Connect
Number 94: August 1995

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**Connect**

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**This Issue ... Next Issue**

This issue of Connect is dominated by reports from several conferences - the National Student Participation Workshop, the Australian Curriculum Studies Association's Curriculum 95 Conference, student presentations to the International Conference of Principals. And, as we went to press, a brief report arrived of the NSW State SRC Conference - more on this in the next issue.

Of course, none of this can be a comprehensive listing - there's a lot happening. While the Electronic Newspaper from the ACSA Conference is outlined, there's no report in this issue of a similar venture at the i*EARN Conference (happening roughly at the same time). That's partly intentional, for Connect is intending to devote a considerable portion of its next issue to an exploration of student participation in an age of electronic communication.

**Student Participation in the Electronic Age**

What does the 'information technology revolution' mean for student participation? At this stage, I am thinking that there are two interesting aspects to explore:

- how is such technology - and the internet in particular - able to increase the participation of students in meaningful, real-world research, action, and decision making? For example, the possibilities of the internet would seem to encourage student participation in international research on ozone depletion, student communication and action on the Holocaust, SRC networking in locations where distance has limited face-to-face workshops. But there are also possibilities for continuation of trivial and manipulative pursuits in the name of learning;

- how is such technology changing the power relationships in the classroom? The recognition of student skills and expertise in this area could dramatically alter concepts of who teaches and who learns.

These are some of the issues that the next issue of Connect would like to explore - stories of existing projects or of exciting possibilities. Some articles are promised, but your experiences are valuable to us.

The next issue will be a double issue (number 95-96), due for publication in November. **Deadline is the end of September** - or a little later if you let us know an article is coming. Contributions by mail, fax or e-mail are welcome.

Roger Holdsworth
National Student Participation Workshop

The third National Student Participation Workshop was held at the University of Melbourne on July 9th and 10th 1995. About 75 people participated - mainly students - from Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

Charles Kingston summarised the positives: 'the idea; the dedication of the organisers who realised the idea; the people; the motivation to find out what is going on, how it's being done and how to apply those examples to one's own school; the real sense that everyone was needed and had a valuable story to tell; the variety of the workshop presentations; the active nature of the exercise; and ... (how hopeful) the sense that this was another solid example that the vision and the idea is still alive and kicking.'

To some extent, the strength and power of this workshop cannot be summarised in a simple re-telling of what happened. But, because it is important to see the steps the workshop went through (and because it may help in the organisation of similar events), here is a fairly straight description of the two days:

Sunday 9 July 1995

On the Sunday, the Workshop started in mid afternoon with a welcome and orientation. The participants were then each given a piece of a jigsaw and asked to find the others in their picture group. The groups were challenged to tell the story in the picture - a story that had something to do with student participation.

This introductory activity - a chance to meet others, and a chance to hear some ideas about what participants thought student participation was about - was followed by more formal introductions.

What do we mean by student participation? was still the theme, as each individual or group was asked to introduce themselves through presentation of an object in a 'Show and Tell' activity. These objects symbolised participants' involvement in student participation. Some brought a lantern, some a badge. Others showed a banner, or a Constitution, or a poster they'd made. Others, focusing on the lack of participation in their school, presented 'nothing' to the group as their symbol.

The familiar (to some of us) three-legged stool analogy ... - SRCs and student activity group as one leg; School Councils and shared student/adult decision-making groups as a second leg; and student ownership and participation in the classroom setting - provided a solid place to sit for the multiple activities and approaches that were to be the rest of the conference. (Charles Kingston)

There is considerable 'Forgotten History' (or, amongst students, unknown history) in student participation. Liz Wheeler was a secondary student activist between 1985-7, and Victorian representative on the Australian Network of Secondary Students. As a tertiary education graduate, Liz's comments provided a brief glimpse and reflection on what existed in Victoria and nationally a decade ago.

Why student participation? To focus on the reasons for student participation, the same small discussion groups reformed, each to make a poster to 'advertise' why student participation is important. Some posters became detailed statements of the importance of participation; others presented a simple 'roadside slogan'. These posters were then placed in windows of the Youth Research Centre at the University; excerpts from the 'slogans' are reproduced at the top of the next few pages of this report - though they are limited by our inability to reproduce the creative design and art-work involved in these advertising posters.

"A good process; a chance for all to get to know each other and focus on where we were coming from." (evaluation)
**Monday 10 July 1995**

On Monday, there were a number of new arrivals, and the team from Bathurst/Dubbo led the group through some introductory activities - rearranging rooms, writing responses to the Sunday’s sessions. The morning session then focused on Student Representative Councils, Student Councils, and Student Networks. The morning began with workshop leaders providing a brief introduction of their situation - for example, a description of their SRC - and then outlining what they aimed to present in their workshop.

The first round of workshops dealt with SRCs and other student bodies:

**Setting up an SRC - How to do it? How to start off?**

(Presenter: Les Vozzo)

The workshop began with students sharing their major concerns about their individual SRCs. Some of these concerns were the need to influence decision making at a school level, too much teacher control, poor participation by students, splitting the school into senior and junior schools, and the training of SRC representatives.

Four areas were identified as important ingredients for establishing an effective SRC. The first one related to the structure of the SRC. Make sure every SRC representative has a job and is a member of a standing committee. The number and function of these committees will vary from school to school. Some examples include publicity, social, sport, school improvement etc.

The second area related to leadership training of student representatives. This training was essential and provided the students with the management and leadership skills needed for the effective running of the SRC.

The third area was to stage events or happenings which would involve many students. This would give the SRC a profile and, in many instances, provide money for equipment and resources.

The fourth area related to recognition of student achievement and participation. The issue of certificates or giving accreditation were some of the ways to do this.

**Efficient meetings - How to make your SRC work?**

(Presenters: Katrina Greenwood, Emma Chapple and Kathryn Tucker, Padua College, Mornington, Vic)

The first topic to be discussed in the workshop was the structure of the SRC. It was established that, in order to run efficient meetings and generally make the SRC work, a structure should be agreed upon. For example, a 20 member council has five representative types of activities such as sporting, social events, arts, environment and so on. Out of the 20 members, there may be four members representing each allocation of activities and events to be organised for each role on the council.

We next discussed the importance of job allocation within the group for such tasks as treasurer, secretary, correspondence and public relations. We also discussed majority voting and regular attendance of members, as well as general procedures enforced by the chairperson of the group, and student representatives’ rights in effectively getting the message across to fellow SRC members and the whole student body which they are representing.

The final topic discussed, which seemed to be the topic which most students encountered themselves, were the problems of attendance, courtesy within the group and pointless/ineffective meetings. To discuss this point, two short role plays were put on by students who were conducting the workshop and students attending the workshop. Characters were established.
- the late arriver, the chatterbox, the negative cynic etc, as was a topic and problems which needed to be addressed. The topic on which the meeting was based was: Where, when, why, how and who to invite to a senior school social. Much lack of cooperation was encountered in the role play, however towards the end of the second meeting, the meeting was turning out to be more productive and worthwhile. (Emma Chappelle)

Evaluating your SRC -
How you know what you have achieved?
(Presenter: Roger Holdsworth)

Using a grid that describes what student groups are seen to work on, and how they work (doing it themselves, asking others, sharing decisions) (see Connect 75, pages 8-9), a way to evaluate the nature and scope of an SRC's activities was presented. The group tried mapping their own activities onto the grid and discussed the result.

"It can be effectively used back at school." (evaluation)
"I've got lots of ideas about where to take my SRC." (evaluation)

Support teachers - What role?
(Presenters: Mark MacMurray and Adrian Grabham, year 10, Bathurst HS, NSW)

The role of teachers and other adults in supporting students in student leadership activities was explored. The need to provide continuity as new students come and go, and the importance of developing a trusting personal relationship between student leaders and advisors was stressed. The value of a team of advisors was emphasised, as was the willingness of advisors to allow students to make mistakes sometimes.

"Support Teachers was pretty good and used some good scenarios." (evaluation)
"Kids did a great job considering their relative inexperience. Needs some follow-up work in teacher/adviser roles." (evaluation)

"Furthermore, we were made aware of the importance of jointly working together to draw up an agenda for the year's activities and of assigning jobs and responsibilities to each team member, ensuring that each team member's potential is used.

"This workshop, like all the others in which we participated, was filled with many enjoyable and valuable experiences which contributed to the great success of the two days. It was a trip well worth our while." (Mona Abdel-Fattah, King Khalid Islamic College)

"Very beneficial. I learnt how to hold efficient meetings and that having a chairperson is very effective in controlling the meeting so that something is achieved. Leadership qualities are present in everyone, but styles of leadership vary from person to person, and by assigning specific roles of leadership to people, it helps to organise SRCs." (evaluation)

"Efficient meetings was a workshop relating to how well you can structure a meeting. It was great to see our fellow students act out two ways to show us two different aspects. Firstly, they showed us a poor kind of way of a meeting proceeding. Secondly they acted out a successful way a meeting can happen. I've learnt that to get an efficient meeting running you need to be cooperative, patient, a great listener, and have the ability to get along with your fellow students.

"Above all this, I enjoyed this workshop and every other workshop, because it gave me a chance to meet new, exciting people, and develop a better understanding, and gain more knowledge in my academic work.

"I hope these kind of workshops, and student participation in general continues and become a yearly event, because it is a great experience. I know that I experienced a fantastic time on both days!" (Salima Najmeddine, year 9, King Khalid Islamic College, Coburg, Vic)

"Generally, I have found that our SRC meetings have not been working as supposed. However, attending this workshop, I have learnt the need for leadership and stamina." (evaluation)

SRCs: So What!
(Students' opinions will Only Work if we Heed and Act Together!)

August 1995
The second round, covered the School and Wider Community:

School Council and Adult Committees - How to work them?
(Presenters: Leonie Wood, year 12 and Elizabeth Phegan, year 11 & NSW State SRC Representative, Bathurst HS, NSW)

The operations of Bathurst High’s School Council, with six student members (3 permanent and 3 alternates) and a quorum which must include students, was used as a case study. The difficulties students face, such as jargon and time constraints, were examined and some realistic approaches to overcoming these problems suggested. It was emphasised that real student involvement in adult committees still has a long way to go.

Setting up an inter-school network
(Presenters: Ben Millington and Michelle Pratley, South Coast Regional SRC, NSW)

This workshop drew on the experience of the NSW South Coast Regional SRC - 37 high schools from Bulli to Eden, organised in nine clusters.

Ben and Michelle outlined the regional process: meetings held on Friday evenings and all day Saturdays, the process of chairing meetings and recording minutes, examples of typical agenda items, the role of support adults, the teleconference with the Assistant Director General for the Region, minutes sent to all schools.

In addition, meetings and workshops are held within the clusters. A Regional Forum is also held annually, and examples were provided of participants, format and topics.

Networking in the Region occurs through people and not paper. Connect is supported as a way of conveying information on paper between schools.

Media/Public relations:
How to get your message into the wider Community?
(Presenter: Dalal Smiley)

The Media and Public Relations workshop attracted over 20 participants. It covered issues of how important it is to demystify the media and to learn the necessary skills of accessing it towards achieving certain goals.

The workshop drew on learning from the model used to plan a publicity campaign for the Student Participation Workshop. A general press release was drawn up, which was then specifically tailored to particular areas around Australia, from which students and other participants have come. Examples of published articles were used, and everyone at the workshop received a kit of information they could use next time they have an event that needs publicity.

It was obvious that the participants were quite interested in the topic and wanted to know more. Some expressed a desire for the workshop to go for a longer time in order to allow more scope for discussion and analysis. (Dalal Smiley)

Australian Centre for Equity Through Education - National Representation
(Presenter: Dev Mukherjee, Australian Centre for Equity through Education, NSW)

Dev, Research Officer with ACEEE, presented information about the Centre and extended an invitation for students to participate in its activities at a national level. (See Connect 93, page 14)

SRC: Working for Everybody: Be Involved!
Student Participation: Let the Seed be Interactive: Bee the Voice (buzz buzz...)

The third set of workshops for the morning focused on Practical Issues:

Communications Skills:
Inside SRs, Schools, Networks

(Presenters: Les Vezzo and Charles Kingston)

One of the greatest human fears is public speaking. An SRC representative must have the ability to talk and get a message across to other students. For this to happen, the student must play to her or his audience and have a very clear purpose in mind. The ability to tell a story and the use of emotion can be helpful in motivating other students and getting them involved in SRC activities.

The workshop was very much hands-on and the participants spent time paraphrasing and re-telling each other what they had learnt from the earlier workshops. The workshop concluded with the participants writing a brief paragraph for a school newsletter about what they had learnt from the Conference.

"This workshop was different to what I thought it would be, but I learnt a lot about relating to audience and paraphrasing." (evaluation)
"We learnt how to paraphrase - to tell someone who was talking to you what they actually said, in fewer words." (evaluation)

Action Planning - How to make it happen

(Presenter: Roger Holdsworth)

The group looked at an Action Planner, designed to be used with student groups and in SRC training sessions. While some of the sheet worked satisfactorily, it wasn't generally as useful as hoped. The group was asked to re-structure the Action Planner to make it more useful. A possible new Action Planner arising from this workshop is included in this Issue of Connect (pages 14-15). This is a result of the brainstorming in this workshop session.

"Practical 'hands-on' approach gave participants a chance to develop and evaluate an Action Plan." (evaluation)
"Helpful - we will use the Action Planning sheet." (evaluation)

Quality Assurance - Students evaluating schools

(Presenters: Sean Haynes and Cindy Bailey,
South Coast Regional SRC, NSW)

Sean and Cindy presented an initial version of the paper that they would later present at the ACSA Curriculum 95 Conference. It described the process and outcomes of student participation in the Quality Assurance mechanisms in the South Coast Region of NSW - in particular in the program review of school development days. Their paper was contained in Connect 93, pages 5-6.

"I have worked on QA before, but this workshop was still informative." (evaluation)
You Won’t Know What We Want ... Unless You Ask Us!

After lunch, the afternoon program dealt with aspects of student participation in curriculum.

In a similar structure to the morning, panel discussion provided an overview of what is meant by and possible in this area. Questions such as: What are the current big curriculum issues? How can we negotiate curriculum? Can leadership be taught? What do we mean by Participation Projects? were touched on.

Two rounds of workshops were also introduced:

National Curriculum Issues - The ACSA Conference
(Presenters: Tony Mackay and Jill Anwyll, ACSA Conference Organising Committee, Vic)

Tony and Jill were invited to present information and answer questions about the national curriculum issues that would emerge during the ACSA Curriculum 95 Conference. This workshop was primarily intended for those students (and others) attending that Conference and was a response to previous students’ requests for a pre-conference orientation session.

Students Negotiating Curriculum at Sherbrooke Community School
(Presenters: Lisa Cooke and Adele McCarthy, Sherbrooke Community School, Sassafras, Vic)

The workshop began with a brief introduction about the school - a prep to year 12 Government school in the Dandenongs (Victoria). There are 120 students and 13 teachers and classes are multi-aged.

How our students are involved in curriculum decision-making:
- At the start of each year, the students are asked which subjects (other than the three compulsory ones: Maths, English and Language) they would like to do. Examples of choices in 1995 include: Swamp, Motor Mechanics, Human Development, Bike Touring, Psychology, Indonesian etc.
- Programs are then set up depending on staff availability and the popularity of workshops.
- Students select six workshops.
- Within each workshop, students negotiate the content with the teacher. Some topics are negotiated for whole class presentation, while other topics and areas of study are negotiated for individual study and research.
- Work requirements in Maths and English are also negotiable. Students who are able to work beyond their year level are able to do so, as are those who work below their age level. All have a chance to experience success.

Other areas of student participation in the school program include:
- School rules are discussed at whole school meetings. These meetings are held every morning. Students, staff and interested parents can all express their views and a group consensus is reached.
- Fitness: students select fitnesses they would like to do three times per week. The six most popular choices go ahead for 5-6 weeks, then selections occur again.
- Home-group content: students plan activities with their Homegroup teacher. Activities must include:
  - a school community project;
  - a fundraising activity;
  - a homegroup dinner;
  - a community project outside the school;
  - social activities and games;
  - a homegroup camp.

The outcomes that are seen when students are participants in Curriculum Negotiation:
- a sense of belonging - students ‘belong’ to the school and the school ‘belongs’ to them;
- self-esteem increases;
- students develop evaluating skills;
- decision-making skills are improved (which are necessary for adult life);
- it encourages responsibily, pride and increased confidence;
- it allows those who don’t normally succeed academically to select, commit and participate successfully within their individualised program;
- students are not compared to each other and are working at their own levels on their own negotiated topics and projects.

Connect 94:
Peer Mediation
(Presenter: John Perham, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Ballarat, Vic)

John is involved in a Peer Mediation Program at Ballarat Secondary College. As this Program has not been established at the time of the Workshop, this session centred around general descriptive information as to the relevance of Peer Mediation in the school environment.

There was a brief demonstration of how mediation can assist in the resolution of seemingly unresolvable disputes, and an all too brief question and answer session concluded the session.

Leadership Curriculum - Teaching the SRC
(Presenters: Charles Kingston (Teacher/SRC Advisor), Leonie Wood (year 12) and Greg Arrow (year 9), Bathurst HS, NSW)

The strong links between activities of the SRC and other participation projects and the totality of the curriculum was emphasised. The 1-Unit Senior Leadership Course currently on offer at Bathurst High was examined in some detail, including advance placements and distance education possibilities. The main value of the course was that it is providing accreditation for work that many students are doing anyway. (See Connect 91, pages 8-9)

Literacy Camps Organised by Students
(Presenters: David Heymer, Carmen Morphet, Damien Tinker, Taiyah Brown, Lyn Loger, Nathalia Secondary College and Chris Brown, Rushworth Secondary College, Vic)

One of the highlights of the conference was a workshop presented by a panel of talented students from Nathalia and Rushworth Secondary Colleges, about literacy camps. Students shared their experiences of organising and participating in camps that catered for students with predominantly major learning difficulties. Such camps are ideal environments whereby all students attending share the same problems and support each other.

The organisers are students with learning difficulties, who acquire many skills by being involved in the whole process from making telephone enquiries, to setting camp rules, to writing letters to request financial support for the camp. The teacher’s role is to facilitate the process.

Students who attend the camps aim to use their experiences as gifts whereby they become role models for younger students. This aims to ensure a progressive continuum of support.

Overall, the immense support gained at the camps, the confidence and the skills that the students acquired certainly enthused the workshop audience to participate in a most valuable activity.

Congratulations Literacy Camp organisers! (Mrs Manar, teacher, King Khalid Islamic College)

"Was really helpful; we see so much violence where you can use this stuff." (evaluation)
"Provoked good discussion." (evaluation)

"Valuable insight into the structuring and implementation of the Leadership 1-Unit Course at Bathurst High." (evaluation)
"Great to see recognition being granted and that students can do leadership projects officially in school time." (evaluation)
"Lots of interest... Would have liked more time to be able to workshop the ideas and strategies a bit more." (Charles Kingston)

"This workshop came from the perspective of students who had literacy problems. It was good to hear the student ideas and their good feelings." (evaluation)
"Really amazing! It’s good to see the students achieving.” (evaluation)

For more information see articles in Connect #77/#78 pages 3-7, #81 page 13, #82 page 5, and #84 pages 18-20.

The Outlook Depends On You: You’re the Voice
(SRC improves: the mind, function of schools, communication skills and the representation of tomorrow’s future.
- The knowledge you gain can benefit everyone.
- Use your eyes to see what’s happening around you!
- Use your ears to listen to your peers and hear their thoughts!
- Use your mouth to voice your opinions and the opinions of others!)
Conflict Resolution
(Presenter: Christine Forsey, West Education Centre, Vic)

"Spending a day and a half at Melbourne University to take part in the National Student Participation Workshop was a very valuable and pleasant experience. I enjoyed all the workshops I attended, especially the 'Conflict Resolution' one. It has brought to our attention the importance of listening to one another instead of jumping to conclusions and making hasty judgements. Also the importance of communicating clearly and working together to reach a compromise was highlighted." (Meyyasar Najmeddine, year 10, King Khalid Islamic College)

"A good introduction with practical exercises." (evaluation)

"Conflict Resolution was the best workshop. We learnt not to jump to conclusions, but to listen to one another." (evaluation)

In this workshop, participants were given the opportunity to identify the reasons why conflict happens and strategies for dealing with it constructively. After some introductory activities, participants divided into groups of three to conduct 'conflict' role-plays. Each group had an observer as well as two protagonists. The observer was provided with a checklist of things to look for about how the conflict was handled, eg did people get angry? did people listen to each others' points of view? did people attack the person or the problem? After the role-play, the observers talked to their groups about the ways in which conflict was handled. This was followed by a presentation on how assertiveness can be used to resolve conflicts. The groups then reconvened to continue their role-plays - this time using assertiveness. The workshop concluded with a discussion about the benefits of using assertiveness to resolve conflicts.

"Conflict is a necessary part of life: problems are not.
*Conflict is when people disagree because they have a different point of view. Bad feelings occur in conflicts when people believe that there is a right and wrong way of looking at things.
*Successful Conflict Resolution does not mean that everyone will feel happy. Sometimes it is not possible for everyone to get exactly what they want, when they want it. But a successfully negotiated conflict does mean that everyone will feel satisfied that the problem can be solved."


Action Now Will Bear Fruit in the Future

The Workshop finished with a plenary session in which small Buzz Groups were firstly asked to discuss and report on what had been learnt in the two days. School groups then discussed applying some of the lessons ‘back home’. Finally some proposals were made about a further workshop in two years to coincide with the 1997 ACSA Conference in Sydney.

Formal evaluation sheets were filled in and farewells said.

Evaluation

What do we learn from organising the Workshop? What should be done differently next time?

Evaluations completed on the second day by participants were fairly consistent. Overall comments on the Workshop agreed that “it exceeded my expectations”, “Great,” wrote one consultant. “My learning curve about SRCs has been steep!”

The consistent ‘complaint’ that came through in evaluations was (again) the shortage of time - reflected both in the overall time available, and in the hurried nature of sessions. While the ‘quick pace’ was seen as a positive at times (“keep the short, snappy workshops”), the “lack of enough time for both the workshop sessions and the sharing that needs to occur” was also highlighted.

One evaluation noted, in comparing the longer afternoon workshops with the morning ones: “The longer sessions were really better than the shorter ones.”

The smaller than hoped for numbers (about 75 took part over the two days) and the fact that students only came from Victoria and New South Wales (a South Australian contingent were unable to get there at the last minute) were also disappointing. On the other hand, there was a “pleasing mix of city and country” and representation from both Government and private schools, including a group from a Melbourne Islamic school.
There was a suggestion for a ‘state of play’ session to explore more explicitly the current situations across different states and systems with respect to SRGs, School Councils, curriculum, government policies, types of schools etc. “It would assist understanding of how to shape workshop comments for the needs of participants. This would be best on Day 1, perhaps near the middle (eg of two full days - maybe the first session after lunch, before workshop sign-ups). Probably 20 minutes would be adequate but would save repetition and uncertainty in workshops later.”

“This conference has been outstanding in achieving the desired aim of ‘student participation’,” wrote one participant. “The most notable feature to me was that students have strong views on how they feel about their education. A National Workshop such as this is excellent but should be continued by constant liaison now only with those involved but also with those in higher education - thereby providing pathways.”

Another participant noted: “It was lovely and very effective to have adults and students participating together in workshops. We certainly learnt a great deal from one another.” However, one other felt that “some separate sessions for students/non-students, with plenary sharing” would have been useful.

What Now?

The final plenary session briefly discussed possibilities for another Workshop in the near future. Arising from the Australian Curriculum Studies Association Curriculum ’95 Conference, it is now being proposed that a similar Workshop be organised in Sydney in 1997, with a similar relationship to the Curriculum ’97 Conference. Various New South Wales based organisations are in the process of considering these proposals, with a view to having a substantial lead-up time to organise it.

As one evaluation noted: “There is a need to communicate the information about the conference further - I’m not sure how many in Queensland (or elsewhere) would have heard about the conference.”

But: “The vision still lives...!”

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THE CYCLICAL YOUNG PERSON AND THE STARFISH

The cynical young person wandered the beach, lost in thoughts of Baywatch.

Ahead lay a strange sight - millions of starfish washed up on the sand as far as the eye could see.

The young person couldn’t help but be impressed.

A little further on was a figure bent over the beach.

The figure was an old man and, as the Young Person got closer, it became clear that the man was picking up the starfish and tossing them into the waves.

“What are you doing?” the Young Person asked.

The old man looked up. “Saving the Starfish.” He threw the starfish he was holding into the sea. “If they stay on the sand they will suffocate and die.”

The Cynical Young Person looked up and down the beach at the millions of starfish, then laughed a world-weary laugh.

“...but look at them all. There are millions. What’s the point? What difference can you make?”

The old man bent down and picked up another starfish, and held it up to the Young Person. “I can make a difference to this one.”

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Please advise us if you know - we are happy to credit authorship correctly.

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STUDENTS NEED A VOICE

Communication Breaks Down Barriers
Student Leadership Prepares You To Be An Adult
Students Make It Happen
Students Share & Care
Students - Ask for Help and Share the Responsibility

August 1995
A six-hour workshop at the Australian Curriculum Studies Association's Curriculum 95 Conference examined issues and strategies associated with Students as Curriculum Partners. The workshop was informed by four presentations, and then, in its final session, developed some strategies for future action.

Session 1: What do we mean by students as curriculum partners?

In the first session, workshop participants heard from Allen Jones (Wendouree campus, Ballarat Secondary College, Vic) who described curriculum evaluation processes at the school in which a year 10 class participated as researchers into the school's Social Science curriculum. This information previously appeared in Connect 93, pages 7 to 11.

This was followed by information from Charles Kingston, Adrian Graham and Greg Arrow, Bathurst High School, and Brett Blacker, Dubbo South High School, NSW, about the accredited Leadership Course developed at Bathurst HS. Again, information about this course is in Connect 91, pages 6-9.

These presentations, together with an overview paper along the lines contained in the editorial to Connect 93 (pages 2-3) provided a broad view of student participation and of the links between participation in governance and in the classroom. It was interesting to note that in both the illustrated cases there had been an interaction between these aspects - SRC participation in governance had resulted in curriculum development and change (including curriculum negotiation in the school); a curriculum review project based in one classroom has now had consequences for the establishment of a student committee in the school.

Session 2: Who are the partners?

Any tendency to assume that curriculum partnerships are restricted to senior secondary students, or to those students who are academically successful, was challenged in the second day's workshop session. Participants first heard from Garry O'Shanassy from Doveton North Primary School, Vic. Garry outlined the Expo process that operates in his classroom (year 5-6 in 1994) and concentrated on the participation of students in an Expo at the Myuna Community Farm, in which students conducted hands-on tours of the farm for other grades at the school. Details are in Connect 90, pages 3 to 5.

Then students from Nathalia and Rushworth Secondary Colleges (Vic) presented information about the Literacy Camps that they organise. Chris Brown, Carmen Morpnett, Damien Tinker, David Heymer and Talayah Brown are part of a group of students with learning difficulties who carry out all tasks associated with organisation of these camps, including inviting successful adults with histories of learning difficulties to lead sessions. They had invited two of these support adults to this workshop presentation. Their joint presentation (also including their teacher, Lyn Loger) was a strong affirmation of the ability of students and of their value as curriculum partners. Previous accounts of the Literacy Camps have appeared in Connect 77/78, 81, 82 and 84.

In both the initial sessions, as one participant noted: "... their dedication and enthusiasm at the workshop made the written reports take on a warm personal meaning and added a huge dimension to what student participation really means."

Session 3: What now?

At the start of the three days, one participant commented, with some disappointment at the numbers attending: "They just don't get it!" This provided a useful focus for the final session's discussion on strategies to broaden the knowledge of and commitment to recognising students as curriculum partners. In an intense two-hour brainstorm, the participants (students, teachers, academics, consultants and parents) produced the basis of an 'action plan'. The following is a summary of the notes taken:

Issues of concern:

1. The 'Sales Pitch' - how to effectively reach those who still 'haven't got the message', the link of participation to effective learning and to an 'apprenticeship in democracy'; the need to move from a dominant view of students as 'consumers of knowledge' to one of students as 'producers of knowledge'.

Connect 94:
2. The need to link student participation to the 'traditional' aims of education: how can this operate at different levels from school to state? the need for substantive recognition (credit) and time; the need for more published action research by and from students and teachers to establish these issues.

3. The need for time for members of the education community - students, teachers, parents, administrators, consultants, academics - to develop, implement, reflect and document these processes. Does this mean that other things must be 'dropped' and/or 'incorporated' in the current curriculum?

4. How can we get more resources involved?: broadening the base of students/teachers - parents, DipEd/undergraduate/graduate, community members; establishing a cooperative learning community to work on these issues.

5. The nature of the language and terminology is important: eg 'pupil free days' is counter-productive to student participation - in contrast talk of development days in which students, parents and others participate.

6. The need to underpin all these developments with a solid theoretical approach; this establishes its legitimacy and its efficacy. The 'student learning model' has always been and continues to one of participatory learning. We also recognise that we are all learning, we are all students. Outcomes may include curriculum and administrative restructuring and the recognition that participation is legitimate learning business.

Strategies:

- Formulate a national policy on student participation for proposal to significant organisations.
- Develop a theoretical model of student participation.
- Continue to document successful practical examples of projects and approaches.

In particular, it was decided to begin working on a policy statement to be circulated through ACSA and adopted at the 1997 ACSA Conference.

Various other bodies and occasions were also suggested as part of this broad strategy.

It was clear from the workshop that substantial further work is needed to support and develop the concepts of students as curriculum partners. However, there was also unanimous and enthusiastic support for the urgent need to move down such an exciting path.

Connect and the ACSA Student Participation in Curriculum Network will continue to play an important role in these developments. If you are interested to be active and involved on any level - in the writing tasks, in policy development, in discussions - please let us know.

What might a national policy on student participation look like?
What should it contain?
What should it say?
Contribute your ideas - Connect is interested to include your views.

Photos on these pages from the National Student Participation Workshop, July 1995; Opposite page: Nathalia/Rochester Literacy Camp students and their display.
ACTION PLANNING

This sheet is a guide to help you plan the steps you will need to take to put an idea into action.

Part 1. Making Sure the Idea is Clear
Name of the idea:

What do we actually want to achieve? (What will it look like at the end - exactly and in detail?)

Part 2. Making Sure We Know Who is Involved
Who (groups and individuals) has a role in this idea:

Name | What is their role? | Why?

What is the SRC's role? | What will the SRC actually do itself? | Who/what will it ask? | Where will it share a decision (eg on a committee)

Part 3. Making Sure the Reasons are Clear
Why do we want this idea? (What are the arguments for it)

What are the arguments against it?

What are the answers to these points?
Part 4. Making Sure the Steps are Clear

On another piece of paper, write down all the steps that you can think of that will be involved in the plan. Then try to put them in order - what comes first?

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<th>Step</th>
<th>What?</th>
<th>Who will do it?</th>
<th>When? (start) (finish)</th>
<th>What do we need?</th>
<th>Who will help us?</th>
<th>What problems do we expect?</th>
<th>How will we solve them?</th>
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The ACSA Conference Electronic Daily News

During the Australian Curriculum Studies Association’s Curriculum 95 Conference, a group of 16 students from six schools in Victoria and New South Wales acted as Conference reporters and published a daily newspaper for the Conference.

Nothing new to that? Ah but this time, the ACSA Conference Daily News was not published on paper, but on the World Wide Web.

The student reporters attended keynote sessions, panels, workshops and papers. They took notes, described what happened, wrote about their impressions. In some cases they wrote directly onto laptop computers, or in others, returned to a University computer laboratory to type in their reports. They then marked up their accounts in HTML (HyperText Markup Language) - which, in most cases, they learnt on the spot - and linked the separate stories into a consistent set of ‘pages’.

Throughout this process, they worked as a self-managing team coordinated by an undergraduate education student. They made decisions about which sessions to report on, how they would work as a group, how the pages would look.

Read the News!

The Conference Daily News was available to be read immediately, during the Conference. It was also, of course, immediately available everywhere in the world, accessible by anyone with internet access and a Web browser on their computer.

You can read the ACSA Conference Daily News at: http://www.edfac.unimelb.edu.au/ACSA/ACSA-base.html

If you don’t have web access, a quick description: This address takes you to a page from which you can branch out to read about ACSA, about the Conference, access abstracts of papers and workshops, and learn about the Daily News and its reporters. There’s also a direct link to the ‘front page’ of the newspaper, with further links taking you to each day’s accounts - reports of keynote addresses, workshops and papers. And to comments from Conference participants.

Why an Electronic Paper?

The Conference was concerned with the theme of ‘Choosing the Future’, and the process of producing this paper was intended as an example of changes facing us in education. It also illustrated the necessary changes in relationships between students and adults - in this case seeing students as ‘skilled curriculum partners’.

For all the students (from year 6 to year 12), this was a first: the first time they had attended a major national curriculum conference, the first time they had worked as reporters, the first time they had constructed web documents.

For the project organisers, this was also a first: an opportunity to create a new approach to the participation of students in the Conference, and to learn from it.

Project Learnings

Some of the disappointments:

- we couldn’t place computers around the conference at the start of each day, as we’d hoped to, so that delegates could browse the reports. This meant that few delegates had immediate access to the paper;
- because of the pressure of time and equipment access, not all students got access to all aspects of the process. In particular, some students missed out on learning HTML and most didn’t get a chance to organise their reports into the final structure of the paper - a couple of students did the final ‘finishing’;
- while it was expected that not all workshops and papers would be covered, we did miss getting reports up on a couple of the plenary sessions;
- we’d hoped to have use of a QuickTake camera to include photos from sessions, but this didn’t occur.

Next time such a project happens, it will be important to remember (as the team suggested in their ‘debriefing’ session):

- to be more organised at the start: it would be valuable for the team to work together for a long session before the Conference started - sorting out processes, working out how to cover sessions, learning some of the technical aspects of the process;
- to have the output of the project more visible to conference delegates, either with many browsers available each day, or with paper copies of pages run off and, perhaps, posted on noticeboards;
- to have a tighter roster of jobs that enable all students to do all tasks;
- to orient the reporters more to the content of the sessions. One student noted: "The keynote speakers and the open forum on the last day were thoroughly agony to sit through for me. Not because they lacked substance but because to understand those things, I would have to know a little at least about them. The workshops and papers, though, were absolutely great! They were easier to understand than the keynote and because of this I found myself absorbing things and taking interest in them. I learnt a lot from all the workshops and papers because I felt they had something to do with me."

And that comment might have greatest relevance to what we all need to recognise about learning at curriculum conferences!
Student Reporters' Comments

Here are some comments from the students:

Leah McPherson, University High School (year 10)

I feel so much more confident of myself and my career goals after spending time reporting on the Conference. The invaluable experience that I gained has just made me more determined to further my studies in the specialised area of English (hopefully to do journalism one day).

The electronic newspaper was a fantastic idea, but the limited access that people had to it was a problem and a bit disheartening for me. I felt that our work as a team was only being recognised by a few select people, though when the teachers attending the Conference were spoken to by yours sincerely they all (or the majority) seemed to take an enthusiastic interest in it.

I was, however, disappointed that we all did not have access to the process of publishing pages on the World Wide Web. From a keen English student's point of view, this conference was enormously beneficial, but in terms of acquired computer skills, I felt that it did not supply what I was told it would.

I don't want to harp on negative things because they are only minor and require a little more extensive organisation that what was done. Hopefully at the next ACSA Conference there will be another electronic newspaper. If there isn't, there is something drastically wrong, considering a large part of the four days involved discussions about inter-twining the classroom curriculum of today with modern technology.

One of the many reasons that I walked away from the ACSA Conference feeling an enormous amount of pride and success was because of the people involved and your attitudes towards us. It would have been easy to treat us as silly high school students who didn't know the first thing about ACSA (which we didn't), but it was really admirable of you to treat us as mature and responsible adults who knew what we were doing (even when we didn't have a clue). It is a rare trait and I want you to know that it meant a lot to all of us, because we usually don't come across people who actually treat us like adults instead of just saying they are.

Anita Raghavan, Kilvington Girls Grammar (year 10)

If I were asked to sum up the electronic newspaper project in one word, I wouldn't hesitate or stop to think. I can give the clear answer: Discovery. Discovery is not a word used for one aspect only, but many. Discovery includes learning, seeing, listening, doing and experiencing.

What was included in this discovery?

I discovered that there are adults in the world who trust young people to do big projects. I learnt what it felt like to be treated like an adult.

Throughout the ACSA Curriculum Conference I was involved in reporting various workshops and papers. In most of these, the people respected my presence and allowed me to do the work I had to do. They patiently answered my questions and treated me as a part of the meeting.

I also learnt responsibility. I knew that putting the paper together was a team effort and, as part of the team, I had to work hard and fulfill my part, otherwise I would be letting my team down. I learnt that, as a team, I had to help others, not be hesitant to ask others for help and learn to work with everyone.

I discovered how to put things onto the World Wide Web, so that they could be viewed by people all over the world.

I discovered that I had to put my best into everything. This project was accessible to everyone and it must look presentable and be informative.

I discovered that, in all teams, each person has to put their full in for the project to be a success.

I learnt that teachers are working hard to make what seems like the impossible happen, for every student to wake up on Monday mornings looking forward to school.

I now understand all the work that teachers put into their work and the many hardships that they encounter doing it.

Being a part of the ACSA Conference has broadened my horizons and has definitely made my attitude to many things a lot more mature.

August 1995
Melinda Hart, Kilvington Girls Grammar (year 10)

I believe the idea of an electronic daily newspaper is beneficial for the teachers attending the conference, as it presents the student's view on their proposed future curriculum. The Conference demonstrated the hard work and effort required by teachers to organise a curriculum to satisfy every student's needs.

I really enjoyed the opportunity to work with other students from different schools, as it gave me an insight on the range of opinions and views that other students have on different issues. We were treated as responsible young adults at the conference, allowing us to freely express our own opinions and to make our own decisions. The Conference was certainly a contrast between life at Kilvington to life at the University. I enjoyed reporting on workshops and papers and making a small contribution to a student newspaper.

Lars Gilbert, Scotch College (year 12)

Needless to say, I absolutely LOVE messing around online, especially on the Internet, so I totally agree with the idea of doing something different and publishing the newspaper electronically. Not only does it have its logical benefits (a much larger group of people have access to the newspaper; the newspaper will be in circulation as long as is desired; it's environmentally friendly!) but it also teaches the students involved how to surf the internet and publish a web page. (And really good ones at that!)

I hope this year will be viewed as a learning experience, and that the idea of publishing an electronic magazine doesn't come to a screeching halt just because things didn't always run as smoothly as planned with our group.

The Conference

I guess it was a interesting experience, a learning experience, an unusual experience. I took great delight in discovering that teachers really do seem to care about the welfare of their students, and are not simply treating their work as an average 9 to 5 job, where they go to school, teach, and then go back home. I guess it's true not all teachers care about their students as much as those who made the effort to attend the conference, but perhaps they can take a few lessons of their own and learn from the teachers who did attend.

Naturally, at times the conference was nothing more than downright BORING, but it's to be expected when you aren't the target audience. Oh yeah, the free lunch was fantastic; under no circumstances must the lunch be abolished in future years ;)

How We Were Treated

I think the way we were treated couldn't have been better. Sara was great, always willing and able to help us in any situations we got ourselves into. The was an enormous feeling of freedom amongst the students. It was as if we were at school, but could do what we wanted, act how we wanted (well, to a certain degree :) ) and come and go as we pleased. On the occasion when I felt ill, and neglected to ring in and let someone know, I was amazed to discover that nobody required an explanation of my absence (or they simply forgot to ask!)

I think the way we worked could have been improved upon. Not so much the amount of work being done, but the way in which it was communicated between us. Although we seemed to be getting it together towards the end of the conference (again due to the excellent guidance of Sara), the first day and a half were a complete shambles. In the future, I think it would be a good idea to plan these kinds of intricacies before the conference actually starts, so that the students know exactly what they are doing, how they will be doing it, when and where they will be doing it. Whether this is devised by the teacher or the students themselves is also something to think about.

What I Did

Well ... I did some reporting (a workshop and two papers), and some publishing (every document since the Wednesday! :-). I also edited some of the documents from the day before. (Speaking of which, I noticed that the page referring to the workshop I attended has a spelling mistake. Editing only has one 'e', not two! Change it if you like, it doesn't really bother me though, just proves that the documents are really written by students!)

Possible Changes For Next Time

There are a number of things that could be different next time around. Firstly, I think it would be great if everybody got involved with every aspect of publishing an electronic newspaper, from reporting right through to uploading the completed page onto the server. Secondly, I think there should be more pre-conference sessions, so that everybody is familiar with each other, their equipment, and what is expected of them. But overall I think the conference was handled extremely well by the adults involved.

Alicia Brown, Kilvington Girls Grammar (year 9)

Putting the newspaper on the web pages was a good idea because:

1) Anyone could gain access to the paper almost free of charge and very easily and
2) We didn't waste paper by selling a newspaper.

The conference was extremely interesting and informative and some very intelligent people talked. I think the people at the conference were good listeners and asked some sensible questions.

We, the student reporting team, were treated very well as a whole and were involved in some of the papers and workshops. It was nice to be involved in the workshops and to be asked what we thought of different topics discussed. I am thinking of the workshop on teaching methods that I attended and was asked about the different ways I had been taught and assessed. People cared and listened to what we all had to say.

Next time, I think the keynote sessions should be shortened by giving more time for people to ask questions and talkers not repeating themselves. I also found it helpful having the overheads corresponding to what was being talked about during the keynote sessions. Some/All of the keynote were hard to follow but the one addressing functions of the brain was bearable because of the overheads. I would recommend that next time, more speakers use visual aids because it is easy to loose concentration even if the talk is interesting. By having something corresponding to what is being talking about I find it is a lot easier to follow for long periods of time.

The Student Reporting Team consisted of: Leah McPherson, Mollie Daphne, Kate Day, Tim Fisher (University HS, Vio), Anita Baghavan, Melinda Hart, Alicia Brown, Alasha Moxon, Stephanie Schuener, Chris Young, Clare Pellegrini (Kilvington Girls, Vio), Lars Gilbert, William Henderson (Scotch College, Vio), Brett Blacker (Dalborg South HS, NSW), Greg Arrow (Bathurst HS, NSW), Isa Skinner (Bega HS, NSW), Sara Pleasants (University of Melbourne).
Bathurst High Leads the Way as Student Leaders Address the Principals of the World

The recent International Conference of Principals, held at Darling Harbour Convention Centre in Sydney, was addressed by student representative council leaders from around the state. Bathurst High, in the Central West of NSW, was instrumental in lobbying for and organising the students for this auspicious occasion.

Principal of Bathurst High, Jan Gerard, and SRC Advisor, Charles Kingston, were able to develop three separate opportunities for student leaders to present their message of being active participants - partners with the principals - in their own education.

On Monday, 7th August, three outstanding and articulate students gave major speeches to over 1600 delegates under the theme of 'Partners in the Learning Environment' - year 12 students Sarah Vardon of Bateman's Bay (on the NSW South Coast) and David Jones of Narrabeen High (in the North Sydney region) joined their year 6 colleague Brooke Frary of Granville South Primary on the same platform with Dr Ken Boston, Director of the NSW Department of School Education. Their speeches were stirring, sincere and specially directed to the ideas for which all schools and SRCs should strive: to be creative and concerned partners in the daily decision making and the long term development of the best learning possible for their respective schools.

David suggested a number of ways in which SRCs could contribute, from support for Stewart House, to major consultation in the development of welfare, curriculum and activities programs. He pointed us all towards the goal in the Year 2000 of hosting the first International SRC Conference to coincide with the Sydney Olympics. All three speeches are available from Bathurst High School and will be published later this year by PASTA - the recently formed Professional Association of SRC Teacher/Advisors (see below).

On Tuesday 8th August, a panel on 'Student Leadership', chaired by Jan Gerard, brought together six students from NSW schools to elaborate on various programs and projects in which student leaders have acted as full partners in their schools or regions. Elizabeth Phegan from Bathurst High explained the involvement of students on School Councils, the current development of stage management teams at her school, and the 1-Unit Senior Leadership Course she is currently undertaking. Sean Haynes from Smiths Hill High near Wollongong described his experiences as a Quality Assurance student interviewer and discussed the crucial links between curriculum and student leadership.

Other student speakers at this panel were Van Marinos, 'Prime Minister' of Cammeray Public School's SRC and Katrina Schwarz of Sydney Girls' High. Michael Skott, Captain of Cherrybrook High School in Sydney's north-west and Jami Roach, an American exchange student from Michigan, currently at Kelso High in Bathurst, provided international perspectives on leadership.

The Convention Centre also provided an ideal venue for a display of materials on various student leadership programs. This was well-received, and many principals and other visitors took the opportunity to talk with students who were in charge of it: Bathurst High students Greg Arrow, Adrian Graham, Leonie Wood and Angela Shelley, Andrew Mina from Orange High, Cheri Speckman from Blakehurst High, Jane Steel from Hornsby Girls High and Cammeray Public students Pascal Akenson, Tullia Zar and Claire Juanda.

Charles Kingston, Bathurst HS, NSW

PASTA - Adding Spice to SRC/Advisers' Lives

The Professional Association of SRC Teacher/Advisors (PASTA), initiated during a weekend conference in Sydney in February this year, is now up and running. Thanks to the work of the Steering Committee, it is now an officially registered professional association affiliated with the Joint Council of Professional Associations in Sydney. Its major aims are to support teachers and other adults working in the field of student leadership - supporting student participation, leadership and representation.

PASTA is not just a New South Wales organisation. It is open to interested members from around the country - public or private schools, primary, secondary or tertiary levels. In addition to ordinary memberships at $30 a year, there are membership categories for institutions (your school or your SRC) at $50, corporations ($70) and honorary memberships, a category at $15 a year which includes interested individual students at any level.

The first major newsletter is currently being printed and will be available with membership forms by the end of September, if not sooner. A second is planned for November. In addition, PASTA will publish significant leadership curriculum materials and special events, such as the speeches of the students who spoke at the International Conference of Principals (see above).

PASTA will also be holding a professional development weekend on 18-19 November at Stewart House - Curl Curl Beach in Sydney. The theme is 'SRCs Promoting Happier and Safer Schools'. PASTA's second annual conference, also in Sydney, will be in February 1996. Anyone interested in either of these events or in joining the association, is encouraged to contact Charles Kingston at Bathurst High (Bathurst, NSW) or Ralph Murray at Berkeley Vale High (Berkeley Vale, NSW).
Riverina Regional SRC Environment Conference

Students Sowing the Seeds of Change

Making clothes from recycled garbage, wading through stagnant creeks and creating a waterwise garden were just some of the activities undertaken by students at the recent Riverina Regional SRC Environment Conference.

Over 70 students from 35 schools across the Riverina attended the Region’s third annual ‘mini-conference’. The theme for the Conference was Students - Sowing the Seeds of Change, and follows on from previous Non-Violence and Anti-Racism Conferences held in the last two years.

Students chose the topic and were instrumental in the planning of the activities. The organising committee developed four workshops: Recycling in schools, Streamwatch, Beautifying Schools and ‘Who cares’.

Recycling allowed students to make recycled paper, create clothing from the contents of a reverse cycle garbage bin and to sort rubbish which can be recycled.

Landscape gardener Wayne Fox gave students the opportunity to lay pavers professionally and to create a waterwise garden as examples of effective ways of beautifying schools.

Justin Nancarrow from Streamwatch had students up to their armpits in the creek testing water quality and gathering samples of organisms to observe under microscopes.

‘Who cares’ was an awareness raising exercise which gave students the skills to critically examine their own school environments and to share effective strategies that other schools are employing.

As usual, a lot of enthusiasm and motivation was generated at the conference and students were looking forward to taking practical ideas back to their schools to implement at the local level.

Emma Bradshaw, Narrandera HS
Kirsty Lovell, Kooringal HS
Briony Thornton, Leeton HS
Katie Harvey, Lockhart Central School
Bronwyn Harriss, Wagga Wagga Technology HS
The Organising Committee
OUR PRIMARY SCHOOL COUNCIL

Dallimore children’s school council was set up in early 1992. It was set up for us children to be involved in decisions that affect us and to create an opportunity for us children to ‘voice’ our ideas and opinions.

The school council consists of 14 children who represent each class, and two teacher representatives. We meet every Monday and discuss and issues that the children of Dallimore want us to. After the meeting, the representatives report back to their classes at circle time.

Over the last three years we have accomplished a lot. Schools Council have provided a healthy tuck shop for the school, we have bought over 200 toys for the children to play with at playtime and dinnertime and we have also paid to have many games and drawings painted onto our playground eg giant chess board, maze, compass, British Isles etc. We have also introduced separate playtimes for Infants and Juniors. We have recently applied for and been given a £410 Grant for a Derbyshire crime beat competition which paid to have a camera installed in our playground. We are in the process of having a Wendy House built and seats placed around the playground. They have all helped to reduce bullying.

Dallimore children’s School Council wrote to Derbyshire County Council about the school dinners. We got them to change to dinnertime menu and include a vegetarian choice. We also recently devised a dinnertime rota that makes lunch time more fair.

We raised money to pay for all these activities in different ways. So far we have had a toy sale, colouring competitions, drawing competitions, lots of discos, fancy dress competition and selling cakes.

Should any child at Dallimore, whether in a nursery, infant or junior class, want to say anything at all, then they can contact school council by asking their class representative or by writing a letter and putting it in the School Council box which is opened once a week. They do not have to sign the letter if they don’t want to.

School Council has been very popular. We were even interviewed by Radio Derby when we had the playground painted and had an article written about us in a magazine. We think that it has made the school a better place.

Carly Barrett, Council Secretary (age 11)
Dallimore School, Derbyshire, UK
(from Education Now #8, Summer 1995)

PRESTON EAST PRIMARY SCHOOL JSC

We have 11 Junior School Council members at Preston East Primary School (Melbourne, Victoria). They come from grades 3 to 6. Junior School Council members are elected by the children in the school and are there to represent their opinions.

We hold our meeting on Tuesdays at lunchtime. The first Tuesday is for all JSC representatives and the second Tuesday is for the Radio Broadcast Team.

At our meetings, we discuss what’s happening around the school and what we can do to improve things.

The Junior School Council has been involved in jobs including:

- helping with special days (eg Grandparents Day)
- serving in the canteen
- surveying children about lunch orders (likes/dislikes) and sending the results to the School Council
- running fund-raisers (like the Disco)
- producing a Radio Broadcast (beginning in term 3)

Our Radio Broadcast will include schools news, sports results, interviews, birthdays, jokes, children’s work, special days and favourite music.

The Junior School Council is important to us because we should get involved in school issues and have our say.

We hope to continue our hard work in term 3 and 4.

Carly Burgess, JSC President
Steven Kearney, JSC Vice-President
Barb Tryde, Contact Person, Preston East PS, Sylvester
Grose, Preston East, 3072
Phone: (03) 9470 2023

August 1995
Student Participation is designed to assist students develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes required of them to actively participate in their school environment and the wider community now and in the future. This subject advocates the use of the curriculum in engaging young students as informed, skilled and active participants.

The syllabus emphasises effective communication, collaborative decision making, and developed planning, co-ordination and management skills which enable students to build a valued role as an independence, responsible and productive member of society.

Previous Experience
No previous experience is required.

Neighbouring Syllabuses
There are no syllabuses with similar objectives, content and criteria to this syllabus.

Learning Objectives
Through studying course content derived from this syllabus, it is intended that students will:

- develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable them to actively participate in the school environment and the wider school community;
- have an impact that extends beyond the classroom, working on issues that they and the community value and that make sense to them because it contributes to that community;
- be able to participate more confidently and actively in the school environment and the wider community;
- work collaboratively with other students and teachers to identify educational values and priorities and act together to realise those values and priorities;
- recognise, refine and reflect on the level of responsibility required of them as a member of the school environment and wider community.

Rationale
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. Student participation fosters responsibility, independence and productivity capacity.

If students are to participate, they need to know how and they need to have the resources to do so.

Student participation gives students the opportunity to have some control over their daily lives and their futures within the school environment. Students who are involved in decision making, trying to improve education for themselves will be given accreditation for such work which they do outside the classroom.

Student Participation brings students into direct, real and non-artificial encounters with their social environment and hence allow students to question the human values and psychological processes of human interaction which relate to social justice issues.

Content
This syllabus comprises a compulsory core unit Action Research (approx 30 hours) and one accreditation option (approx 20 hours).

ACTION RESEARCH (30 hours)
Students are required to participate as a member of an action research team in a community participant program identified by students and valued by students and the wider community. The ‘community participant’ ideal stresses the application of study and reflection in such activities as volunteer service, political advocacy and research in the community. Under suitable guidance, teachers should cultivate participation skills that take students beyond the classroom to interaction with the wider community. Knowledge, skills and attitudes should be developed in the areas suggested below:

Communication & Decision Making Skills

Communication
- levels of communication.
- active listening.
- non-verbal communication skills.
- barriers to effective communication.
- assertion theory.
- communicating to an audience.
- language response.

Decision Making
- decision making process.
- personal and external influences on decision making.
- decision making styles.
- the methodology and workings of action research.
- data collection methods and interpretation.

Planning, Co-ordination & Management
- goal setting & time management.
- taking responsibility & being accountable.
- resource use & networking to achieve a task.
- meetings: structures, procedures and facilitating.
- conflict resolution (identify and resolve).
- problem solving techniques.

Working with others
- group facilitation.
- characteristics of an effective group facilitator.
- stages of group development.
- prevention and intervention of problem behaviour.
- empathy building.

**ACCREDITATION OPTION (20 hours)**

Students will be given accreditation for their involvement in student/teacher negotiated student participatory activities, projects or programs. Students will be required to link aspects of the core content with their accredited work.

Student participation could be seen to be:

(i) community development projects in which students provide some service to their community e.g. cross-age tutoring, peer support, student enterprise, SRC, vandalism prevention, media production, job creation, student newspaper and student organised concert groups.

(ii) community research and action projects in which students have investigated and acted on issues facing the community.

Student will be asked to submit a written review of what it was like for them to participate in that chosen area; discussing the constraints to, and possibilities for, improved student participation in that chosen area.

Students will also be required to keep a journal and provide reflections on the methodologies and workings of action research and at least one of the following areas of knowledge/skills development:
- Communication & Decision making;
- Planning, Co-ordination & Management;
- Working with others.

**Assessment**

Students' achievements on this syllabus are to be assessed against predetermined criteria. For each criterion a wide range of achievement is possible and students' achievements will be rated using a four point scale.

The four ratings are 'A', 'B', 'C', or 'D' where each rating represents a range of achievement with respect to that criterion.

- A rating of 'D' is used when a student has offered work for assessment but there has been little evidence of achievement.
- A rating of 'C' represents the range of achievement which is considered to be at an acceptable standard for this syllabus.
- A rating of 'B' represents the range of achievement which exceeds the standard considered to be acceptable for this syllabus.
- A rating of 'A' is the highest rating that a student can attain on a particular criterion.
- Where no work has been offered for assessment no rating will be given against that criterion.

Standards for each criterion are established and reviewed through a process of consultation between all teachers of the syllabus. Advice on these standards is available through the Tasmanian Secondary Assessment Board.

Internal assessment of all criteria will be made by the school. Schools will report the students' rating for each criteria to the Tasmanian Secondary Assessment Board.

**Criteria**

The assessment for 9/12 WS*** A Student Participation will be based upon the degree to which the student can:

1. demonstrate an understanding of appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication skills;
2. convey a knowledge of the decision making styles and demonstrate an understanding of the decision making process;
3. recognise the need for, and demonstrate an understanding of appropriate planning, co-ordination and management procedures and techniques;
4. locate and collect relevant information and resources from a variety human and physical sources;
5. comprehend the methodology and workings of the action research approach;
6. use an action research approach to identify a thematic concern; plan, act, observe and reflect on the basis of which they can formulate new plans, new action, observation and reflection, and further replanning;
7. maintain a journal to record, recount and reflect on a participatory activity, project or program;
8. work collaboratively with others, and accept responsibility as a member of a team for a range of specific tasks.

**Award Requirements**

The minimum requirements for an award in this syllabus are as follows:

- **Satisfactory Achievement (SA):** 6 'C' ratings and 1 'D' rating.
- **High Achievement (HA):** 5 'B' ratings, 2 'C' ratings and 1 'D' rating.
- **Outstanding Achievement (OA):** 5 'A' ratings, 2 'B' ratings and 1 'C' rating.

When a student has satisfactorily attended class and has made a conscientious attempt at the tasks related to this syllabus and set by the teacher but where the requirements for an SA award have not been met then this syllabus will be listed separately on the Tasmanian Certificate of Education, provided that no award for a neighbouring syllabus has been listed for the same year. A recommendation by a school for such inclusion should be based on a global judgement of the student's performance and should not be related to ratings on individual criteria.

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This is a draft of a proposed 'A' (50-hour) syllabus submitted to the Tasmanian Secondary Assessment Board within the Work Studies (WS) area. Once approved, it will be allocated a number in place of the ***.

Comments and queries to: Peter Carey, 3 Chessington Court, Lower Sandy Bay TAS 7005

August 1995
Alternative Education Conference
21-22-23 October 1995
At Tamariki School,
Christchurch, New Zealand

A rare opportunity to establish contacts and share ideas with other parents, teachers and children, to attend workshops, participate in discussions and hot debate! First-rate entertainment will be provided in the evenings, including a concert of all our combined talents.

Some suggested topics for workshops are: play and kids' learning; parents in the school; what are schools for?; how to be an alternative school parent; my child isn't reading yet; my child does nothing but play; the school meeting; how do teachers plan and make assessments in an alternative school; kids in conflict; how to start an alternative school; integration; ages and stages; swearing; differing philosophies.

Five start accommodation is currently being negotiated. We're looking at sponsorship to keep costs to a minimum.

Send all queries and correspondence to Alison Brizzell, 227 Ferry Road, Christchurch 1, New Zealand. Phone: New Zealand (03) 365 7578; Fax: (03) 379 1534.

North Country Alternative School
Private Approved Program

"We are interested in boarding students from other countries."

The school:
- Accepts students for a minimum of one year.
- Accepts ages 6 to 18 years of age.
- Has small classes.
- Offers day program and boarding.

We believe that a positive learning and teaching process is student-centred. Active learning will be encouraged through the avenues of writing, independent study, creative projects, small group work, cooperative learning, the participation in other programs and activities, field trips, peer tutoring, guest speakers and mentors.

We share an equal responsibility to our community with respect for one another; one cannot exist without the other, especially with regard to gender, cultural as well as racial and ethnic background.

We work with the community through speakers, field trips, our community library, parents, social involvement and dialogue.

Please write to us or call:

Ruby Lee Houlihan
North Country Alternative School
PO Box 805, Main Street, Littleton,
New Hampshire 03561 USA
Phone: USA: (603) 444-5110

Upwey High School SRC

Earlier this year, a training day was held for members of the Student Representative Council at Upwey High School in Melbourne's eastern suburbs. One of the action plans developed was for the creation of a student-run vegetable garden at the school, which could (amongst other things) supply food to the canteen.

Following that day, three SRC sub-committees have been formed, and some members of the SRC are now taking an active role within them. The 'vegie patch' group is now called the Horticulture Group, and they have enlisted the help of the school gardener who has given them valuable time. A propagating shed is being costed at present, and a 'grand scheme' is being touted - they are very keen on this.

The Maintenance of School Group is now working with the Deputy Principal, with two of its members making a commitment to go to the Grounds and Maintenance meetings each month in their own time.

The School Phone is also being investigated thoroughly and the SRC are working on ways of getting around the cost of the phone and opposition to its positioning.

We will keep you posted on outcomes and hopefully report on what was achieved.  
Rod Cram

Some Brief References:

Education Now

The article on page 21, "Our Primary School Council" is taken from Issue Number 8 (Summer 1995) of the UK newsletter Education Now. This issue also contains a 5-page feature supplement on "The benefits of student participation". Copies from: Education Now Publishing Cooperative Limited, 113 Arundel Drive, Bramcote Hills, Nottingham NG9 3FQ UK. Subscriptions (4 issues per year) are £10 for organisations or £6 for individuals.

Foxfire On Line

The Foxfire Project (PO Box 541, Mountain City, Georgia 30562, USA) now has an e-mail account with America On Line. Their address is: Foxfirend@aol.com
John Holt: Personalised Education and the Reconstruction of Schooling

John Holt died ten years ago. He had written ten books, many of them destined to become acknowledged classic works in education. His writing was translated into seventeen different languages. It seems an appropriate time to review Holt’s contribution to education.

When he first began to teach, Holt was content with schools and what teaching had to offer: “I had no quarrel with traditional education. If someone had said to me much of what I have said in this book, my answer would have been ‘Baloney!’ I agreed without question that students should be made to learn…” (Instead of Education, p 207)

Holt found, as many of us have found, that formal teaching did not work very well. Perhaps it was a technical problem. You just needed to perform the method more efficiently. Holt threw himself into lesson planning, visual aids, the devices for motivating children, and careful evaluations. There was some improvement, but not all that much. He decided to study the children and he began to see the classroom from their point of view. It led to his first book, How Children Fail, where schools had: “…an exaggerated concern with getting right answers and avoiding mistakes; they drive them (ie the learners) into defensive strategies of learning and behaviour that choke off their intellectual powers and make real learning all but impossible.” (p 39)

But his discovery that schooling itself held children back was only the beginning of his analytical journey. Holt admitted that he had been part of the problem before becoming part of the solution: “I myself, for many or most of the years I was a teacher, did almost all of the bad things I have talked about. Indeed, I think I did most harm when my intentions were the best.” (What Do I Do Monday?, p 53)

His was a long and complicated journey but he was to end up declaring: “I don’t believe in the curriculum; I don’t believe in grades; I don’t believe in teacher-judged learning. I believe in children learning with our assistance and encouragement the things they want to learn, when they want to learn them, how they want to learn them, why they want to learn them. This is what, it seems to me, education must now be about.” (The Underachieving School, p 146) and “The schools can be in the jail business or in the education business, but not in both. To the extent that they are in one they cannot be in the other.” (The Underachieving School, p 64)

John Holt: Personalised Education and the Reconstruction of Schooling plots John Holt’s journey by reviewing each of his ten books in turn and showing how his ideas are still pertinent.

Available from Educational Heretics Press, 113 Arundel Drive, Bramcote Hills, Nottingham NG9 3FQ, UK for £17.95 hardback or £9.50 paperback. ISBN 0-9518022-7-5 (hardback) and 0-9518022-8-3 (paperback).

Roland Meighan

New South Wales SRC
1995 State Conference

Over 120 students (and a few ‘non-students’) from all over NSW made the 40 minute or 40 hour trek to Vision Valley, north of Sydney, for the annual State SRC Conference. This was the ninth straight year of this gathering, and reflected the hard work put in over those years by many SRC representatives and their advisers.

One of those - Jeremy Maitland - returned once again this year as a keynote speaker. His enthusiasm (and relatively long history - as students go - with SRCs) set the theme of the Conference in place. The students were told to ‘GO MAD’ - in other words, MAKE A DIFFERENCE. Make a difference in themselves and the level of responsibility they assume; make a difference in their schools by actively involving their fellow SRC members in decisions and projects of real importance to students and their communities; and make a difference in their state by becoming aware of key issues and doing practical things to influence the shape and future of education.

The theme was explored in various ways over four days. Playback Theatre of Sydney was a profoundly entertaining and relevant keynote group which set the tone for the focus of the second day: ‘Together Discover Humanity’. Flexishops conducted by various regional groups followed this up with presentations on ‘Homophobia’, ‘Racism’, ‘Safe Travel’, ‘Sex-Based Harassment’, ‘Our Values Shape Our Actions’, ‘SRCs at University’, ‘Teenage Rights and the Law’, ‘Anti-Violence Strategies’, ‘Emotion Without Connection’ and ‘Decision Making’.

Bram Williams, a media consultant who revealed the irony that he had been kicked out of his SRC some years ago for being too outspoken and was now a keynote speaker for the state conference, set the tone for the third day’s focus of Turning Talk Into Action’. Flexishops on this day explored these topics in order to do just that: ‘Working with Primary SRCs’, ‘Student Participation in Quality Assurance’, ‘Practical Skills for Promoting the School’, ‘The Leadership Curriculum’, ‘Look at What You Don’t See’, ‘Environmental Issues’, ‘Drug Education - Student Concerns and Issues’, ‘SRC Dynamics’ and ‘Choosing Your Communication Style’.

The NSW SRC gave its annual report, revealing a level of sophistication and action throughout the previous year which showed how far it has advanced since its foundation in 1992. This group of 20 students from the (previous) 10 educational regions of the state, attempts to carry out some of the recommendations that evolve at this Conference.

This year, the annual Forum held on Day 3 put forward 15 varied and thought-provoking recommendations. A future issue of Connect will publish these in full. Sufficient to say that they ranged from a call for all SRCs to use the new computer technology (NEXUS E-mail for example) to initiate and maintain more regular communication with colleagues in the student leadership field, to a view that SRCs should actively press the proposed resumption of nuclear testing in the Pacific by the French government.

Anyone wishing further information on this Conference may contact Sue White, Pupil Welfare Consultant at the former Metropolitan North Region Offices in Hornsby, NSW - or Student Leadership Course students from Bathurst High who attended the Conference: Karen Fraser, Elizabeth Phegan or Greg Arrow.

Reported by Charles Kingston, SRC Adviser, Bathurst HS
SKIPPING STONES
A Multicultural Children’s Magazine

Skipping Stones is a nonprofit children’s magazine that encourages cooperation, creativity and celebration of cultural and linguistic diversity. We wish to explore and learn stewardship of the ecological web that sustains us. We offer ourselves as a forum for communication among children from different lands and backgrounds.

Skipping Stones is designed to expand horizons in a playful, creative way. We welcome your suggestions, submissions, subscriptions and support.

We would especially like to hear what Australian youth have to say through their writing and artwork and look forward to including their voices in our pages. In addition to creative work from Australia, we are also seeking Australian pen pals (under 17). Interested students can send their name, sex, age, address and interests to Skipping Stones and we will print this in upcoming issues. Our magazine travels all over the world.

Skipping Stones readers hail from north, south, east and west. From villages to inner cities, youth have something to say, about their culture, school, religion, environment, neighbourhood... and Skipping Stones provides a forum for saying it. Any way you choose to express your dreams and opinions, Skipping Stones provides a place for creative communication. We want to make reading Skipping Stones an active experience, relevant to issues confronting you locally and globally. Your writings and artwork challenge others around the world to think and learn, cooperate and create.

Need Ideas?

Share your culture by explaining why a certain belief or celebration is important to you. Describe your city or village or home. Write and illustrate an article about the community project you organised or your experiences in other cultures and countries. What are your favourite ethnic foods? (Be sure to send us the recipe.) Or, send a riddle, proverb, or folk song in any language.

We also invite your submissions on:

- children's rights around the world;
- world religions, cultures and beliefs;
- hospitality customs of various countries;
- reduce, reuse, recycle, rethink;
- Asian, African and Latin American cultures;
- architecture in your region or country;
- games, quizzes, book reviews, cartoons.

Future Features

Kids Take On the World
Tell us how you are transforming your school or community. Make your own press releases for your club or activity. Send photos, drawings, interviews, letters to the editor. Let your imagination and action change the world!

We're All in it Together: Sports!
Why do you compete individually or on a team? When does your team achieve the best results? What makes a good leader? A good team player? Who are your favourite sports stars? Why?

Who Can Contribute? You!


Guidelines for Submissions

Writing (essays, stories, letters to the editor, riddles, proverbs etc) should be typed or neatly handwritten and limited to 750 words, poems to 30 lines. We encourage you to send submissions in languages other than English. We love illustrations! Please send originals of your drawings, paintings or photos. Include your name, age, address on each page submitted.

Please tell us about yourself in a cover letter. What is your cultural background? What languages do you speak or write? What is important to you? What are your dreams for the future? What inspired you to write or create your submission? We might even print your letter!

If you would like your work returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope with adequate postage. Please allow three months for our reply. If your work is published in Skipping Stones, you will receive a complimentary copy.

Subscription Information


For submissions and subscriptions, contact:

Skipping Stones
PO Box 3939
Eugene Oregon 97403 USA
Phone: US: (503) 342 4956

Arun Narayan Toké and Amy Brandt
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) 489 9052 or (03) 344 8585

STUDENT PUBLICATIONS:

Australian:
Mentors’ Camp Writing 1994 (Rockhampton, Qld)

International:
The Contemporary (Cold Spring Harbor HS, NY, USA) Vol 6 No 1, January 1995
An End to Intolerance (Cold Spring Harbor HS, NY, USA) Vol 3 June 1995
Noun (Paradise Project, Edmunds Middle School, Burlington, VT, USA) Vol 18 No 1, Summer 1995
Skipping Stones (Eugene, OR, USA) Vol 7 No 2, Spring-Summer 1995

OTHER PUBLICATIONS:

Australian:
Yakka (Australian Red Cross Youth, East Melbourne, Vic) No 1, May 1995
YACSA Round (YACSA, SA) May/June 1995
ACEE Equity Network (ACEE, Darlinghurst, NSW) Vol 1 Issue 2, August 1995
The Middle Years of Schooling and Student Alienation: Newsletter liftout (ACSA, Belconnen, ACT) June 1995
Curriculum Perspectives (ACSA, Belconnen, ACT) Vol 15 No 2, June 1995
Rights Now! (NCYLC, NSW) Vol 3 No 2 May 1995
1994 Annual Report (NCYLC, Sydney, NSW)
Ethos P-6 (VASST, Richmond, Vic) March 95
Rural Education (RERDC, Townsville, Qld) Vol 6 No 1, May 1995
Network News (Surry Hills, NSW) June 1995

Overseas:
Foxfire News (Foxfire Fund, Maintain City, GA, USA) May/June 1995
Democracy & Education (Institute for Democracy in Education, Ohio University, Athens, OH, USA) Vol 9 No 4, Summer 1995
National Coalition News (National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools, New Mexico, USA) Vol 20 No 1, Summer 1995
Education Now (Nottingham, UK) #8, Summer 1995
Lib Ed (Bristol, UK) No 26, Spring 1995

ALLPIE Conference: Blazing New Trails in Learning (Alliance for Parental Involvement in Education, NY, USA) September 8-10, 1995
Communication Research Trends (Centre for the Study of Communication and Culture, St Louis, MO, USA) Vol 15 (1995) No 1
The Summerhill Journal (Summerhill School, Suffolk, UK) Summer 1995
John Holt: Personalised Education and the reconstruction of Schooling, Roland Meighan (Educational Heretics Press, UK) June, 1995

Documents

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

A full, computerised 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
418  The Middle Years of Schooling and Student Alienation News Sheet, June 1995. (ACSA) (4 pp; $0.70)
419  Students as Reflective Practitioners, Susan Hearfield, Brisbane Catholic Education (paper at the ACSA Curriculum '95 Conference, July 1995) (14 pp; $1.40)

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August 1995
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• Back issues of CONNECT ($4 single; $6 double issue). Circle issue/s required: $ ..........
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• Cross-referenced index to contents of Connect back issues ($3) $ ..........

• Students and Work - 1985 Connect reprint booklet #5 ($5) $ ..........


• 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: $ ..........

• Cross-referenced Index to photocopies of documents ($3) $ ..........

(all prices include postage and packaging) TOTAL ENCLOSED: $ ..........

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