226 1201;
Fax: (08) 231 0528.
YOUNG AUSTRALIANS’ VIEWS ABOUT THE FUTURE

Young people want the Australia of the future to be a society motivated more by generosity and less by greed - one that places less emphasis on the individual, material wealth and competition, and more on community and family, the environment and cooperation. Young people want to contribute to the decisions which affect them.

Young Australians see science and technology as playing a major role in the type of world in which we live and would like to see more emphasis given to placing it in a social context.

These are some of the findings of the Australian Science and Technology Council (ASTEC) Youth Partnership report entitled Having Our Say About the Future - Young People’s Dreams and Expectations for Australia in 2010 and the Role of Science and Technology, which was released in early March.

The study found that young people are concerned about the global environment - perhaps more than any other issue - and the growing gap between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’. They are also concerned that crime and violence will increase by 2010 and that unemployment will remain an issue over the next 15 years.

They also recognise the value of science and technology in solving the problems confronting society, but are concerned about some of the consequences of scientific and technological advances.

The ASTEC report is the result of a major foresight study that aimed to explore young people’s views of probable and preferred futures for Australia in 2010 and the role of science and technology in shaping these futures.

The project comprised a series of eight workshops involving 150 young people from a variety of backgrounds, and a national opinion poll of 800 young Australians aged between 15 and 24.

Mr John Vines, the Partnership’s Convenor and member of ASTEC, said: “The partners were delighted to have had the opportunity to undertake this study.” He noted that one of the most important findings of the study was the extent to which young people care about Australia’s future.

“When given the time to think about the future, particularly their own preferred futures, most young people became more aware of their own responsibilities to contribute to achieving a better future,” said Mr Vines.

The report makes several practical recommendations on how government and the community can help Australia to realise its potential in the year 2010. These include:

- ensuring science and technology in schools is set in an appropriate social context;
- integrating young people’s values into research and development priorities;
- ensuring the Commonwealth Government listens to young people’s views in areas including science and technology, education, taxation, health and the environment;
- expanding the opportunities of people receiving income support to do community service, environmental conservation work and personal development activities;
- requiring government departments to consider developing new ways for young people to contribute to the policy development process; and particularly a way for young people to talk to the Prime Minister and the Minister for the Environment on environmental issues.

Copies of the report are available from Tanya Jackson at ASTEC on:
phone: (06) 271 5471 or fax: (06) 271 5127.

Richard Eckersley, CSIRO

6.15%
For those who turn 17 in 1996 ...
Are interested in the future ...
Want their views to be heard ...
Then this is a unique opportunity

The Issues
The content of the forum will be drawn from the 200-word statements provided by the selected participants. It will also address the following themes:

- Australia in the world
- Leadership
- The environment
- A sense of belonging
- Technology and its impact
- Multiculturalism
- The economy

Other themes will emerge during the forum, and the participants will develop their own agendas for change and proposals for consideration during the forum.

Prominent Australians will speak to the participants each evening of the forum and the participants themselves will give presentations to each other. Most of the time will be spent in working groups, developing agreed goals for the future and ways to achieve them.

The formal and informal exchanges will be stimulating and productive, and the whole forum will be a unique experience for the participants. The forum will also be uniquely valuable for Australia, since it will represent 17 year old Australians' thoughts on the future.

Selection of Participants
Those people who turn 17 in 1996 are eligible and encouraged to apply.

The application consists primarily of a 200-word statement on the future. The application can be handwritten or typed and forwarded by either mail or fax to the Australian Commission for the Future. Alternatively, the application may be transmitted electronically by e-mail or via the Commission's Internet site. (See Applications for post, fax, e-mail, and Internet site addresses.)

The content of the 200-word statement can be on any aspect of the future or concern about the future. Statements of the selected participants will be copied for circulation to other participants. Selected participants will also receive background documents and assistance to plan their involvement in the forum.

A selection committee has been formed in each state and territory, chaired by a representative of the Australian Commission for the Future. Their task will be to select a representative sample of participants from their state or territory, based on the 200-word statements.

The Results
The most important result to emerge from the forum will be the impact on the participants and on their capacity to analyse and respond to the future. There are also a number of other products that will emerge from the forum, including:

- media coverage of the forum and its content;
- scenarios and strategies produced by the participants;
- reports from the working groups, translated into curriculum materials for secondary schools;
- talks given by prominent Australians.

Note: This is a forum for youth with an adult audience as well.

Administration and Security
The forum will be a well-managed event, with extensive administrative support. Security at Macquarie University will be carefully controlled and every effort will be made to ensure that the participants derive the maximum benefits from the event.
Education Through Social Action

David Greene

We have to believe that we can change things. And the first battle is up here in our heads. We have to be conscious of what’s going on. We must be aware. We have to realise that we are the strength. We can’t let anything move us. We have to stand strong and firm.

Carl Poree, young leader speaking at Youth Rally against New York City budget cuts, May 1993

Today there is a great emphasis in education on what is called contextualised learning or functional context. The stated impetus for much of this thrust is to prepare our youth, or the ‘unskilled’, for employment. The fact that millions of jobs need to be created is never really addressed, and academic education and the development of critical thinking are being cut back to give students a learning context connecting them with work skills. Other critically important contexts exist, including social action to change conditions. Learning is strongest when it is connected with action or practice, and action for social justice is a most important learning context that can mean real empowerment.

The following is a summary of some work being done in this area with inner-city youth in New York.

There are many types of leadership, and many times the term is used very loosely. Administrators, program developers, proposal writers, and others often talk of everything being leadership development. For example, if I learn my spelling, it is leadership development; if I learn to be punctual, it is leadership development. In the broadest sense, this is true, and I wouldn’t argue against a future leader learning to spell correctly or to be on time. Taking responsibility for yourself is a form or stage of leadership, but for this discussion I am talking specifically about leadership for the community - for society and for politics, for citizenship and for organising to fight for better conditions.

At Young Adult Learning Academy (YALA) in the East Harlem community of New York City, we started a project of youth leadership development based on integrating class work, group meetings, organising, and social action. A basic principle here is that students be actively involved in fighting for their own interests and issues - meaning housing, jobs, welfare etc - and that this involvement is the most critical context for the development of new leaders. Young people are, of course, the future and should begin to develop as the leaders of that future.

At our school, some of the most active students surely brought a disposition toward social change with them, and I believe many students do. We simply facilitated a leadership quality they already had.

As a result of this work, new student leaders developed and other leadership was enhanced, while youth influenced and involved other students, teachers, this educational institution, and government and community organisations outside of the school. This was accomplished in a short period of time but continues to have effects on the education process. Even though our school situation has particularities and limitations, some important lessons for education were learned which apply to different contexts.

YALA provides academic and job skills training to young adults (ages 16 to 24) who left high school before completion and have returned. Nearly half are parents, and though motivations for being in the program vary greatly, there is strong interest in obtaining a GED (General Equivalency Diploma) and employment at a living wage. Reading levels on standardised tests range from third to twelfth grade.

These young adults (mainly black and Latino) bring with them important life experiences, anger, and dissatisfaction with the way things are (housing, jobs, health care, education and opportunity). They come from all parts of New York City but are concentrated in the poorest neighbourhoods with the worst services. The program of academic and job skills training is less than four months long and is followed by internships at work sites for an equal period of time, which we hope will lead to employment.

This project’s goal was initially to involve youth in social action and the learning that could take place from reflection and understanding of this experience. The social action would include education, organising, and action around issues of vital interest to students - issues which they themselves had decided to work on and in which they had a personal stake. While many issues were important, young people pushed the need for housing and jobs to the front burner every time. In some ways, the project began as separate from classroom studies, but very soon it became stronger by the integration of classroom and social action outside the classrooms. The process became learning by a unity of theory and practice for developed leaders.

A second and connected goal was the development of student leadership, which could organise and educate other students, independent of teachers and administrators. The dramatic and particular effect which students had and could have on this school, students, teachers, community organisations and government was hoped for but not clearly visualised at the beginning. The potential is for students to actively develop into the leaders we need, to learn and teach others through experiences in social action, to transform the world around them.

Another teacher, Molly Smollett, and I conducted a few workshops in 1991 and 1992 for students on the issue of housing and homelessness, allowing for greater student discussion than our 50-minute classes permit. We supplied students with information about the issue (newspaper articles, graphs, videos etc) and they added their experiences (some students had been homeless, and all had experienced the housing crisis first hand). Other homeless people were invited to participate in
the discussions and to tell their stories. There was no question that students were interested in the discussion, and they began to talk about solutions. Attendance at workshops swelled. Discussions spilled over into classes, and many students expressed interest in continuing to meet. We decided that we needed to have a regular lunchtime group for continuity and the possibility of action to begin tackling these large problems.

We set a lunchtime meeting and called it a Jobs and Housing Workshop, but we soon changed the name to Action for Jobs and Housing. Some students who came at first thought that we were giving out jobs and housing, but there was a core group who saw the need for organising and acting more clearly. We met weekly for lunch hours on Mondays; the school provided pizza, which enabled the group to use important lunch hours and allowed for the discussion to proceed easily.

At first the group was educational only - that is, providing information about the issues and what was happening - but they quickly evolved to be a very active group, taking action to solve real problems they faced: the absence of decent affordable housing and jobs.

It is important to note here that the core of the group consisted of people from my social studies classes. In these classes I tried to combine learning from books, articles, speakers, and film with an active participation in the processes of government, institutions and citizenship. The class provides information on the history and struggles of the past and encourages petitioning, letter writing, public speaking, protesting, reading and discussing, researching etc. on the social issues we face today. Some students were motivated by the class to become involved in action and organising, seeing these as real and relevant to their lives.

The lunchtime group first took on the task of getting signatures for petitions calling on President Clinton (then newly elected) to take steps immediately to end homelessness. They collected 250 signatures, which were sent to the Coalition for the Homeless to be delivered to Clinton. Some students who were less active in the group collected signatures in their neighbourhoods. Students also organised voter registration tables and signed up hundreds of new voters, as well as educating people on the issues and government.

Almost at the same time, I arranged for two students and myself to speak at City Council hearings on proposed budget cuts to youth employment and training programs. One of these students had recently led a petition drive at school that put an end to smoking at the school. In the process of speaking at City Council the students practised many skills, including the preparation of discussing, thinking through, and writing, and the performance of speaking at public hearings. They did a wonderful job and were two of only three young people who spoke. Most of the speakers were employees of these programs, who gave the appearance of only speaking to save their own jobs; speaking to save your job is important, but in this context more was needed.)

The lunchtime group was also opening their meetings to homeless men and women from a Wards Island Shelter program which was downstairs in the same building. While their participation was not consistent, they always added very real dimensions to the discussion and issues. This helped us keep our feet on the ground even when trying to understand broader concepts and implications of the economy, politics, and immediate issues of jobs and housing.

One of the students, together with others in the lunchtime group, named the group STAND - Students Taking A New Direction - and an outspoken 18-year-old woman named Sharon Brown was elected president. I took two emerging leaders to a Homeless Organisations Working Meeting in the Bronx one evening, and the combination of active student leaders and homeless organisers and activists was wonderful for all. Older homeless organisers welcomed the young people as leaders of today and the future, and they offered their experiences, understanding, and connections to guide them. At one STAND meeting, they had a guest speaker from homeless organisations and planned some joint activities in approaching other high school student bodies in the city.

Repeatedly, students who were involved saw the organising and working together as real, not a classroom exercise in the abstract. Several of these students continued and continue to be involved with the homeless who are organising and advocating for themselves. These connections, I know, were and are an inspiration.

Students in STAND have written articles for and helped to distribute a homeless and welfare right publication. At one meeting of the homeless organisations, held at an impressive shelter for the disabled homeless, there were forty people in wheelchairs who participated actively in their own advocacy and organising. Students said that seeing these strong and courageous people ready to fight and speak out was an inspiration to them.

Students seeing their own voices play a role is a crucial piece of this work. Having the issues, activities and targets be based on their informed decisions, their experience, and their basic and immediate interest is also a crucial ingredient.

Youth discussed action around the issue of jobs and training for youth, in which they have a vital stake. They set up a table at the school’s entrance, with petitions for City Council to stop cuts in funds for youth programs. They got several hundred signatures and educated people about who their City Council members were and what they needed to know about youth programs.

Two student leaders attended a legislative breakfast, where they cornered several City Council members and lobbied their support for youth programs. They heard the mayor’s office blame the council and the council blame the state, and both hope for help from Clinton.

One student, Rita Joseph, participated as a speaker in a lunchtime meeting to inform teachers and students about what was going on with Haiti, President Aristede, and Haitian prisoners. She also taught four classes on this subject and did an excellent job.

All students were active in agitating for and planning a rally and lobbying at City Hall. A coalition of City Works programs was meeting together and talking about what to do
over threatened cuts in City Works city funds. STAND students Carl, Sharon and Rita played a key role in pushing this coalition to call a rally for May 21 and pushing the effort forward.

The reluctance of many program people was stirred to action by the outspoken leadership of these students. The students' approach to the issue of a very timidly proposed idea about a rally (raised cautiously by one staff person) was to state that STAND was having a rally and others should fall in line. Once students declared an organised voice for a rally, it was hard for some indecisive staff not to fall in line. Later in the process, STAND students also went to several community-based organisations to mobilise their students to attend and take active parts in the rally and the fight.

Students also enlisted more than 50 youth to testify at City Council hearings. Other teachers at YALA played an important role in supporting and raising a critical awareness of STAND leaders.

Some Conclusions

When students recognise their real self-interest is involved, they will more likely move: to take action, to learn materials, to study, to discuss, to write, to try to reflect and summarise. Students/youth need to have their own experience (past and new) be a vital part of this organising, activating process. Terrific amounts of critical and important education can take place in this process.

Students will more clearly see programs and their futures as their to mould, enliven, enlighten, and participate in when these conditions are in effect. The process of being involved in action (outside the school) makes the education real and powerful. It is also a powerful hook for future learning, citizenship, advancement, and liberation.

The connections between students and community leaders in the process of struggle and active participation in efforts to change conditions, policies etc. is empowering, educating and transforming.

Young people are, of course, the future, and they should begin to develop as the leaders of that future. When Sharon Brown and Chauntie Swann testified at City Council hearings, it was clear they were presenting a view or perspective that was otherwise absent. Several people, including myself, told them that they should run for City Council. Thinking about running for office is only a small part of leadership, but even the consideration of their running for office opens a different discourse.

When Carl Poree spoke at City Council, he asked piercing questions about the concern for youth and where funds were and what they were being spent on. In a meeting with Deputy Mayor Joyce Brown, Carl spoke clearly about youth being like a rare vase that had been left in the dirt, and all that was needed was some care to reveal the existing beauty and richness.

In the process of organising around the rally, students learned about the politics of service agencies, teachers and administrators. They learned to formulate new and clearer questions about what was happening to them and their position in society. After classes ended and teachers were discussing educational theory and practice, studying pedagogy of the oppressed and teachers as intellectuals, Carl Poree and other students participated actively in these readings and discussions.

Youth who were active in STAND have met together outside of school and are planning to get former active students together to continue organising. Newer students have already been active in rallying and speaking for jobs and housing.

Many of the core practices of Foxfire methodology are reflected in this work with students in STAND. Learning was clearly characterised by student action and student interests. They made basic decisions and reflected on what was happening and what to do. A clear connection was built upon work in social studies classes, the lunchtime meetings, and the community. Teachers and students were both learners in this situation, even though some of us had more experience to bring into the stew. Clearly, too, the orientation of the lunchtime group and other work was the struggle to really improve conditions for the community and the city.

Education in the context of social action to improve miserable conditions such as unemployment, inadequate or non-existent housing, poor health care, and inadequate education has an important role to play in leadership development. If we are serious about the development of leaders from our youth, we have to view leadership as steeped in conflict and social action - unless we mean it to be a limp and ambiguous endeavour aimed at satisfying foundations and agencies with questionable interests. Contextualised learning is the subject of much discussion, particularly as we blame youth for being untrained in a contracting job market.

The present context of this focus is the workplace, and the goal is to bring the world of work together with the academic classroom. My concern is that this is being used to educate our youth minimally for available jobs and employers' needs, and not to develop really critical thinking. The context of learning tied to social action can offer an important challenge to learning and thinking, and open avenues of leadership development that historically have proved their worth. Within this context, students wrote, studied, spoke, created, imagined, researched, analysed, dreamed, and reflected on what they needed to learn to struggle and change our world.

David Greene is an instructor at The Young Adult Learning Academy in East Harlem, New York. He specialises in the area of leadership development with young people.


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School Projects Investing in Community Development

The following is an excerpt from a document developed at the Chicago Innovations Forum, Center for Urban Affairs, Northwestern University, 2040 Sheridan Road, Evanston, IL 60208 USA. It is reprinted from Democracy and Education, Volume 10 No 2, Winter 1995. Though most ideas will be familiar to Australian students and teachers (and indeed, many examples have been documented in Connect), it is useful to have such an extensive list in one place.

These are possibilities for academically valid roles for students that also reinforce their valued roles in their community and that serve to develop that community.

The following list of 31 projects is a beginning effort to give concrete examples of how a new partnership between schools and communities might be implemented.

**Students and Teachers**

1. Identify the key assets of the community (businesses, associations, clubs, facilities etc) and create a guidebook for community development. The local Chamber of Commerce or service clubs may cooperate in its publication and dissemination. The initial work can educate students and teachers about their community while initiating a cooperative working relationship with community groups.

2. In cooperation with interested community groups, create community history projects that will enhance commitments to the future. These could be done with senior citizens, ethnic associations, historical societies. The completed work could be published in local newspapers.

3. Working with local development groups, research information that will facilitate community planning, ie inventory vacant lots, identify land ownership, map capital improvement plans, identify economic development groups, update census date on local demographics.

4. In collaboration with local neighbourhood organisations, development groups or business associations, conduct local attitude and consumer market surveys. These could be conducted door-to-door or by telephone.

5. Conduct research on the choices involved in community issues and convene community forums in the school to discuss the issues based upon the background research prepared and presented by students.

6. Most neighbourhood organisations in larger urban neighbourhoods need to learn about developments at the block level and channel information to the block residents. Local students could become ‘area reporters’ for the two or three blocks where they reside, acting as liaison between the neighbours and their associations. This civic information function could be the basis for course work on the nature and practice of democracy.

7. The community development process requires local media to involve residents in planning, notify them of action, and celebrate the local progress. The students, in cooperation with local groups, could create a newspaper serving these functions in areas too small to be served by other media.

8. In cooperation with local government units, students could engage in public service by conducting studies and performing functions with local units of government. They could do air quality monitoring, assist public health officials in surveying toxic sources, conduct traffic control studies etc.

9. In cooperation with local business associations, students could do studies of consumer attitudes and preferences as well as reports on the proposals and ideas of local business people regarding improving economic opportunity. They could also develop proposals for closer links between the school and local employers.

10. Students could become direct participants in development activities such as housing construction and rehabilitation, where they could develop skills and contribute to the development process.

11. Many churches are involved in running community projects such as tutoring programs, sports, services to the elderly, pre-school child care, etc. They usually depend on community volunteers. Students could become volunteer workers, developing skills for future employment while building the community’s capacity to meet local needs.

12. Many non-profit organisations involved in the community development process could use the capacities of students. They could work with the office support staff in connection with a curriculum in office management. They could assist in tracing housing in violation of codes and student the process of enforcement.

13. Every community has organisations involving senior citizens. There are innumerable ways for students to cooperate with these groups and their members. All of the projects described above could be conducted in cooperation with individual senior citizens or groups. Intergenerational housing developments could be jointly studied and planned by students and seniors. Students
could develop a matching service connecting students and seniors to provide mutual support, i.e. daily phone checks to see that seniors are all right etc.

14. In cooperation with local artists or an arts council, students could create outdoor murals to beautify the local environment.

15. As major users of the parks, students could study the history of community parks, survey local residents’ use and desires, sample students’ use and desires, and develop a neighborhood plan for park development and improvement.

16. As part of a curriculum focused on energy issues, students could develop an energy efficiency program for their school, with the savings placed in a fund to capitalise new venture development by students.

17. Students could conduct a study of crime and vandalism in the neighborhood by using data provided by the police force. They could also survey community attitudes towards crime. Based upon this information, they could develop a proposal for crime reduction, seek student participation, and seek local governmental and community support.

18. As specially trained and skilled professionals, teachers have a great deal to contribute to groups involved in community development. They could develop a school inventory of the skills and expertise they have to offer. This inventory of capacities could be made into a teacher skills directory and distributed to local community development groups seeking technical advice and assistance. Subsequent requests for assistance could also be the basis for involving students in apprentice-like learning experiences with their teachers.

19. Most community development groups have boards of directors representing diverse interests in the community. Administrators and teachers could indicate a commitment to serve on the boards, contributing their knowledge and identifying opportunities for school participation in organisational development projects.

20. A special course in business accounting could be developed for local small business people. Similarly, a course on local community development enrolling both students and local adults could be created.

21. Special courses to help people earn credentials, such as the test on General Educational Development, could assist local residents in their job preparation process.

In-School Ventures

22. A centre created by the school involving teachers, students and local citizens could experiment with the development, use and sale of neighborhood technologies to improve the local economy. These technologies could include solar energy systems, greenhouse horticulture, energy-saving activities and materials, waste treatment and recycling systems.

23. Students could develop commercial ventures for community maintenance and improvement. These could include contracts to maintain and develop railroad and local public transit embankments, maintenance of lots for the parks authority, tree planting projects with local block clubs etc.

24. Using school facilities, develop a student enterprise to prepare and deliver Meals on Wheels to home-bound citizens.

25. Students and teachers could develop an enterprise using school equipment, when not in use, to create a computer centre providing book-keeping, word processing, or mailing services for local enterprises.

26. Enterprise 'incubators' could be developed in local schools. There, students would plan and develop student-run community enterprises such as growing flowers, auto repair, or a 'rent-a-kid' service.

27. The profits from these ventures could be used to create a scholarship fund or contributed to a community economic development fund.

Facilities

28. The school could develop a student-run 'latch-key' program for the children of working parents (perhaps staffed, in part, by older students).

29. Community facilities needed by both students and citizens could be sued by both groups, cutting back on public facilities costs. Thus, the community library, gym and swimming pool could be in the school, bringing citizens, teachers and students into more frequent contact with each other.

Purchasing

30. Local schools could make special efforts to contract for goods and services with local merchants. They could cooperate with local economic development efforts to help create local markets for local ventures. In large school systems, local authority for purchasing could be granted to encourage support of local vendors.

31. Students could conduct a study of their school's purchasing patterns and procedures. This information could then be made available to local merchants and economic development groups.
Puget Sound Community School, Seattle, Washington, USA

Changing Paradigms

Christine Calmes, Hanna Chung, Kim Casey, Aaron Rabin, and Andy Smallman

Last month we introduced you to The Puget Sound Community School, an alternative school for middle and high school students in the Puget Sound area of Washington state, USA. This month we’re going to tell you how the school got started and focus in on a couple different aspects of our program - our internet work and our apprenticeship program.

Director Andy Smallman describes the beginning of The Puget Sound Community School this way:

I like to say that PSCS was in the process of being created for many years, from the time in elementary school that my third grade teacher pulled me into a packed auditorium by tugging at my earlobe. Or when in junior high school my seventh grade PE teacher accused me of doing something I hadn’t done and spanked me with one of my tennis shoes. Or in high school when one of my best friends failed a math competency test because he ran out of time, and was then forced to take a semester of ‘bonehead’ math (as it was called).

In each of these instances, and countless others like them, I learned in school that I did not matter, that I was nothing more than a product on an assembly line being tinkered with each year by another set of adults who had their own agendas for me. When I graduated from high school, I wanted as far away from education as I could get.

The funny thing was, after several years away from school, I decided that I wanted to be a teacher. Certainly not one of those ear-tugging, spanking, time-testing types, but one who might make a positive difference in the lives of children. So I went to college, found that I could direct my own learning, and then on into graduate school where I first earned my teaching certificate and then a Master’s degree.

I landed a job in a wonderful alternative elementary school where I was allowed to explore many of my ideas about teaching. I taught the oldest children in this school - 10, 11 and 12 year-olds. But each year I sent those who outgrew the school into a world where there was not much choice for them educationally. It seemed most schools for students this age became very rigid, very academically-oriented. My belief was that students this age needed to feel a sense of connection to their community, needed to feel that their voices were heard, needed to feel that they were reasonable; in short, my belief was that students this age needed to be trusted and respected for the unique people they were. And from that basic premise, the Puget Sound Community School was born.

Our first organisational meeting took place in December, 1993. A group of interested parents gathered in my home and I outlined the philosophical foundation of the school. From that first meeting, enough momentum was generated that, in hindsight, makes it appear as if things just came together quickly and easily. In truth, it was hard work.

Having never done anything like it before, my wife, Melinda Shaw, and I stumbled through the maze of starting a business, from licensing to incorporating, to applying for our non-profit status. I have joked that if we knew all it would take to get started, we probably never would have begun. But a little bit of ignorance and a lot of faith, combined with our belief that we were doing right by young people, guided us through. In short order we had registered enough students to balance our first year’s budget.

I’ll never forget the first day of school. It was a beautiful, warm, sunny day in early September, 1994. The ten students (we would soon add an eleventh) and I met in a local park where we spent the day talking and playing games. That night I came down with a very high temperature and we had to cancel the second day of school while I recuperated. One of the parents joked, “Well, Andy lasted a day.”

I plan to last many more, actually. I created my dream job and I expect I’ll be doing this for a long, long time. From our humble beginning, I look to today with 27 students enrolled, then to next year when we will have 36. Down the road I envision a program for children of all ages, doing what they want with their time all day, everyday, completely trusted to develop fully and wholly in their own unique way. Who could want more?
Kim introduces some aspects of the school:

I too, have found my dream job at PSCS. There is a positive energy surrounding this school that carries it forward. Students also love being at school each day, and have often expressed disappointment about holidays. They have taken charge of their education, and are excited about the activities they are pursuing. Students carry this energy and enthusiasm with them into the wider community in many different ways. For instance, some have become very involved with the internet:

Hello, my name is Hanna Chung, and I am absolutely crazy about the internet!! I work on my Power PC Apple Macintosh about an hour a day. I mostly work on my homepage and, as my mother would say, crawl the web. I very much enjoy teaching others whatever I can about homepages or really whatever they want to learn. That I know.

I am very much looking forward to our monthly outing at the Speakeasy Cafe. This is a cafe in downtown Seattle that has computers connected to the internet, great food, live music and very cool people. The Speakeasy is our internet server and they generously let PSCS stay overnight with unlimited time on the computers about once a month. For me, it is utter heaven.

Most of us stay up all night talking, eating, or getting paid for doing something that I love to do. It makes me very happy. I am very thankful in PS CS for the environment that it provides.

Last time we drank 50 bottles all together. It’s definitely the highlight of my month.

The people at the Speakeasy are very supportive of the school. They provide space for other pages that the school maintains. I help maintain the Good Shepherd Center homepage in exchange for classroom space on Wednesday mornings. The Good Shepherd Center is a big building that houses many pretty cool non-profit organizations. It’s a really good place to look for community service opportunities. I also maintain the school’s Child Care Team homepage. We set up the page to announce our services and have included our resumes on-line.

All this experience creating and maintaining homepages recently led to my first paying job. My Dad owns a small business in the bay area of California and he hired me to make their homepage for $100.00. It’s very hard for me to believe while I’m working on the homepage that I am.

Another way that students are involved in the wider community is through our apprenticeship program. We work to set up each student who is interested with an apprenticeship of their choice. So, students are working with playwrights, jugglers, photographers, etc. learning about a profession or activity of interest to them.

I’m Christine, yes, a PSCSer, and yes, I’m going to tell you about my apprenticeship with the Seattle Youth Involvement Network. I do a lot of copying, stapling, and I help with typing stuff, and it’s really not boring because I’m doing stuff I care about. Besides, it’s not only copying and typing. I help with ideas, and I call people to see if they are still interested in volunteering with the community. Some of the projects include helping homeless people, cleaning up places, etc. It’s a nice opportunity for me to get involved with community projects, get my friends involved, and meet people.

Alex Karpoff is apprenticing with a horse trainer. She has riding lessons in exchange for working four hours each week at the stables. Her work includes filling water buckets in the stalls and paddocks, mucking out 3 to 7 stalls (she can now do each one in 15 minutes or less), and cleaning and oiling tack. Alex is excited to be learning to ride. Once she has the basics down she plans to move on to stadium jumping and dressage.
Aaron Rabin describes his apprenticeship at the Wilderness Awareness School this way:

On Thursdays I find myself walking through an emerald green forest. Thick masses of stringy moss hang from vine maples that plaster the almost completely hidden forest. My apprenticeship is tracking. When I tell people this, half say, 'So you run all day?' Well, that's only half true.

It begins with about an hour's drive into a small town called Duvall. Just past it is where my friend Bow lives. Although he takes it for granted, I would give anything to own his huge house, cottage, two carports, two ponds, one lake, three cars, and forty acres that I call home on Thursdays. Once there, we walk or drive into the wilderness around his house. We take walks to track and give respect to the forest. We make fires, and practise our survival skills. A lot of times the thing to do in the woods is to lay back, relax, and become invisible to the animals which I have learned to do. That way, usually the birds and animals will act as if everything is normal and will come to you.

Tracking is a way to identify with nature and to make all of your senses aware, to feel the magnetic energy of animals and their spirits and to learn my own habitat. You see, almost all Americans are alien to their own state. Almost none know what plants you can eat, what plants are poisonous, or what kinds of animals, birds, rodents, and amphibians live near by. The tracking and awareness school I help with and am taught by have done studies which show that most people tested don't know a fourth of the plants growing on their own front lawn.

I have been taught by about four teachers how to identify the tracks of deer, coyote, beaver, raccoon, bobcat, cougar, bear, and so on. I can now identify some of the calls of red tailed hawks, robins, stellar jays and crows. I know the names and some uses on site of dandelion, rosebush, nettles, willow trees, plantain, salmon berries, cedar trees, Oregon grape, and many other plants.

My regular teacher is Jon Talbot and he has showed us almost everything we have learned. He is a fantastic teacher and shows you the ways of the forest and the animals in a way you would never think of. For example, he has taught us how to identify a track. He says that any mark on the ground is a track, and it's true. Not just animals leave tracks. Leaves, branches, anything can leave tracks. Usually we try to find the animal tracks though. When we think we've found one, my friends Bow, Woody, and Greg who do this apprenticeship with me, gather around the track with the teacher and I. The students huddle around and throw out ideas while the teacher keeps silent. When we think we know what the track is we consult him. He'll ask us if we're positive and usually we'll say almost, just to be safe. Then, he'll run us through what he sees and where he thinks the majority of the weight was in the animal at the time and so on, until he finally gives us the answer. We're usually about 75 percent wrong, but now we have a picture of this track in our minds so that we will know what it is next time. We're answering more and more correctly, and are getting a better sense of tracking through this apprenticeship.

The students' work at their apprenticeships and on the internet exemplify their current involvement in the community. So many schools are preparing students for a future role in society. What we know at PSCS is that students have a lot to contribute to the community now. Students are experiencing first hand the kind of contributions they can make, and many organisations are benefiting from their presence.

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Alternative assessments, as opposed to standardised tests, are flexible tools which can capture a rich array of students' abilities and knowledge. This form of assessment is often called 'authentic' assessment because it records and judges the qualities of actual students' performances (Wiggins, 1989).

The alternative assessment scene is usually shared by multiple participants: invited guests, teachers, and students. As recognised by Wiggins (1993) however, students are the primary client of all assessment. This is one of the forgotten facts in today's educational reform efforts. As participants in alternative assessment, students' voices are rarely heard on the issues being raised in different education forums around the United States. One direct way to know about the assessment experiences of students is to listen to them. How do they understand the role of assessment in their own educational experience?

For the past five years, the Center for Children and Technology has been working collaboratively with students and teachers at two New York City high schools. These two schools have developed assessment systems that are at various levels. Part of our work with them has involved documenting teachers’ and students’ experiences with alternative assessment. In order to examine the role of alternative assessment in students' educational experiences, we conducted in depth interviews with sixteen (16) students from the above two schools. We talked to eight (8) students in each school.

Because of their participation in the alternative assessment process, these students provided interesting views about their education by comparing their experiences with alternative assessment systems to their experiences with standardised testing, and daily life. Based on these educational experiences, the students revealed that their understanding of the assessment process and system is filled with both approval as well as concern.

Students’ approval of the alternative assessment system

Types of assessment activity:

Roundtable and presentation activities have become an integral part of the assessment system in these two high schools. Roundtables are moments in the assessment process when the students have the responsibility to demonstrate to teachers, students' colleagues, parents, and invited guests that they have produced a considerable amount of work in their portfolios; and that they have mastered specific habits of learning. They have to discuss and defend their work in a roundtable format. The collection of materials included in students' portfolios is usually the testimony of social and intellectual growth through students' research and project-based work over several years (4 years or less). In the other high school, which has a mechanical engineering major in one classroom, the students work in small collaborative groups to design and construct devices over the course of three weeks. At the end of this period, students present their projects to colleagues, outside guests, and teachers for critique.

Self-assessment indicators:

Overall, students talked about these alternative assessment processes in terms of communication and self expression, ownership, maturity and responsibility, flexibility, awareness of acquired knowledge through its use, personal interest in learning, self-esteem and confidence, and preparation for college. These are some of the indicators that they use to assess their own learning and personal growth.

Self-expression and explanation:

The students told us that the communicative aspects of alternative assessment such as presentations, roundtables, and written journals were helpful tools for self-expression and explanation during the learning process. All of the students reported that presentations and roundtables help them to "see improvements in [their] work." They also indicated that they preferred these modes of assessment (roundtables and presentations) because they allow other people to see immediately what they are really able to do with what they have learned in the classroom.

One student said: "It's like [assessors] look at you but they can look inside you. It doesn't allow me to hide behind a [grade] of 95."

Another student added: "It allows you to have a say and to make sure your teacher knows what you are doing."

Sense of ownership:

The students felt that the work they produced in their assessments belonged to them. As one student reported: "I like to think for myself. I want my ideas to come out and the work to be mine."

Demonstration of knowledge:

Students noted that this assessment system is more demanding than traditional tests which require them to memorise lessons. Several students noted that the alternative
Students' concerns about the alternative assessment system

Despite students' positive experiences of the system, they were not in absolute agreement about the implementation of alternative assessment systems in their schools. They spoke of their fears about aspects of the alternative assessment approach that they sometimes perceived as contradictory. Not only was the work demanding but it was harder compared to the work they have done in their regular classes. Their concerns centred around issues of (1) accountability; and (2) community’s and society’s perception of the assessment system.

Accountability issues:

The accountability issues that these students raised are related to the alternative curriculum and assessment at their schools as compared to more traditional practices. One concern was that they felt they were not provided with enough basic mathematics skills as defined in textbooks. They further explained that the system does not prepare them for the Regents Competency Tests (RCT) and Student Aptitude Tests (SAT) exams.

The students also do not know how these exams and their learning experience can be reconciled. They wonder why they are being trained in this excellent system and at the same time, their learning is being tested with traditional assessment methods outside their schools.

One student said: “We don’t get what regular high school students get, like RCTs. They don’t really prepare us for the RCTs. They’re trying to get rid of it. They go over it a little bit but not for a whole semester. I think we should be prepared for the RCT’s and SAT’s exams.”

When a student was asked why she thinks that she needs to take these exams, she replied: “The tests are still here and [high school] students need to pass them in order to graduate despite the portfolio system. And students who want to go to good colleges may not get good SAT scores and some colleges just look at these.”

The tension with the alternative assessment as these students are experiencing it right now is that they are being very well prepared for college and life in general, but at the same time they do not know how they will perform in schools which use a different grading system. Moreover, some of the students reported that their parents question whether the alternative assessment system will help them graduate at the same level as other students in traditional classrooms and schools.

One student said: “My mother wanted to know why there were no grades. She wanted to know how I was going to graduate from this system.” Although his mother was concerned about the assessment system at the school level, the student was convinced that the portfolio assessment system shows his real abilities and his true self in the learning process. He argued further that: “It’s just like you know more about yourself than your teachers know about you when you’re doing the portfolio assessment thing. It’s better than regular RCT’s exams.”

Assessment community and societal issues:

Several students raised questions about community participation in assessment and pointed to the social context in which assessment is embedded. Their concerns centred on issues of implementation, expansion, longevity and continuity, and respect of the alternative assessment system.

Outside assessor:

Students were conflicted about the role of outside assessors in the assessment process. They were asked who they think should assess their work and why.

Some students thought that visitors did not have the appropriate contextual information about their work, and therefore could not be expected to have any say. As one student said: “I don’t think visitors who don’t know your work should assess your learning. Because when I presented, sometimes
my whole project does not get read before they assess. Perhaps they should be invited but they shouldn’t have a say in the grading.”

Other students felt that outsiders forced them to explain their thinking more. They emphasised the issue of unfamiliarity as an important step in the evaluation of their work during presentation and roundtable. One student said: “It’s better if people who are familiar with your work are not at your roundtable, because you can be able to know whether you can or cannot explain your work to people who are not familiar with it.” Another student added: “Because if you are able to explain your work to someone who does not know it, then you know that you mastered that work.”

However, the rest of the students thought that teachers, student colleagues, and outside assessors should be involved in the assessment process. Moreover, some of them argued that even if visitors are not given the power to give grades, they should at least be invited to attend and comment during roundtable and presentation sessions. They like having everybody invited: teachers, peers and invited guests. They have experienced that this community:

- supports student’s work;
- provides different opinions about student’s work; and
- becomes aware of student’s real work - especially parents.

Seriousness issues:

Peer, family and society present constant reminders to students of the precarious nature of alternative assessment systems. When students share their alternative assessment experiences with others, they get little support from families and peers who are in more traditional educational settings. Students reported that those outside the system tend to trivialise their alternative assessment experiences. For example, one student indicated that “some students don’t take the [assessment] system seriously.”

Modern culture still believes in numbers and grades as an objective picture of what students know and are capable of. This belief is a myth. According to Ostrow (1995), standardised tests do not show what students know but rather what they do not know, and does it quite nicely. Alternative assessment approaches, on the other hand, provide students with both experiences: what they know and don’t know. For example, when students were asked about their thoughts on this way of assessing their work, one of them said: “I am able to assess my work to find my weak and strong points.” Another answered: “There is no way you can misguide yourself. You have all your work in front of you. You see what you’ve done. You see for yourself what you should’ve done. And the self-assessment basically helps explain that. You know for yourself next time the things that you have to do.”

Some students are able to discriminate between what standardised tests and alternative assessments tell them about themselves and their learning. However, these tensions between old and new systems remain problematic for most students.

Conclusion

Students acknowledge alternative assessments as valuable to their learning. It helps them to demonstrate their knowledge to others and to gain insights into their strengths and weaknesses as learners. What counts most is what students think about and can do with their own learning. As the students noted, alternative assessment is demanding, and therefore it is difficult but also rewarding for them. As teachers and learners they have a sense of their own limits. Their acquired knowledge and a supportive learning environment help them to go through these difficulties and get ready for college.

According to Greene (1995): “...We acknowledge the harshness of situations only when we have in mind another state of affairs in which things would be better. Similarly, it may only be when we think of humane and liberating classrooms in which every learner is recognised and sustained in her or his struggle to learn how to learn that we can perceive the insufficiency of bureaucratised, uncaring schools. And it may be only then that we are moved to choose to repair or to renew” (p. 5).

Most students in our study thought that going to college was out of their reach. Now it has become a graspable reality for them because of these alternative assessment systems which have helped them release their educational imagination.

Schools need to have an active role in building new standards with colleges during the transitional period within which students go from alternative high schools to traditional colleges. They also need to look at what students are benefiting from and how they perform after high school.

References


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Yahooligans

Yahoo has opened Yahooligans, a searchable and browsable index of the Internet designed specifically for 8 to 14 year olds. At present the main categories are: “Around the World,” “Art Soup,” “Computers and Games Online,” “Entertainment,” “School Bell,” “Science and Oddities,” “Sports and Recreation,” and “The Scoop.” The site works much like the main Yahoo index, but for those of you who may not be familiar, both product and searching help are available under “Info”.

http://www.yahooligans.com/

Text only: http://www.yahooligans.com/text/

Safe Schools Mailing List

The ACT will be hosting a series of forums in April addressing violence in schools. The Forum is aimed at identifying and promoting effective ways of dealing with violence in schools and developing proactive strategies and presentations about successful strategies currently operating in schools. The outcomes will form the basis of the ACT recommendations to the National Steering Committee to develop a report on effective strategies emerging from the forums.

A Safe Schools Mailing List has been created to provide an opportunity for educators and students at all levels to discuss issues that relate to dealing with violence in schools.

Some of the topics for discussion will address how school culture can change to address violence as exhibited in its many forms, and will include:

• how to desensitise students to video culture;
• the relationship of race and/or culture to violence;
• inclusive practices for students with a range of behaviours;
• how to deal with bullying;
• anger management.

Student participants will be facilitated in discussion about when, where, why and how violence occurs and be sought from a range of perspectives, including perpetrators, victims and observers.

To join the Safe-Schools Mailing List, send the following e-mail message:

to: majordomo@actein.edu.au
from: <your e-mail address>
subject: (leave this line blank)
body: subscribe safe-schools
       (turn off your signature)

Hope to meet you there!

Jan Henryon, Chisholm PS, ACT
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Youth Monitor

Youth Monitor is an information bulletin for researchers and workers in the area of youth studies, published by the National Clearinghouse for Youth Studies.

Youth Monitor is not an electronic discussion group or listserv, but is purely a distributed electronic newsletter. It takes you into our gleanings from the Internet, gives you highlights about events, new research, and gives you news from the National Clearinghouse for Youth Studies, home of the print journal Youth Studies Australia.

Refer to the print journal Youth Studies Australia for in-depth articles on youth research. It has a popular feature also called Youth Monitor - covering newspaper articles on youth issues, but it's too long to reproduce as an electronic mail message, and so the electronic newsletter aims to promote other current interest news-items for youth workers and researchers.

You can access it on the web at http://www.utas.edu.au/docs/ahugo/NCY8/monitor.html

or send a message to: Youth.Monitor@educ.utas.edu.au

asking to have it delivered to your e-mail address.

Anne Hugo

Publications from the NCYLC

School Exclusions: student perspectives on the process (Jackie Taylor, Research Report 001/95; $10)

Research by the National Centre has found that students who are suspended or expelled from school overwhelmingly believe they are not listened to during the exclusion process. This research report also analyses education legislation and policy and collates available statistics on school exclusion.

Promoting Youth Participation: a rights perspective (Melanie Kaplun, Discussion Paper 002/95; $10)

This paper will be useful to any community or youth organisations considering the complex question of youth participation. The literature is reviewed and arguments are put forward as to why youth participation should be encouraged. Such participation is seen as fundamental to the promotion of children's and young people’s rights. Models surveyed include consultation, youth advisory committees, peer research and peer education. Barriers and difficulties in embracing youth participation are canvassed and guidelines and principles for introducing youth participation are outlined.

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April 1996
SRC AND JSC RESOURCE FILE

SRC Expectations

The following statement was circulated to all SRC members at Marian College, Ararat (Vic) by Inke, the SRC Chairperson:

Attention: SRC Representatives and Executives

The following points are the general expectations of SRC Representatives in 1996 as appointed by the executive council on Monday 4th March 1996:

- All SRC class representatives are expected to attend general meetings in the Marian College Library during the lunchtime of every second Wednesday.
- If it is impossible for you to attend a general meeting, it is required that a substitute representative is present to take notes and report back to class. An apology must be put in at the meeting to excuse your absence. This also helps the executive to account for every representative, present or absent.
- Eventually we will have an assembly timetabled on the day of each general meeting during which representatives will have the chance to report back to the class rather than using the class time of one particular subject. This time will also give class members the opportunity to give feedback and ideas to class representatives.
- Any representatives who are aware of current issues, events etc which involve the SRC, are expected to make a report at the general meeting when business arising or other issues are discussed. Representatives may meet with SRC executives or teachers before general meetings to discuss business arising or issues they wish to discuss with the rest of the SRC.

If students have any questions or comments regarding these points, they may speak to any of the executive members either at or before the next general meeting.

Thank you and good luck.

JSC Investiture

Various schools organise official ceremonies to present Junior School Council badges to incoming representatives. Some schools have some of the previous year’s JSC members present the badges.

At Preston South Primary School (Vic), the newly elected Mayor of the City of Darebin accepted the school’s invitation to attend and present badges to JSC members. He then invited the JSC to visit the Council Chambers. Largely because of the Mayor’s presence, the local paper also attended and photographed the ceremony.

Student Council Performance Plan

Student Council members at Glenmore State High School (Qld) have developed and each year complete a Performance Plan for their work. This includes:

- My required responsibilities are:
  - to uphold the School’s Code of Conduct;
  - to abide by the School’s Dress Code;
  - to sustain a reasonable academic effort.

- My personal commitments are:
  - ..... 
  - ..... 
  - ..... "

Each student develops details for the second half of the Plan, and these statements are then signed and witnessed.

As well as the Student Council, there are a series of Year 12 Committees in areas such as: Graduation, Social Club, Magazine, Sun Smart, Community Service and Sports. Each Committee has office-bearers (Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer) and develops a statement of Objectives, Activities to be Undertaken, and Proposed Time Scale.

JSC Student Forum - Introductory Activity

The Preston-Reservoir Junior School Council (JSC) Network is holding a JSC Training Day on the morning of Wednesday May 1st at Norris Bank Primary School (Vic). This is the first such activity in the Network for a couple of years.

As an introductory activity, each JSC has been asked to prepare a poster or similar display illustrating their structure and work. These posters will be placed around the hall at the start of the day. Each JSC member attending will be given an ‘investigation sheet’ on arrival, and asked to find such things as: ‘the largest JSC’, ‘the newest JSC’, ‘two activities of each of three JSCs’ and so on. We’ll probably form small teams (2 or 3 people) within each JSC to wander round and find the answers.

Each JSC will also have to have some representatives left ‘at home’ to answer questions.

We’ll let you know how it goes.
ANGRY TALKS ALCOHOL

Last year, Angry Anderson attended the Riverina Regional SRC Conference held at Laurel Hill Forestry Camp between November 27 and December 1.

Angry’s aim was to educate Riverina Student Council representatives about the issue of Alcohol Abuse. His workshop was a huge success. Through Angry talking about his past experience, including twenty years as an alcoholic, students were informed first-hand of the effects of alcohol and drugs. Angry was an inspiration to all students and staff because of his honesty and his brilliant public speaking. He spoke without notes and answered questions for an hour and a quarter before flying back to Sydney. Angry was so impressed with the students and their questions that he has volunteered to speak at the Riverina Regional SRC’s ‘Risk Minimisation’ Conference to be held in June this year.

There were also many other issues that were dealt with at the Conference. Brad Gray, from the AIDS Council of NSW, ran a workshop on Homophobia. This was also highly successful. Other issues workshoped included: Eating Disorders, Youth Suicide/Trauma Management, Road Safety, Racism and Working with Primary SRCs.

There was great attendance at the camp - 92 students from 36 schools. The students will now implement what they have learnt from issues that have been discussed.

As usual the camp was brilliant and an inspiration to all those who attended. It continues the fine traditional of Riverina Regional SRC activities.

Tanya Hawthorne
for the Riverina Regional SRC

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POVERTY
SOME MORE THAN OTHERS!
A National Conference for Secondary Students
Ormond College, University of Melbourne
9th - 12th July, 1996

Visualise a young Aboriginal student from an isolated rural settlement sitting beside a young refugee from Cambodia and a homeless young person from Melbourne, and being challenged by those who have worked to address some aspect of poverty, empowering each other to creatively explore poverty in all its forms, and then writing music or a piece of drama together to challenge others to act towards change.

These are scenes we expect at the national residential conference for secondary school students - Poverty - Some More Than Others - to be held in Melbourne in July.

This student-run event aims to promote inclusive dialogue that translates into action in ways that are relevant and interesting to young people. This is your conference, your ideas and your future.

Schools are invited to select two students to attend the conference. We particularly encourage you to select students who have a deep concern about poverty and its denial of human dignity, and who have a background in student leadership or community involvement, or who have a particular flair for journalism, creative writing, the visual or performing arts, or other aspects of communication.

This is a conference with a difference! It is the first event of its kind anywhere in the world. It is planned by a team of students, community leaders and educators from all three school systems, and has already attracted the interest of many professional people across Australia.

The conference fee is $350. This covers all meals, accommodation, conference activities and materials. There are 180 places available for secondary students in years 11-12 from Western Australia, the Northern Territory, Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, the ACT and Tasmania.

Jenny Sharwood

The conference will provide an opportunity to:

• work with experts from a variety of disciplines focusing on poverty;
• meet people from all around Australia of different backgrounds;
• travel and see another side of Melbourne;
• create on-going connections;
• Shape Tomorrow Today.

The conference is an opportunity for you to interact with a spectrum of peers and mentors, and share your thoughts on the elusive notion of poverty. By actively participating during your stay, we hope that you will learn, share and be challenged to discover new dimensions in dealing with poverty, both locally and beyond.

It is not too late to apply (though the initial closing date was 29th March). Contact the organisers (opposite) as soon as possible.
Shaping Tomorrow Today

The Shaping Tomorrow Today Association Inc. is an inclusive, non-profit, non-affiliated network of educators, students and members of the wider community which is committed to challenging and enabling students, in partnership with others, to harness their energy, their talents, their creativity and their dreams to build a better future. We organise forums and national conferences which bring students together to examine the major human issues of our time. In an intellectual and artistic environment, students develop critical, constructive and creative reflections and responses to these issues, which are then shared with the presenters and the participants.

The committee consists of teachers and students from Government, Catholic, Independent and Jewish schools, and educational and community consultants, and includes the Education Coordinator of the Brotherhood of St Laurence, Mr Basil Varghese. We believe our diversity is one of our greatest strengths. We are united by our commitment to and belief in young people and by our belief that educational programs should include inspirational and unforgettable experiences which transcend the usual, divisions we artificially place between different learning areas. Such experiences should be challenging and meaningful, allowing students to realise that education is an exciting, lifelong process and that they can contribute creatively and constructively to their community.

We are unique in that every stage of the planning and management of the events we organise. This ensures that the issues and activities are relevant and meaningful to the young people who participate and that they know their ideas, responses and beliefs will be respected, listened to and acted upon. It also ensures that the atmosphere will be one of insight, acceptance, encouragement, support and cooperation. Students will therefore build up the leadership skills which they will need to contribute effectively to their communities and ultimately to be the shapers of their own tomorrow.

Jenny Sharwood

Contact:
Mrs Jenny Sharwood
Conference Secretary
1/4 Sweyn Street
Balwyn North Vic 3104
Ph: (03) 9816 4786 (h);
(03) 9830 1388
(bh - Fintona Girls' School)
Fax: (03) 9888 5682
(Fintona Girls' School)

Full Service Schools Conference
Adelaide
9th - 10th September 1996

The Australian Centre for Equity through Education is hosting a conference to examine both the practical and policy implications of school based access to services. How can education, health and community services collaborate with families and communities to ensure that a full range of services are accessible to all children and young people?

The Full Service Schools: Working together for better futures conference will be held in Adelaide at the Grosvenor Hotel from the 9th to the 10th of September, 1996. The conference will provide a unique opportunity to consider existing models and new strategies for Australian schools and services.

We are seeking papers that address both practice and policy across governments, systems and agencies and across health, education and social services. If you are interested in presenting a paper please send an abstract to the ACEE by 30 April, 1996.

For further information and registration details contact ACEE.

Registration costs:
Early bird registration (before June 30th) $140.00
Full Registration $170.00
Concession (students and unemployed) $100.00

The ACEE is keen to get students involved in the conference but, unfortunately, cannot fully subsidise places and still keep the conference affordable. However, the ACEE is looking into sponsorship possibilities.

Dev Mukherjee, Research Officer
Australian Centre for Equity through Education
"Better Schools for Better Futures"
4-16 Yurong St (Level 3)
Darlinghurst NSW 2010
Ph: (02) 332 3548
Fax: (02) 332 3541
WWW:
The ACEE is funded by the Australian Youth Foundation.
National Education Demonstration in Armidale

COLLECTIVE WISDOM

On Friday 23 February a unique national demonstration of the application in education of multimedia and associated technologies was carried out in Armidale, the regional NSW educational centre. Entitled Collective Wisdom, Armidale, the demonstration provided a national model for the application of multimedia and associated technologies including the Internet to achieve educational objectives.

The demonstration centred upon work by a representative group of over fifty pupils from six primary and secondary schools preparing material on “A day in our life” which was then sent electronically to a central site where other students turned the material into World Wide Web pages. While teachers assisted, all the core work was carried out by the students, with the results made available worldwide as the day progressed.

The demonstration also included a range of supporting activities such as a national media presentation, a seminar and displays which allowed visitors to try the technology themselves.

Martin Levins, Collective Wisdom’s project manager and head of computing studies at The Armidale School, noted the technology itself was not new, nor was its application in education.

“What is unique about Collective Wisdom,” Mr Levins said, “is the way the Project crosses traditional divides between primary and secondary schools and public and private schools to encourage the cooperative, practical advanced application of the technology by the students themselves.

“The Project also strikes at the heart of the common Australian belief that metropolitan equals leading edge.

“We face great problems in the country in gaining adequate recognition and support for our work. The demonstration is designed to overcome this problem by providing a national showcase for our achievements to this point,” Mr Levins concluded.

Objectives

The demonstration aimed to:

• showcase Armidale capabilities, showing what can be achieved in educational terms while driving home the message that leading edge is not the same as metropolitan;

• increase support for the Project itself, thus aiding its further development and encouraging cooperative action among the educational community.

Form of Demonstration

The demonstration was broken into two parts.

The morning session targeted the national audience. It began with a forty minute introductory session including a press conference. This was followed by the main demonstration in which a group of students at the Armidale Town Hall processed material supplied electronically from school sites, into World Wide Web pages. The results were summarised at the end of the morning and made available via the Internet.

The morning session was linked electronically to a supporting event at the Country Embassy in Sydney.

The afternoon session targeted the local audience. It began with a demonstration session. However, unlike the morning session this consisted of a series of displays in which locals and visitors were able to use the technologies themselves. This was followed by a seminar of about an hour addressing issues associated with the technologies and the future of Collective Wisdom.

Martin Levins, Director of Computing, The Armidale School, Australia
Phone: Voice 018 660 910, Fax 067 738 230
Jim Belshaw (Ndarala Multimedia Centre) on (067) 72 1906 or (067) 72 3389

The demo (described above) can be reached at: http://www.as.edu.au
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:
Student Representative Council Support Material
(South Coast Region SRC, NSW) Nov 1995
NSW Student Representative Council Supports
International Year of Tolerance - poster by Miranda
Bailey, Orange HS
JSC Newsletter (Kingsbury PS, Kingsbury Vic - for
Preston-Reservoir JSC Network) Term 1 1996

OTHER PUBLICATIONS:

Australian:
Having Our Say About the Future (ASTEC: Australian
Science and Technology Council, Canberra ACT)
January 1996
Student Futures Forum 1995 (Department for
Education and Children’s Services, SA)
Equity Network (ACEE, Darlinghurst, NSW) Vol 2 Issue
1, February 1996
Education Links (Stanmore, NSW) No 51, Summer
1995-1996
Network News (Surry Hills, NSW) March 1996
YACSAround (Youth Affairs Council of SA, Adelaide,
SA) January/February 1996
Youth Studies Australia (National Clearinghouse for
Youth Studies, Hobart, Tas) Vol 15 No 1 March 1996
Should Children Have the Right to Vote? - discussion
paper (Robert Ludbrook, National Children’s and
Youth Law Centre, NSW) December 1995
Rights Now! (NCYLC, NSW) Vol 4 No 1, Feb 1996
Orana (ALIA, Qld) Vol 32 No 1, February 1996
Starlink (Students at Risk Program, DSE, Vic) Issues 2,
3 February, March 1996
Other Ways (Alternative Education Resource Group,
Chirnside Park, Vic) No 67, March 1996

Overseas:
National Coalition News (NCACS, New Mexico, USA)
Vol 20 Nos 3, 4; Winter, Spring 1996
Democracy and Education (Institute for Democracy in
Education, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, USA)
Volume 10, No 2, Winter 1995
AERO-Gramme - special issue (AERO, New York,
USA) March 1996

Dear Connect

I am President of the Orrvale PS Junior School Council. I love reading Connect magazine. I think it is a great way to communicate and read what other School Councils are doing.

We have had four meetings this year and all of the new people are enjoying it. This is my first time and I think it’s great.

I run the meeting. Our teacher picks out five different suggestions from all the classrooms to work on. After the meeting, I have a meeting with our Principal. I tell him what we had worked on. Then he takes our ideas to the Senior School Council and the teachers.

At assembly, a representative talks about what we had discussed. Our representatives are elected from Grade 2 to Grade 6.

I think that Junior School Councils are a great way to help schools and raise money for other people.

Yours sincerely
Brendan Sanders
President, Orrvale PS Junior School Council
Channel Road, Orrvale 3631

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