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**THIS ISSUE......NEXT ISSUE**

Once again, this issue's 'Global' section features a couple of short articles from Eliot Wigginton of the Foxfire project in Rabun Gap, Georgia, USA. Apart from being a useful articulation of the student participation principles underlying that oral history project, this focus allows us to let you know of an exciting and important event that will happen in 1990.

The Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia (SPERA) has invited Wig to take part in their 1990 Conference. This will take place at the Lake Hume Conference Resort, near Albury/Wodonga, from 8 July to 10 July, around the theme 'What Does Social Justice Mean for Education in Rural Australia'.

Wig has indicated that he is most interested to visit and that his policy is to be accompanied by a student from Foxfire. He also hopes that other 'events' can be organised around the country within that visit. Connect (which has a history of contact with Wig and Foxfire that goes back to 1978) is anxious to support and promote as many opportunities as possible for Wig and the Foxfire student to meet and talk with Australian projects and interested teachers, students and others.

If you are able to help, please let us know - we particularly need to hear of contacts outside Victoria, where there is the possibility of transport and accommodation costs being met, and where you can offer to organise local meetings.

1990 is a particularly opportune time for a visit. Foxfire stresses a whole language approach to literacy (see the interview in Connect 51/52, 1988) and the visit could become a valuable part of the discussions that will occur in International Literacy Year (ILY).

For details of the classroom approach that Wig takes, chase up a copy of his book Sometimes A Shining Moment (Double-day Anchor, reviewed in Connect 56) - available from Foxfire, Rabun Gap, Georgia 30568 USA - for US$10.95 plus postage.

Connect needs your support and financial help! Please renew your subscription promptly - we carry almost 100 people each issue, who are late in renewing. Please let friends, colleagues, acquaintances and journals know about Connect - we cannot afford to advertise. We rely on an active network to spread the message: SUBSCRIBE!

Roger Holdsworth

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Students from the ASPIRE project in western Sydney - videotaping puppet plays on mathematics for years 1 and 2 children. Connect is edited and published by Roger Holdsworth, 12 Brooke Street, Northcote 3070. Phone: (03) 489.9052.
Approaching Mathematics Education Through the Arts

One of the strengths of the primary curriculum is its holistic approach to education and its commitment to subject integration, particularly in the area of language. The Bullock Report's policy of 'language across the curriculum' has had a profound effect on schools in Australia as well as in England. Often, however, mathematics is still seen as different from the other subjects and as less amenable to integration. It is only since the appearance of the Cockcroft Report that the importance of language in mathematics learning has begun to be appreciated. Now, many schools are beginning to implement a policy of 'mathematics across the curriculum'. The ASPIRE (Approaches to Student Produced Instructional Resources in Education) project is one example of ways in which such a policy can be implemented. The project began in 1988 when three lecturers at the Institute of Early Childhood, Sydney College of Advanced Education, received a small research grant from the College to begin to develop an integrated approach to primary mathematics education. All three lectured in mathematics, and each had a second area of interest: Tony Rogers' was art, Noel Geoghegan's was music, and Laurie Makin's was language, with particular reference to children whose home language is a language other than English. As lecturers in the early childhood area, they also shared a strong philosophical commitment to a child-centred approach to education and to the provision of learning experiences which are relevant and meaningful to children. Mathematics seemed to be in particular need of attention from these perspectives. The team decided on an approach to mathematics education in which:

a) mathematics could be integrated with art and craft, drama, music and language;
b) children could take on the task of producing resources designed to teach mathematical concepts to other children.

It was the team's belief that such an approach would make mathematics more accessible to children, since they could approach it through their individual interests, skills and abilities. ASPIRE also had the potential to develop positive attitudes towards mathematics, since it offered children the ego-boosting experience of taking on a teaching role. It was hoped that the motivation of the task, the relevance of the context, and the high level of subject integration would result in increased mastery of mathematical concepts.

Before setting up a formal research program, the practicality of the vision was explored. So in terms 3 and 4 of 1988, a pilot project was undertaken, and in the first three months of 1989, an introductory video and handbook were produced.

The pilot project was undertaken in a composite years 3/4 class in western Sydney. There were 25 children in the class, 14 in year 3 and 11 in year 4. All but four had been born overseas and had English as a second or third language. They were, as all children are, very different in their personalities and abilities, and very much individuals. They were also an excellent corrective to any tendency to stereotypic. Kenny, for example, had been born in Norway and spoke Norwegian as well as Filipino. Giovanni, despite his name, was Filipino, not Italian - pasta had been his mother's favourite food during her pregnancy!

The pilot project was completed over a period of four months in terms 3 and 4. During this period, the children worked on a flexible allocation of up to three hours a week (usually one afternoon with some morning work on another day) to produce videos of puppet plays designed to teach mathematical concepts to years 1 and 2 children. The ASPIRE team worked with the teacher and children, overseeing progress and videotaping the process. The children's work was then used as the basis for a 10-minute video and handbook, designed to introduce the approach to teachers and to teacher educators.
The pilot project shows production of one particular form of resource: videos of puppet plays. Other media and other means of production would be equally appropriate, for example, computer activities, tape-slide sets or books. This class produced its resources for younger children but it would be equally appropriate to produce resources for other children in the same grade (either other classes within the same school, or classes in other schools). Whatever the medium of production and presentation and whatever the audience, there are certain factors which remain constant in the process:

BOTH DIRECT AND INDIRECT LEARNING OF MATHEMATICS

The direct learning arises primarily from the need to take on a teaching role in the production of resources for other children. In order to teach something to someone else, one needs to understand it oneself first. Adoption of this role by children involved in the ASPIRE pilot project resulted in strong incentive to revise and consolidate the mathematical concepts on which the content of these resources was based. But in the process of teaching, one’s existing knowledge is also extended. The children's teacher gives a good example of this on the video: the need of one group to extend their multiplication skills to deal with larger numbers in order to work out how much it would cost to fill a car with petrol.

Because the children were producing resources for younger children, there was more revision and consolidation of concepts than there was learning of new concepts. However, most of the children were learning English as a second or third language and needed to learn to express their conceptual understanding in English.

The National Policy on Languages advocates a policy of first language maintenance wherever possible. However, with the majority of Australian classrooms containing a mix of languages and a monolingual teacher, it is often impracticable to promote first language maintenance and development. Opportunities do arise, which can be capitalised upon. The children in the ASPIRE class worked in self-chosen single-sex friendship groups. Sometimes the children in a group spoke different languages, and English was their common medium of communication. However, some groups shared a common first language, and the teacher encouraged them to use their first language where they felt it useful and desirable.

One group conducted their discussions and wrote their group story in Filipino. An older child from another class translated their story into English. Then the teacher worked with the children to help them express their original ideas in their own English. The motivation and prestige which ASPIRE offers made this process a very satisfying one for the children, whereas in another context it might have been a very frustrating one.

The indirect learning arises from the process of resource production itself. In this case, designing and constructing a puppet theatre, sets and puppets involved finding solutions to many mathematical problems, e.g. how long the ropes of the drawbridge should be to allow it to both fit across the moat and into the castle; how to make four car wheels the same size as each other and the right size to fit a car; how to join semicircular ears to a circular papier mache head, etc.

Learning also arises from the need to make decisions about the level of mathematical understanding which can be expected of the audience, in this case years 1 and 2 children. This proved to be a very difficult task and one in which the children were not always successful. Here is an extract from one of their plays which is reasonably successful, although you will see that there are missing links in logic:

Fairy Surprise:  Goo, there goes the tenth crash today and it's only 11.45 pm.
Fairy Twinkle:  We need a new road through here. Let's get straight to work.
Dwarf Proud:  Let's go back to the cottage to get a drink of water and the equipment.
Elf Happy:  Let's begin with our hands.

[ACTION]
The link between measuring and rebuilding the road is never explicitly clarified, but the concept of needing to select a measuring instrument appropriate to the task is clearly established and in a way suitable for the years 1 and 2 audience.

HIGH LEVEL OF SUBJECT INTEGRATION

In this case, the subjects were primarily mathematics, language, literature, drama, art and craft. A high level of subject integration is an important part of making mathematics accessible to all children, because they can approach mathematics through their own individual interests and abilities.

One example of this in the pilot project was a girl who was good at story-writing but who baulked at anything mathematical. It was suggested that, in the story and play which she wrote during the pilot project, she should use no numerals or other mathematical symbols, but should write everything out (eg 'four' vs. '4'; 'take away' vs. '-'). The combination of story-writing, which was her strength, avoidance of mathematical symbols, although the content of her writing was mathematics; and the purpose of her writing which enabled her to assist other children, seemed to constitute a breakthrough for her. And whereas, earlier in the year, she had come lowest in the class in the teacher's testing of the children's mathematical ability, by the end of the year she came second in the class. By that stage, she was using mathematical symbols confidently and competently.

Integration of mathematics with humanities subjects is of particular importance if we wish to improve the mathematics education of girls. Research suggests that:

* girls often feel less competent at mathematics than boys. Maths has been seen traditionally as a 'male' subject;

* girls often feel more competent in areas such as language and literature than boys. Language and literature have been seen traditionally as 'female' subjects.

The effects of these gender-linked attitude differences can be seen in the under-representation of girls in 3- and 4-unit (NSW) HSC maths courses, which in turn narrows their choices of tertiary courses and affects their long-term employment prospects.

Breaking this cycle and making sure that both girls and boys are equipped for equal employment opportunity must be, as Jean Blackburn reminds us, an important part of compulsory schooling. The current emphasis on effecting change at the high school level comes too late in students' progression. It is at the preschool and primary school levels that the foundations of personality development and of intellectual orientation are laid. It is at these levels that change needs to happen.

| Dwarf Proud:   | Gee, this is taking way too long. |
| Fairy Twinkle: | Let's use a metre rule. That will be a lot faster. |
| Fairy Surprise: | This is taking too long because it is too short. |
| Dwarf Proud:   | Gosh, I wonder what else we can use? |
| Fairy Twinkle: | I know! A trundle wheel which clicks every metre. It has a hundred centimetres around its edge and when it has gone right around, it is a metre again. |
| Elf Happy:     | What a good idea! |
| All together:  | This is great! We don't have to bend down because it has a wheel joined to a stick and the wheel clicks every metre and it doesn't leave out a metre. Why didn't we think of that before? |
The NSW Department of Education's 'Girl's Education Strategy' points to the need to present mathematics in a way which motivates girls and to the need to give teachers more support in broadening their repertoire of teaching methodologies. ASPIRE offers one contribution to the addressing of these needs. The subject integration of the approach seems to increase its motivational potential, and the adoption of a teaching role enables girls to see themselves as developing mathematicians who have the ability to help other children learn mathematics.

A CHILD-CENTRED APPROACH TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

Mathematics, perhaps more than most other subjects, is often presented in a teacher-centred manner. In ASPIRE, the children are the centre. They are the problem-solvers and the decision-makers as far as is practicable within the limits of their maturity and knowledge. In this project it was the children who decided on the topics, on the medium of puppet plays, on the membership of the planning groups, on role division (giving everyone turns at being actors, camera people, props managers, and so on). This is not, of course, to say that the teacher was unimportant - quite the contrary. The role of the teacher in a child-centred approach is of equal, if not greater, importance to program success than the role of the teacher in a teacher-directed approach.

In ASPIRE, the children are involved from the beginning in the planning of mathematical situations, so the teacher must not only be a good organiser, a good observer and a good communicator - she or he must also be a teacher who believes in the value of children learning from each other and owning their own knowledge.

SUMMARY

In summary, the pilot approach confirmed the team's belief that a multidisciplinary approach to mathematics education is a viable one and one which is of high motivational interest to children.

The team in now exploring ways of extending the project, testing its applicability in a range of schools, and initiating research into the effects of participation in ASPIRE on areas such as:

* children's mastery of mathematical concepts;
* their ability to express mathematical understanding both verbally and via a variety of media;
* attitude change towards mathematics, especially in girls;
* development of problem-solving skills.

The children involved in the ASPIRE pilot project are now in different classes, either within the same school or in different schools. In May of 1989, a small information-gathering exercise in the school in which the pilot project had taken place was undertaken. All the children in the three classes (years 4, 5 and a composite 5/6) which now contain some of the pilot project children were asked to evaluate their own proficiency at mathematics and their liking for mathematics. Their responses suggested the following hypotheses, to be tested in Phase 2 of ASPIRE:

a) there is a positive correlation between participation in ASPIRE and a positive attitude to mathematics for both boys and girls;

b) there is a positive correlation between participation in ASPIRE and confidence in mathematical proficiency for girls.

One of the major issues in mathematics education today is how to make mathematics accessible to as many children as possible and motivational for as many children as possible. ASPIRE is one contribution to this process.

Laurie Makin
Institute of Early Childhood
Sydney College of Advanced Education
PO Box 135, Waverley NSW 2024

This article is an abridged version of a paper given at the Curriculum 89 Conference of the Australian Curriculum Studies Association, held at the Australian National University in Canberra in July 1989.
TEACHING MATHEMATICS IN THE 1990's

Approach mathematics through integration and motivation. Create a child-centred and multidisciplinary learning environment through ASPIRE.

The ASPIRE method of teaching mathematics has been developed by a team of lecturers from the Institute of Early Childhood Studies, Sydney.

As an introduction to the ASPIRE program, a 10 minute video and handbook giving background information and implementation ideas have been produced for pre-service and in-service education.

To order your copy, please send $55.00 and a completed order form to:

ASPIRE (attention Laurie Makin/Noel Geoghegan)
Institute of Early Childhood Studies
P.O. Box 135
Waverley N.S.W. 2024

Cheques should be made payable to ASPIRE.

Please send me ________ copies of the ASPIRE package at $55.00 including postage and handling.

Name ............................................................................................................................................
Position ..........................................................................................................................................
Address ...........................................................................................................................................
Kurnai College, Churchill Campus' Student Executive is in its fifth year and its fourth year as a class that is selected and assessed.

Our school has a tripartite system which means that parents, teachers and students all get an equal opportunity in taking part in how the school is run.

The students have a lot of input into school-associated topics and receive plenty of support from staff, parents and the community as a whole.

Churchill's Student Executive has two support teachers to keep the class of forty students in order and to keep the link between staff and students running strongly.

The class consists of a leadership team of President, Vice-President, Minutes Secretary, Correspondence Secretary and Treasurer. Student representatives and those who've elected to take the subject make the Student Executive what it is.

The meeting times vary, depending on the size of the agenda, but we have a deadline of two periods (1 hour and 40 minutes) in which to complete our meetings and tasks for working parties.

Working parties are groups of four or five students who get together after the meetings and work on tasks such as this Connect article. Tasks that have been completed this semester include discos, identity cards, formal nights, school facilities and the diary policy (see below).

In the whole school sense, on every committee concerning Churchill Campus, at least one member from the student executive is representing the student body during their meetings. This way we get information faster and can be involved in decision making.

The Student Executive of Churchill Campus is improving year after year and will continue to be a dominant part of the school's curriculum.

STUDENTS CHANGING SCHOOL POLICY
A CASE STUDY

Churchill Campus' diary policy was formerly for teachers to sign the students' diaries at the end of each separate lesson. This idea was not treated too well amongst teachers and students. Teachers worried that filling in the diaries and signing them took up too much class time. Students complained that it was a hassle to get them signed and that the amount of time spent filling them in wasn't worth it.

So a working party from Student Executive took up the challenge to change the policy. A survey was formed for students, teachers and parents, offering three alternatives:

1. Should diaries be compulsory? (This was the old policy.)
2. Should diaries be kept and signed if wished by parent, teacher or student?
3. Should diaries be eliminated?

After putting the results and a recommendation to the Campus Management Committee, it was decided that the option with the highest tally would become the new school diary policy. This turned out to be option 2: diaries should be kept and signed if wished.

Danielle McDougall
Jason Shields
HOW TO GET FUNDING FOR STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Funding is a big problem that at one time or another most SRCs and student networks have to combat. To make this problem a little easier to handle I have gathered ideas and suggestions for ways that your SRC or student network might be able to apply for, or raise funds for, student activities in the future.

RAISING YOUR OWN FUNDS

A lot of fundraising in schools is done by students. Often all the money raised goes back into the school in the form of furniture, text books, stationery, and general items used by the school. It is easy to say that the items purchased by the school will eventually benefit students, but, often students like to organise, build, plan, and create special projects for their fellow students and school. To help you fund these “special projects” here are some ideas:

* As most fundraising involves the use of students, the SRC could place a levy on all school fundraising activities, eg 1% of all fundraising to the SRC.
* The SRC should and can run “out of uniform days”. Run by the SRC for the SRC.
* The SRC can run “sausage sizzles”, dim sim days, donut days, etc. Anything that makes people think of their stomachs is usually a good money spinner.
* Walkathons, basketballathons or any sort of “athon” if well planned, can produce a lot of funds for the SRC.
* A “carwash” is also another way to raise funds and it is always appreciated by our busy teachers.

These are just a few ideas out of thousands that your SRC could try to raise funds.

CUTTING COSTS

Often one of the basic reasons why SRCs run out of money is because of over spending and inefficient budgeting.

Are your SRC funds being budgeted properly? If you feel they are not, it is your responsibility as a SRC representative to motivate the students you represent into thinking up an effective way for your SRC to administer their (and your) expenditure.

If you feel your SRC has no problem with its budgeting, then think of how your school supports the SRC.
* What access to school resources is the school council prepared to provide?
* Will the school council provide a photocopying key and stationery?
* Is access given to approved students to make telephone calls at the office for SRC business?

Should students on the SRC have to ask permission to post objects through the school office?

These questions are something that your SRC should be seriously looking at if it is to budget properly and cut costs.

WHAT FUNDING CAN BE APPLIED FOR BY THE SRC OR STUDENT NETWORKS?

The following information includes a lot of ways you can apply for funding, for further information please contact your District Education Committee or the regional office.

RISEC FUNDING (REGIONAL INSERVICE EDUCATION COMMITTEE)

The purpose of this is to fund inservices. Inservices can be a way of getting people together from within your school or representatives of other schools to meet together to:

- discuss important ideas and issues
- listen to guest speakers
- to have small workshops to explore skills or ideas
- to think about what you have done and plan future action
- to plan priorities
- to write policies.

Assistance can be sought for travel costs, accommodation (including meals), lecturers’ fees, stationery for participants and any organisational cost. This type of funding is very useful to SRCs and student networks. Application forms should be found at all schools, but if not, contact your DEC and they will send you some.
How to apply for RISEC (Regional Inservice Education Committee) funding:

1. Submissions should be lodged at your local district office by the 2nd Wednesday of the month.

2. DECs will consider the submissions in the 4th week of the month and make recommendations to the regional inservice education committee.

3. All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their submissions after the regional committee has met during the 1st week of the month.

4. The time span between closing date and notification is approximately 4 weeks. Your planning time should allow for this plus additional time to obtain the necessary prior approvals about which you will be informed.

"MAKING SENSE - A GUIDE TO FUNDING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE"

It's a problem when you've got a great idea but no money. Well, the Funding Guide doesn't provide more money but it does provide some clues about where you may be able to get some.

The idea of the Guide arose out of countless requests from youth workers and young people for information on possible sources of money for projects they wanted to do.

The Victorian Council of Social Service (VC OSS) was funded by the Youth Affairs Division to develop the Guide. It consists of three components: a poster, a package of funding information and a data base of various funding programs provided by the government.

The computerised data base will provide a listing of various government funding programs for which SRCs, student networks, youth groups, and young people may apply.

Overall the Guide will be a useful tool for young people needing practical advice on how to get the most from limited funds. Enquiries:

Youth Affairs Council of Victoria
14 Gertrude Street
FITZROY 3065
Phone: (03) 419 9122

LOCAL RECREATION INITIATIVE GRANTS

This grant aims to encourage new initiatives at a local level which have potential to expand the range and quality of sporting and recreational opportunities for the general community. Preference is given to groups assisting the integration of people who may have limited opportunities due to disability, low income, age, lack of transport, geographical isolation or ethnicity.

FUNDING IS AVAILABLE FOR:

- Programs promoting general leisure activities.
- Programs promoting fitness and physical activity.
- Recreation programs for children.
- Programs promoting unstructured and outdoor recreation.
- Recreation promotion events such as fun days, expos, etc.
- Establishment of new sport and recreation organisations
- Equipment pools for community use.

SRCs could promote fitness in any of the ways mentioned and be able to get funding for their project, for more information contact your local DEC.

GENERAL MANAGER'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

Over the last three years money has been available to schools through the General Manager's Discretionary fund for innovative programs. Early in the year (about March) a notice in Regional Focus has invited applications for this fund. If the fund continues next year, it may be a source of funds to students.

I hope through the development of this paper you have now a greater understanding of where your SRC can get some funds. All groups such as SRCs or student networks need to be able to have their own funds for different projects they want to do. This paper may have given you a few ideas to make it a bit easier for your SRC to get the needed funds.

The development of this paper was brought about after numerous requests from students on where to get funds. If you have any opinions on the paper please let me know by writing to: Cobram High School P O Box 387 COBRAM 3644

Craig Johnson SRC representative
School council representative
President of Students North of Shepparton Network
I am plagued by two pervasive, but completely understandable, misconceptions about the Foxfire program. The first is the conviction that if someone initiates a "Foxfire-type" project, it must, by definition, be a magazine or a book that features the customs, traditions and oral history of a rural, once self-sufficient, community. The second springs out of the first with a perverse, inexorable logic: Therefore such a project is an impossibility in an urban setting. I cannot travel in this country without being confronted by teachers who state, "Yes, but I teach in a city. I can't do anything like Foxfire in an environment like that."

The source of these misconceptions is obvious: The only results of our work these folks have seen is a series of magazines and books that feature the customs, traditions and oral history of a rural, once self-sufficient, community in the mountains of northeast Georgia. Fair enough. At least the people confronting me are teachers, which means that at last - and this has been one of the longest struggles of my career - teachers are finally willing to believe that those products they've seen were, in fact, created by adolescents within a public school setting. At least that much has been accomplished.

Now, to address the second misconception: The Foxfire books and magazines are simply one expression or illustration of a core set of practices at work - practices which actually engaged students in the curriculum. Students put that curriculum to work in the service of the creation of end products the larger community sees and applauds. It is an application of the academic agenda in the real world, and within this nation's public schools. That application has an honourable tradition - albeit much abused and much misused over the years - the roots of which reach back at least as far as the "project method" popular at the turn of the century.

These core practices have been employed by teachers at all grade levels in every conceivable kind of educational setting - rural and urban, public and private - in more ways, and in the service of more kinds of projects, than I could describe in a book. Some of the projects, have been inspiring and elegant; some have been vapid and superficial; some have been philosophically clean and sound; some have been monumentally misguided, standing only as mute testimony to a teacher's misguided ego and fundamental misinterpretation of the bigger social and educational rationale the practices are meant to serve.

But in any case, the point is that the projects inspired by Foxfire are only a tic on a nearly endless list of possibilities; and the fact that most have been conducted in a rural rather than an urban setting is an accident of fate, not a consequence of design.

Eliot Wigginton

NINE CORE PRACTICES

There are probably more....

1. All the work teachers and students do together must flow from student desire. It must be infused from the beginning with student choice, design, revision, execution, reflection and evaluation. Most problems that arise during the activity must be solved by students. When one asks, "Here's a situation that just came up. I don't know what to do about it. What should I do?", the teacher turns that question back to the class to wrestle with and solve rather than simply answering it. Students are trusted continually, and all are led to the point where they embrace responsibility.
2. Connections with the work to the surrounding community and the real world outside the classroom are clear. Members of the community are frequently the audience for the work; the content of all courses is connected to the world in which students live. Whenever students research larger issues like changing climate patterns or acid rain or prejudice or AIDS, they must "bring them home", identifying attitudes about and illustrations and implications of those issues in their own environments.

3. The work is characterised by student action rather than passive receipt of processed information. Rather than students doing what they already know how to do, all must be led continually into new work and unfamiliar territory. Once skills are "won", they must be reapplied to new problems in new ways. Because students are always operating at the very edge of their competence, it must also be made clear to them that the consequence of mistakes is not failure, but positive constructive scrutiny of those mistakes by the rest of the class in an atmosphere where students will never be embarrassed. Handled differently, the experiences students have may be, in John Dewey's words, "miseducative", or may "land them in a rut."

4. A constant feature of the process is its emphasis on peer teaching, small group work and teamwork. Every student in the room is not only included, but needed, and in the end, each student can identify his or her specific stamp upon the effort. In a classroom thus structured, discipline takes care of itself and ceases to be an issue.

5. The role of the teacher must be that of collaborator and team leader and guide rather than boss. The teacher monitors the academic and social growth of every student, leading each into new areas of understanding and competence.

6. There must be an audience beyond the teacher for student work. It may be another individual, or a small group, or the community, but it must be an audience the students want to be of service to or to please. The audience, in turn, must affirm that the work is important and is needed and is worth doing - and it should, indeed, be all of those.

7. The academic integrity of the work must be absolutely clear. Rather than subverting or avoiding or skirting around any given state-mandated skills and content list, the more appropriate response must be to accept that agenda, accomplish it, but also go far beyond its normally narrow confines. In the words of many members of the reform movement, it must be seen as "floor", not "ceiling".

In addition, teachers must question closely the wisdom of remaining bound forever to the sequential treatment of information presented by their texts (American history from 1492 to present in an inviolable chronology, or instruction in mechanics from comma to semicolon to colon, each with its own tidy chapter, exercises and reviews). Texts, rather, must be regarded as reference works, almost like dictionaries, to be used as needed and as appropriate. Instruction in grammar and mechanics should be blended seamlessly within writing process methodology as opposed to endless review before students are allowed to write.

![Dont Fall Behind... Stay on the Learning Line!](image-url)
8. The work must include unstintingly honest, ongoing evaluation for skills and/or content, and changes in student attitude. A variety of strategies should be employed, in combination with pre and post-testing, ranging from simple tests of recall of simple facts through much more complex instruments involving student participation in the creation of demonstrations that answer the teacher challenge, "In what ways will you prove to me at the end of this program that you have mastered the objectives it has been designed to serve?" Students should be trained to monitor their own progress and devise their own remediation plans, and they should be brought to the point where they understand that the progress of each student is the concern of every student in the room.

9. As the year progresses, new activities should grow gracefully out of the old, incorporating lessons learned from past experiences, and skills and understandings that can now be amplified. Rather than a finished product being regarded as the conclusion of a series of activities, it should be regarded as the starting point for a new series. The questions that should characterise each moment of closure or completion should be, "So what? What do we know now, and know how to do now, that we didn't know when we started out together? How can we use those skills and that information in some new, more complex and interesting ways? What's next?"

Elliot Wigginton
Foxfire


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YOUTH MEDIA IN THE USA
Youth Communication & Children's Express

Youth Communication began in Chicago in 1977 as a citywide, youth written newspaper and quickly became the fourth largest circulation newspaper in the city. It was created to give young people a credible voice in the public discussion of the issues and problems facing youth in contemporary society.

Today, Youth Communication has nine locally-run and locally-funded news centres in the United States and Toronto, Canada. The national centre in Washington, DC is directed by Craig Trygstad, one of the founders of Youth Communication. Activities include a national on-line news service, Youth News Service (YNS), at the national centre; a weekly radio program in Oakland; and a weekly cable television program in Chicago. Some centres also have a mentor program for minority students. Professional reporters mentor students one-to-one to file stories for the Youth News Service.

Subscribers to YNS include over 375 high school newspapers and 20 commercial publications (including the Los Angeles Times, the Des Moines Register, and Seventeen magazine). For more information, contact: Craig Trygstad, Youth News Service, 2025 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 501, Washington, DC 20006; Ph. (202) 429.5292.

Children's Express is the 13 year old international news service whose reporters and editors are children and teens. Under the direction of Bob Clampitt, CE utilises a unique type of oral journalism which relies on taped interviews and roundtable discussions, so that children (aged 8-13) are not limited by their writing skills. Teen editors (aged 14-17) provide training, team leadership, research and logistical support.

CE has trained over 2000 young reporters and editors who manage and plan CE news columns for nationwide distribution. Through the Children's Express program, children have the opportunity to seriously discuss issues that will have an impact on their future: nuclear war, toxic waste, education, divorce, juvenile justice, poverty, and international children's rights. This summer, CE reporters will be covering the Democratic and Republican national conventions and asking political leaders about Third World children's issues.

CE has bureaus in New York City, Newark, Boston, San Francisco, Australia and New Zealand. In the Fall of 1988, CE began a weekly television news magazine on Public Broadcasting Stations.

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During 1988, secondary school students in New South Wales organised a series of protest actions over changes to the education system and curriculum structures. In doing so, they formed two student activist organisations, the School Students Union and the Secondary Students' Coalition. While these groups were initially focused on action in response to the political changes, the groups also enabled students to develop contacts and networks across wide areas, particularly in Sydney.

The recent changes to education in New South Wales have angered students and sparked off organised protests. In the western suburbs of Sydney a determined group of secondary students formed a School Students Union which set about organising a student strike. Links interviewed Michael Valenzuela, Ahmed Alsaidi, Stephen White and Kylie Amos at the Trades Hall as they were preparing for a concert to raise money for the Student Union. We began by asking them how the Union got under way.

Standing up for students' rights

MICHAEL — I joined the union about two weeks after it started working. We thought that to combat the changes to the education system we'd have to take a very organised approach to try and preserve education at the level where it was. We're not saying that it was at a great level but we're saying that it was at a decent level at least. We thought the best way to combat those regressive changes was to organise ourselves in a structured organisation that was prepared to work. We're trying to build an organisation which has a financial base, an organisation which will be prepared in the future to take action to fend off changes people are trying to impose on you. That's basically the main difference between ourselves and any other student organisations that exist.

It's been said that we operate out of Trades Hall and we're funded by socialist organisations. They're the allegiances that were in the Sydney Morning Herald and which Dr Metherell has mentioned.

Well, yes we work in Trades Hall every now and then. We hire the halls because they're cheap and nobody else will hire them out to us — especially schools. With regard to the allegation about organisations working within the union, well, we've given invitations to any organisation which wishes to help us out financially but that's as far as it goes. If they wish to help us out financially that's fine as we need the money and the backing. They should have the right to give their views as long as they don't impose them upon us.

AHMED — I think if you want to understand what the union is really all about you've got to look at what its ideals are. The ideal situation is that in the future before a change is made the government (whatever party) not only consults the teachers but also consults students. Students representing their schools can discuss the changes and their likely effects with other students to find out what their response is before actually introducing the changes. This would mean that when changes are made the system is working in a way with which the students agree. If they agree with the way the system works then ultimately they're going to perform better. You can't do what Metherell's done, making changes without giving students warning. If you do that students are going to turn around and say "Look, we have rights as well and we're going to stand up for our rights."

What previous experience have you had with social action because it involves a lot of skills to do what you're doing?

MICHAEL — I've learnt a lot through my parents who work a lot with the Chilean community in Australia. I'm of Chilean background. At first I thought my parents' actions were quite futile but then I went along with them and got experience and learnt a bit. A few other members of the union have had similar experience and we have shared and spread this experience letting everyone know what it's like to organise.

AHMED — I think it basically comes down to inspiration. Students this time have found they need to get up and organise. They haven't looked at textbooks to see how the system works. What they've tried to do is simply to organise. They haven't looked towards anybody else's ideas and I think that's an important point because it shows students are not just sheep to be led around. They've prepared to get up and do something and they think about what they're going to do first.

MICHAEL — That's a really valid point because students can think. It's like putting all these things we've learnt at school into practice. At school they tell you to wait until you become a politician and you can organise things, or wait until you leave and you can organise your life. But students are also starting to think more about their fellow students. You could say they're more humanitarian. I think from what I've learnt we've been orientated around thinking materially — kids these days are oriented too far with television and consumer items. You saw a lot of idealism in the '60s and it would be good to see some turn back to that and people starting to respect one another as human beings not just where they are in the social structure.

AHMED — The problem is that people don't seem to think that while you're at high school you're an adult. They think that while you're doing the HSC you're still a kid but suddenly six weeks later you're a man, you're a woman.

STEPHEN — Students have always had the ability to make changes but they've never had the awareness or motivation. Mr Metherell forced us to take action by phasing changes in so arrogantly and so quickly. Never before have changes been put in in Year 12 without a two year waiting time which allows people to know what they're getting into.

MICHAEL — That awareness has been sparked with these changes. Students started looking past their front doorstep and thinking
These accounts of what happened in 1988 are taken from Education Links #34, and are reprinted with their permission. We hope to follow these accounts, in a future issue of Connect, by reporting on developments in 1989. Have organisations that were formed by students to protest Government changes, been able to survive beyond that initial impetus? Watch this space ... 

Roger Holdsworth

about other people – that’s probably what happened in the ‘50s. We’re facing the system where Australia has been going through recession since 1973, starting with the oil crisis. Now we don’t have the real basis to act because of going through harder times. That’s why I brought the material side into it where students are more preoccupied with how they look, they’re going to drive, where they’re going to go on the weekend. But I think students will start thinking that that’s not everything in life. They’ll start respecting people according to who they are rather than what they are. I think that’s happening now and that’s what people – especially politicians – are afraid of; that students will see straight through the facade they put on.

AHMED – I just want to make the point that this is not a flash in the pan which is what Mr Metherell wanted it to look like. Now it’s true that the initial reaction was spontaneous when people realised something was wrong and that they had to do something. But students now are looking further ahead and thinking about their younger friends, and the education system they’re going to face. We have to build a structure where they can feel free to stand up for what they believe the quality of their education should be. The Students Union is all about trying to get the kids to think about the way the system works, what’s wrong with it, and how they can change that.

STEPHEN – Yes, I’d never really been involved with anything like this before. Then just before the July strike I got involved because I was concerned about the cuts. The experience with the union has taught me a lot. I learnt how the media can twist things and manipulate facts and give a very adverse picture of events. I’ve also learnt how you can be manipulated. I’ve read Mr Metherell’s pamphlet and tried to look at it from both sides but I just don’t see any use in cutting teachers.

AHMED – I think a very important lesson that a lot of students have learnt is that, regardless of where you live, what background you have, what nationality, what colour, what religion, that when you’re faced with an issue all students are able to come together and work together for a common objective. And that should be something that will be carried on in the future when we are adults.

STEPHEN – The union has actually broken down a lot of barriers. There are members in the union from the north shore, from the inner city, from Glebe, from outer west, some round St George, and from Goulburn. We’re also in contact with people from Illawarra, Deniliquen, Coff’s Harbour and down round the Victorian border. So it’s students from all over who would never have had much contact before.

I’d like to finish by saying something further about the cuts to teachers. They call teachers lazy. From what I know of teachers they work very hard. My maths teacher stayed back to help me when I was having difficulties. Three unit subjects are taken at 8am and you can always call on teachers at lunchtime or recess.

AHMED – I agree. They say you can use the textbook. Metherell seems to think teachers aren’t very important or necessary. But teachers teach more than a subject. They get you to think – to think for yourself, and perhaps that’s what Metherell doesn’t really want.

“We’re very serious about what we’re doing and we’ve kept going, even though the government has said we’re a bunch of kids...”

Kylie Amos, School Student Union

Kylie speaks

I got involved in the School Students Union by ringing a contact number after the July strike. I then went along to meetings and spoke at the rallies. Now I’m the Treasurer. Most of the executive were from Year 12 – but now Year 9 is represented, and the membership is broader now. There are well over one hundred schools represented in our membership.

We’re a group of students who joined together after the changes that Metherell decided to make. It started in the western suburbs because we cared about what was going to happen in the future. People aren’t used to us coming out and saying “We want changes... is it right?” We’re different from the Student Coalition which was started more in the north shore area but since their first rally they haven’t voiced a public view – they’ve voiced a lot of opinions on television, which is good, but they didn’t really continue on – whereas we’ve kept trying to think of new ideas to get money so we can have new forms of action.

The most important issues facing us are the cuts in funding for the schools. We fully support the teachers because we need personal attention. Cutting relief teachers will mean there just won’t be a teacher or classes will get bigger and bigger. Cutting the Other Approved Studies (OAS) courses is not encouraging kids to stay to Year 12. It’s doing absolutely the opposite. All the people who were academically orientated are staying on. The OAS were enabling people to do things that were productive in a trade.

The most exciting and productive action I’ve been involved in were the strikes. We got over 2000 people at both. And to see them – they were only there because they cared about their education. They were just so enthusiastic. Then when we got together with the teachers on August 17th – that was definitely the turning point.

There have been quite a few difficulties – like people were spreading rumours that we’re little pawns of the Teacher’s Federation – which we’re not. The Teacher’s Federation doesn’t support a lot of the ideas we’ve come up with. There’s a lot of pressure on us at the moment because education is the first issue the Liberal Government brought up. If they back down on this it’ll give other people some leverage. We’re very sensitive about what we’re doing, and we’ve kept going, even though the government has said we’re a bunch of kids and that the August 17th combined strike wasn’t much at all.

You know, we’ve had people writing from remote country towns, from up the coast, Queensland, Melbourne and Perth. We’ve had letters from the Spanish School Students Union and the British Students Union. They’ve got over a million members in the British union. People acknowledge us. Quite a lot of people on the Executive – the people who started it all – have been involved in things like School Councils and environmental groups. I’ve been to a few peace marches. But our School Council doesn’t appear to do very much – they get seen doing things, but I find they’re not very good on the major issues. But it will keep going, the Union, there’ll always be people who care, who’ll keep going, keep driving, not just those who’ll stay for a week or two.

I’ve learnt that I really do care myself and that if I try I can really achieve something. People say that kids don’t care what’s going on, but we joined together, we tried, and things got done. People have been either too quiet or too shy to try and now we’ve tried, we know it works.

You know, society can be very cruel, it can be very mean, it can be helpful, different people react differently to the way we act. Some support us whilst others say we’re idiots for trying anything in the first place. So all you can do is try your best. That’s all you can ever do.
The NSW Government was quite unprepared for student action on such a wide scale. They were taken aback too by the depth of analysis and organisational ability that secondary students applied to their campaigns. These qualities were not only evident in the School Students Union, as is clear in the preceding article, but also in the Secondary Students’ Coalition. Links interviewed several members of the Coalition, Amber Elen-Forbat, Morgan Lewis, Antonia Tomkinson, Michael Fullilove and Julia Cummins.

No, Minister!

What is the Coalition, and how did it actually start?

ANTONIA — It’s a group of students and schools, a loose network connecting students around the state in action opposing some of Dr Metherell’s changes. By about June or July people in a whole lot of schools were getting upset about what was happening. Individual schools started organising: Mosman wrote an article to the paper, there was a rally at Fort Street, Triple J Radio station brought a whole lot of people together.

JULIA — Yes, different schools joined together with different people. We just happened to form the Coalition, others formed the Students’ Union. They have slightly different policies and organisation, but basically the same ends.

ANTONIA — For example, we don’t have presidents and vice presidents and so on; if something needs doing we get a coordinator whose talents seem best suited to that — for instance, I’m supposed to be the media person.

JULIA — We’ve actually got coordinators, representatives, in about two hundred schools throughout the state — that’s good out of just over three hundred schools.

ANTONIA — One problem for us was that there wasn’t a network already set up around high schools as is the case for uni and colleges — we had to do all the groundwork. At the beginning we tried to go through the students councils and prefects in schools in our area but then the Regional Director found out. He rang the Deputy and said “What’s going on?”, and warned him that “if this keeps on going then it’s quite easy to dismantle the whole student council network,” so...

AMBER — Well, we started by ringing schools individually through the administration. If the Principal or whoever were worried they would contact a prefect or a member of the student body and they would get in contact with us, students passed phone numbers on, people rang us. When our names were in the paper, they looked up the phone book — some were silly enough to put their phone number on radio.

What do you see as the issues that caused such a strong, widespread reaction?

AMBER — There are two prongs: there’s the HSC questions, double marking and the Tertiary Entrance score (TES), that are immediately important, and the others like staff cuts, funding cuts, curriculum changes which are of more long-term concern.

MORGAN — Yes the HSC is really distressing: Metherell’s changing the rules of the game halfway through.

JULIA — Imagine them doing that at the Olympics!

MORGAN — Exactly, there’s a huge uproar.

JULIA — Metherell threw out the unanimous decision by the Board [of Secondary Education] not to put the TES on the bottom of the Certificate. It is the Board who set the curriculum, they set the courses, and when they say “no TES” there shouldn’t be one. They are hardly ever unanimous. But Dr Metherell says, “No, I want the TES, and so we have it! Against all that!”

ANTONIA — I think its also an issue of worrying more about the economics of education than about education itself, and also of putting the traditionally academic subjects above the others.

MORGAN — And that limits your choices, and it will reduce the retention rates eventually. Everything they’re doing is contrary to getting kids to stay on at school, which is what they say they want to do. Greiner actually admitted that he saw OAS [Other Approved Studies] subjects as one of the greater factors in increasing the retention rates.

JULIA — But then he went on to say that it had to be cost effective and why not do it all under one Board, which really defeats the whole purpose of an OAS course because it is designed by the school for the students of that school.

ANTONIA — And there’s no cost involved for the Board — the courses are developed by the teachers in their own “free” time. All the Board does is approve them, which gives them a validity that Dr Metherell seems to be ignoring.

JULIA — It’s quite scary with all the changes, for instance with staff cuts and what that means about class sizes. I want to do 3 unit French next year and I will probably only get a teacher for six out of the nine periods. How on earth can you do well when you haven’t even been with the teacher?

AMBER — The Department says: “It’s research time, good experience for students”, but in French you need a teacher to talk to you. And people in the minority subjects — languages, arts — are going to lose out. Even in maths, if you come to something you don’t understand, well, the textbook can’t talk back.

ANTONIA — Another thing the government did this year was to bring back the moderated School Certificate for Year 10. The previous government had done away with that, and brought in this OCE (Certificate of Education) which most hailed as really good thing — it was to be given to any students who left school at any time — Year 9, or halfway through Year 11 — as a record of their achievements.

MICHAEL — The thing is, they want to be seen to be changing a lot of things but its no good just having change for change’s sake.

MORGAN — And it’s a political thing too, because if they lose this, then they’ll lose the State Rail thing — Greiner actually said something like that in the Herald — so who gets caught? Teachers and students in the middle. He hasn’t spoken to those concerned in it either.
ANTONIA — No he’s only starting to now — after he’s done it. We haven’t seen any of these promised discussion papers which are going to be circulated among interested groups.

JULIA — We keep getting one page letters starting “Dear Student” and saying absolutely zilch. Even the so-called “informative” letter to parents was full of errors.

ANTONIA — There was a blatant lie — he said there would be no curriculum changes before 1990, and it’s not true — there already have been. Even when Greiner formed that committee and people thought it would take power from Methereill — all it did was approve everything Methereill said. It’s really filthy tactics.

AMBER — One achievement Methereill should go down in history for is uniting everybody — parents, students, teachers, public, private, Catholic, independent schools. Has it ever happened before?

ANTONIA — And you know computers are another swizz. All this money they’re saving to put towards computer education — how much of it will be administrative, how much hands-on time for students.

JULIA — Are they going to be teaching the right sorts of thing? And how are the teachers supposed to learn about them?

MICHAEL — I think this is another public relations thing — change for change’s sake. Everybody goes round saying computers are the thing of tomorrow, so the government thinks it can get some votes with computers. But it’s a lot more complex than saying we’ll get a hundred microbes and wham them in the gym.

Do you have policies that help you decide what action you will organise or get involved in?

JULIA — From the beginning we’ve had a two-prong policy: that we play by their rules, so that we get listened to, and that we operate on facts only, that we don’t make rash assumptions. If anything was “proposed” we tried to refer to it as “proposed” so that we get listened to by the community and Dr Methereill. You have to be really reasonable, and it’s very hard. We tried to keep to the “three Rs”: reasonable, responsible, respectable. Emotion is all very well, but it’s not going to get us anywhere — you’ve got to know the facts.

MICHAEL — As far as possible too we try to be independent of other special interest groups, to preserve our own integrity.

AMBER — For instance with the teachers — they teach us, and we are taught so there is an interrelationship — but we’ve got to hold our own opinions.

ANTONIA — It wouldn’t matter if we were adults, then it would be acceptable, if we were tertiary students, it would be acceptable, but as secondary students we’ve been accused right from the beginning of saying what the teachers want us to say.

MICHAEL — Alan Jones was getting stuck into me because of the student movement, and he said “You’ve been duped by the Teachers’ Federation”, and I said, “No actually we made up our own minds,” and he said, “What, at ten years old? That’s pure arrogance.” Whichever way you go, you can’t win.

JULIA — Because you don’t vote, you don’t have a brain. At the very beginning we had a protest at Teachers’ and one of the main things they were angry about was that they didn’t have the vote and couldn’t vote against Methereill and Greiner. They felt bullied.

ANTONIA — So our financial backing is just through private donations, our own money, taking buckets around at meetings and demonstrations.

MORGAN — I think one of the good things about having two groups (the Coalition and the Union) is that they appeal to two groups of students. We have this policy of “playing it by their rules”, so that we don’t lose support from the public and can’t be so easily dismissed, whereas the SUU (Union) is a lot more direct, more confronting. For that reason some students have gone with the SUU, some with us, and a few have gone with both. We’re going to the same place, different ways.

What actions have you been involved in? Which have been the most important/exciting/productive?

JULIA — The Sunday rally — June 26 — about 5000 students — the first public outcry on a mass level. It was the first rally, and it got good coverage too. The SUU held a strike demo, a few days later. And that was a difference between us. We decided to have it on a weekend, so more people could come — some of the students at Catholic and private schools had been threatened with expulsion if they went on strike — and also, we thought if we were fighting for our education then we shouldn’t take a day off to do it. The Union argued that taking a day off was saying we care about our education so much that we’re willing to take a day off from school to say so.

AMBER — We had the rally that day to get the students informed, and to show them, through the speakers, that we did have support in lots of areas.

MICHAEL — And it was really great. There was a really really great atmosphere — there was a terrific response.

MORGAN — We had Shirley Berg from the P&C, she flew down from Wagga Wagga — and Sandra Nott from the Labor Party, Clover Moore, the Independent. And no one from the government.

ANTONIA — That was really bad. We went through the whole week, we went to meetings, we did everything we could. And then at 3.30pm on Friday they rang us up and said sorry, we can’t come.

JULIA — It was awful because we had tried so hard. We didn’t want one side of the story. We wanted them to tell us what the hell they were doing.

ANTONIA — And Greiner had put a press release out the day before saying “Students must listen to both sides of the story”! It was amazing.

MORGAN — Then there was the August 17 strike: teachers, parents, students, everyone. What was so good was you saw heaps of families with little kids in tow, pushing prams and stuff — with flags bigger than them. Parents saying “Look here are my kids, in ten years they’ll be in the workforce and I need help for them now.”

Michael — And it wasn’t just “the protesters” — it was the middleclass, the silent majority that Dr Methereill’s always talking about, which probably gave him a bit of a shock.

ANTONIA — People have to stop and listen when 50,000 people gather in the park and say, hey we want to talk about education Mr Methereill. It’s all a bit hard to ignore — that, and reports in the paper every day for about four months.
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What difficulties have you encountered?

JULIA — Getting in contact with people was hard as we said earlier. And also getting listened to, getting information, being consulted. Until we gave ourselves a name—people dismissed us as ‘just a bunch of students’. Even then, even when we could say we’ve got two hundred schools supporting us, and Antonia and I wrote a letter to Mr Greiner, the reply was all very much “there, there”. “Dear Julia and Antonia” not “Ms Cummins and Ms Tornkinson”, but he didn’t sign it Nick. At one stage he said that the Coalition were “partly to the great misinformation surrounding the issues in the community circulated by the media”. We thought: if you’d tell us things then we wouldn’t be misinformed. We’ve tried our damndest to get as much factual information as possible and it’s just not coming out.

ANTONIA — When we went to a meeting with the Department on the Friday before the rally they said inspectors were going round at the beginning of Term 3, and they would talk to the kids. The inspectors came all right – I found out by chance, and we got into the meeting. But it was a meeting for teachers only. There has been no direct consultation with students, no information.

JULIA — The schools were told they were not allowed to tell us about the inspectors coming, because it’s political, and an industrial issue, nothing to do with the students! We’re the ones who’ll be affected by the changes and yet we’re not allowed to be told what they are, where we can find out, when they’re coming in, how they’ll affect us.

MICHAEL — They have a mandate, a right to make decisions, but they don’t have the right to steamroll past all consultation with interest groups in the issue.

ANTONIA — There’s a letter to Fenton Sharpe which says “I believe community discussion might be a bit confusing to the public!”

JULIA — I think the mandate to govern was summed up in one placard at the August 17 rally which said “I voted for Greiner — silly me!”

ANTONIA — A bloke from the P&C said that Metherell had talked to the P&C before the election and it all sounded great, but what had actually happened was a totally different thing.

MORGAN — Teachers are leaving too – really good teachers. They’ve fought for ages for good conditions, and Metherell’s taking it all back. One of the best economics teachers at our school is leaving.

MICHAEL — Two of our best history teachers.

ANTONIA — Springwood High is losing five or six — they’ve just resigned.

JULIA — How does the government expect to keep teachers, when with all the qualifications so many teachers have, they can just go out into the community and get another, better paid job? Some of them will go to private schools.

MORGAN — They said no teachers would lose their jobs — but they’re sacking people over sixty. I used to think politicians would say things that they at least thought were true, but they’re just lying.

MICHAEL — I used to think “Yes Minister” was a joke.

Have many of you been involved in social action, or organisations, before this?

AMBER — Lots of us have been in student councils, or environmental groups, but it’s much broader than that.

MICHAEL — And we’re not necessarily made up of activists. I wouldn’t call myself an activist. I read about various issues and struggles but I’m not a radical. That’s what makes this whole issue different. It’s not radicals arguing about educational ideology, it’s just people asking for a decent education.

MORGAN — It’s people realising they might not be able to do the subject they want next year.

Olympia speaks:

"Many of the students' families are used to seeing governments as an overpowering figure that is so high up it is unapproachable... We have to put aside these fears of government and realise that there is something we can do about these drastic changes."

Olympia Lazarides
Year 11, JJ Cahill Memorial High School

I would be natural to assume that as a year 11 student at JJ Cahill Memorial High School (Mascot) I was concerned about the drastic changes proposed by the Greiner Government, and indeed I was. Many of my fellow pupils were affected by the issue but felt helpless about the situation. They saw it as an inevitable change that was sought after by the government and no matter what they did, these determined authorities were not going to be deterred.

As soon as the news of a strike was heard, students changed, seeing it as a "dry off" and a cause not likely to involve them. There were messages sent to all students but still no enthusiasm. Six out of the 980 students at the most attended eight of the protest rallies. I have boiled this attitude down to a "fear" of government as well as a lack of interest in political affairs.

How does fear come into the argument? Many of the students' families are used to seeing government as an overpowering figure that is so high up it is unapproachable! There is one thing I must condemn and that is the attitude of, "there is nothing we can do about it!". They seem to forget that we now live in a democracy and that means we have a government that is run by the people who live under it.

We have to put aside these fears of government and realise that there is something we can do about these drastic changes. Sensing that there is a problem is the first step towards solving it, but that alone won't get us anywhere.

While most students were outraged to hear about the cutback in teachers and HSC changes they could not be bothered doing anything about it. Perhaps this is due to the discouraging influence of their past or the simple lack of faith in even a united front against a stern government.

If there is a lack of faith existing now, what happens when future generations hear in 1988 when there was a huge disapproval of a government proposal that the politicians dismissed these outcries - that they turned a blind eye and laughed at the people they represented? What kind of example of government/people cooperation is that? I am sad to say that this will be detrimental to the morale of the public and will discourage their say in current affairs.

JJ Cahill is a school that is active within itself and the community. It has a good school spirit but when it comes to politics we are stuck with Australia's old time enemy - apathy.
I want to give a student's perspective of the recent action following Dr Metherell's proposed changes to the education system in New South Wales. It must be understood that these changes mean more to us than just a chance to strike and miss school. Nor are we just puppets being manipulated by teachers who are disgruntled leftwing radicals. The action we have taken is born from concern over the nonchalance detrimental handling of our education which ultimately will determine our future, for better or worse.

Greiner, the Premier, and Metherell talk in their interviews of wanting to meet with the student groups to discuss the proposed changes and yet neither of them have accepted invitations to speak at any of the protests. They only pay heed to groups already backing them. No amount of public opposition seems to phase Metherell. A student protest attracted 6000 students and a rally on the day of the strike boasted 50,000 parents, teachers, students and supporters. This huge rally was described by Metherell as "a flop, an abject failure". He should keep in mind that everybody at the rally and protest over the age of fourteen will have the vote at the next election.

Fifty thousand parents, students, teachers and supporters disproves Metherell's claims about them being a silent majority and the puppets of militant unionists. People poured in from locations like Bathurst, Newcastle and Bega by bus, car and train - even by plane - to support the stand against Metherell as schools across the state were left deserted. The Domain was filled with protesters who settled to hear the many speakers. Bob Carr compared the rally to the lunchtime rally in November 1975 when Gough Whitlam was sacked. After the speeches, the crowd reassembled in Macquarie Street outside the police line, barricaded Parliament House. The street became so filled with chanting and singing protesters that the barricades had to be moved forward. The feeling of being in that crowd and participating was fantastic with everybody being seen and heard for the same cause. When Nick Greiner and Metherell appeared for the opening of parliament ceremony the rally responded with a deafening wave of the chant "resign!", and on his departure and failure to face the crowd, Metherell's system is a marked regression.

MORGAN - Education should be more about people than numbers, it should be more diversified.

ANTONIA - And diversifying the curriculum doesn't mean Mickey Mouse-ing the curriculum - it could have rigour.

AMBER - ...and relevance ...

JULIA - ...and interest ...

ANTONIA - We're asking a lot here, we're aware of that, but it is possible!

Just last question about the future. We commented earlier on how the bringing together of teachers, parents and students has been Dr Metherell's great achievement. Do you think that the momentum of that coalition can be maintained?

MORGAN - I think there is a problem about going into next year, it won't be the sensation it is now, and it will be difficult - maintaining the rage.

MICHAEL - At the rallies there were some people from Year 7 and 8 from my school, but they're not so directly affected. But I think the change people undergo from the end of Year 10 to the beginning of Year 11 is really metamorphic because the HSC is no longer vague, you're hit with it.

Heath speaks:

"Fifty thousand parents, students, teachers and supporters disproves Metherell's claims about them being a silent majority and the puppets of militant unionists."

Heathcliff Sheridan
Year 9, Balmain High School

"coward".

Although the numbers at the protest and rally were impressive and encouraging, as was the percentage of school students who went on strike, there were a number of children who treated the strike as a holiday and went to the beach or saw a movie. These students are either alarmingly unconcerned with what Metherell is planning to do to our education or are uneducated about the proposals and what they will mean to them.

I asked Daniel Tilbury, in Year 9 at Balmain High School, what he thought of Metherell's proposals. He thought they would cut teachers' time with students and cancel their extra curricular activities. Daniel plans to work with animals and perhaps become a zoologist. He plans to study maths, science and English and these subjects will possibly be made compulsory by Metherell. Although he dislikes Metherell, and his proposals, Daniel did not go to any of the protests. He thinks they are a good thing but not very effective.

I also talked to Finn O'Keefe in year 8 at Balmain High School. He considers the proposed abolition of HSC double marking as unfair and opposes cuts to teaching and ancillary staff because they would mean larger classes and poor quality education. Finn went to the rallies to express his views and thinks such action will be effective in the long run. He wishes to work in the theatre and his subject choices, History, English and Drama are at risk under Metherell's cuts.

Although the rally was impressive, giving a great feeling of solidarity to those opposing the Metherell changes, and despite the great amount of anger and dissatisfaction displayed against the new educational regime, Metherell still refused to take note. Nothing has changed. Before he backs down and public education receives justice, more people are going to have to be educated about the education cuts and what they will mean to them. It is vital that every student care about their education and be concerned enough to defend it when it is downgraded. Education could be threatened by those with power who personally have no need for it any more. Education is too important for this to happen!
ANTONIA – Yes, you’re right in it. The membership is spreading beyond Years 11 and 12 as the lower years are beginning to realise they don’t know what their HSC is going to turn out like.

JULIA – I think awareness is growing within the parent body, and that they’re going to be worried about their children going into Year 7 next year.

ANTONIA – The P&C have suggested that we might plan something jointly and that would be great. People are becoming aware that the P&C don’t just hold cake stalls and that’s half the battle – becoming more aware – that’s when you can get organised to do things.

Student action is not new. Perhaps it has not always been as spectacular or provoked as the recent action but it has been an empowering force all the same. In the early 1980s, a strong movement for student participation developed in schools in the Western Region of New South Wales and its influence began to spread outside the region. It had energy and vision and Charles Kingston, a teacher who was active in the movement, describes what happened to the momentum once the Department of Education became involved.

A tarnished vision
Vision Creates Ideas
Ideas Generate Action
Action Brings Rewards


The vision that motivated me and many others in the Western Region for many years was of a truly coordinated, communicating and caring regional organisation – responsive to students’ needs, relevant to current issues and responsible enough to lead our students and schools into a better, active future. To be strong – and strongly supported – such a vision needed to be shared not just by students and staff involved, but by parents and by educational administrators.

Such almost happened. It isn’t happening now. What once was a vibrant, student centred, forward looking movement, is no longer. Perhaps, phoenix like, it will rise from the ashes left over from bureaucratic burning to rekindle the creative imaginations and energies of schools out west.

The ideas that were created by that vision, and the actions they generated, are the theme of my article. I acknowledge but make no apology for my biased view. I take quiet, ironic pride in observing from a distance the actions of recently formed student action groups in response to the new State Government education policies. Frankly, the Department of Education, having chosen control rather than creativity two years ago, is getting what it deserves. It could have been so different!

The History
In the late 1970s a number of schools in the Western Region of the Department of Education were developing student governments and councils. These included Nyngan, Canobolas, Bathurst and Boorowa Central. West Wyalong, however, had a system far more effective than most, one which had emerged, over several years, from the needs and aspirations of its students – a truly grassroots, school-based development.

In 1980 students from West Wyalong made a presentation at Youth Forum in Bathurst, a statewide forum for secondary students. The West Wyalong students' topic was "Student Government – Rights and Responsibilities". As a result of the presentation, members of the Schools Commission (and where has it gone?) encouraged West Wyalong High School to put in a submission for the development of a regional association of student governments. This was done – by novice students assisted by two almost as novice teachers (little did we foresee the heights and depths of what was to come). We received a grant of $7,600.

During 1981 West Wyalong developed the basis for an association. Together with the Youth Affairs Council of NSW, we surveyed student representation in Western Region schools. We published four newsletters, a student handbook for the school and, in early 1982 after a full six week "holiday" devoted to the task (yes, Virginia, teachers do work after 3.30) we published The Hitch-Hiker’s Guide to Student Government.

Most importantly, we had training workshops for student leaders. These students then helped to run the first annual camp. The aims of the camp and those succeeding it were to develop leadership, decision-making and organisational skills necessary for student participation now and citizen participation later in life. The first camp ran for five days, involved one hundred and ten students and twenty teachers from twenty-one high and central schools. It was here that we held the inaugural meeting of the Association: RASG was born.

Over six years – from 1981 to 1987 – RASG successfully operated within the Western Region of the New South Wales Department of Education. With the support of two successive regional directors, Doug Rickard and John Lambert, and the voluntary, largely self supported efforts of dedicated teachers and students, RASG organised student leadership camps (ten in all, both senior and junior), workshops to train student group leaders for these camps, with inschool workshops for student councils, PEP student...
In seeking to secure the student government movement within the Department of Education we had succeeded beyond our key ambitions ... We had ... won the war but lost the battle.

The focus of the debate was the word "government". Attached to the word "student", it appears that amongst powerful individuals and groups within the Department of Education, "student government" was perceived as a threat.
A new home for Links

Education Links has wandered all its life from house to house. This has made it difficult for others to contact anyone about the magazine.

In August this year Links moved to a more permanent home at the Inner City Education Centre, ICEC, a community and resource centre set up in 1975, was originally funded by the Commonwealth Schools Commission, but is now surviving on its wits. It has been — and is — a progressive force within the education system developing strategies by which disadvantaged groups may become involved in the educational process and recently has moved more strongly into publication of educational materials.

We are delighted to have this relationship with ICEC. Regular meetings of the Links collective are held there on the first Thursday of each month at 7.30pm. If you would like to find out more about Links, or join the collective, you would be more than welcome at these meetings.

at The Inner City Education Centre
37 Cavendish Street, Stanmore. Phone: (02) 516 3550

These articles are reprinted, with permission, from Education Links 34. This issue also contains articles about education action in TAFE and other areas. A subscription to Education Links costs $15; individual and back copies are also available. Contact: Education Links, C/o Inner City Education Centre, 37 Cavendish Street, Stanmore NSW 2048. Phone: (02) 516 3550.
YoUTH/POWeR is a magazine about world development, justice and social change - for young people, and by young people.

The magazine began in 1986 as an International Year of Peace project and has developed considerably since then. It aims to explore global development in a way that relates to and includes our own experiences of life in Australia. It emphasises action, involvement and possibilities for change.

Each edition of YoUTH/POWeR includes ideas, information and activities - classroom resources for teaching about peace, racism, the environment etc.

Students from years 9 to 11 are involved in planning, researching, writing, taking photographs, interviewing, illustrating and laying out the magazine. They also make up the YoUTH/POWeR Editorial Panel, which organises these activities.

Past issues have covered these topics:

#1: Peace
#2: South Africa
#3: Racism
#4: Shelter
#5: The Pacific
#6: Aboriginal Australia
#7: Environment

Subscriptions to YoUTH/POWeR are $15 for 3 issues, though class sets (30 copies) of single issues etc are available at reduced rates.

Contact: YoUTH/POWeR Subs, Development Education Group, 155 Pirie Street, Adelaide SA 5000. To become involved, contact Suzy Stiles (Editor) at the above address or phone (08) 223,5962.
Students Active in Curriculum '89

Secondary students stood at the microphone in front of a packed hall. "When you talk of productive partnerships," they challenged, "where do you see the role of students?"

Throughout the 1989 Conference of the Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA), held in Canberra from July 6 to 9, students were active and obvious. The Conference attracted over 450 participants from throughout Australia (together with some international guests) and approximately 50 of these participants were students, mainly at the secondary school level.

As well as rising to the floor microphone at the many opportunities, to question and argue, these students were also visible in other arenas:

* Students formed the opening panel of the Conference to present a variety of 'Pupil Perspectives'. Their views and accounts were diverse and articulate, yet some of the audience left comment- ing that 'they' didn't get their point across in a coherent enough way - and implying that all panelists were of a like mind, without differences. Another student was a member of the 'Persasive Priorities' panel later in the Conference.

* Students attended the variety of paper presentations and workshops, contributing to discussion and questions.

* A specific workshop on 'Issues in Student Participation' attracted large numbers of students (as well as non-students), and advertised its discussions and outcomes in large wall-charts in the Conference foyer.

* The 'Celebration of Curriculum' session on the first day involved large numbers of students, principally from ACT schools, in demonstrations of student-centred activities from primary and secondary classrooms.

* Each day, a team of students produced the Conference news-sheet, 'SOAPSUDS' (Students' Opinions and Perspectives: Students Understanding, Directing and Speaking). This involved the team attending sessions, writing summaries and comments, collecting accounts and graphics, and late into the evening, typing and laying out the A3 sheets. It provided a consistent linkage for the many events of the Conference, and a clear focus on the participation of students in curriculum discussion.

A detailed report of the Conference will be available through the Australian Curriculum Studies Association. For details contact Jim Cumming, Curriculum Policy Unit, Department of Employment, Education and Training, PO Box 826, Woden ACT 2606 Phone: (062) 83 5452. Further reports will be included in Curriculum Perspectives, the ACSA journal - for information and membership application, contact Renata Moles, School of Education, Deakin University, Victoria 3217. Ph: (052) 471 463.

It is also likely that some form of continued networking around issues of student participation will occur through ACSA, leading up to the next Conference in Adelaide. With a steady increase in student numbers and active participation over the last three Conferences, we can look forward to an even more spectacular partnership of students with teachers, parents, administrators and academics.

In Connect 56, we reported on the Videobeat student video magazine, produced by the DSP Resource Centre, Metropolitan East Region, NSW.

Episode 6 of Videobeat is now on the way ... and it is all about student participation! Further information soon. But, in the meantime, contact Di Smith at the Resource Centre, Carr Bridge and Swanson Streets, Erskineville NSW 2043. Phone: (02) 517.6822.
WHAT PRICE INDEPENDENCE? by Robyn Hartley (Research Fellow of the Australian Institute of Family Studies) is the report of a research study commissioned by the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and carried out by the Australian Institute of Family Studies, with support from the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme.

The research results are available in three publications. The full research report presents the complete findings and related discussion; the summary report outlines the major results and recommendations; a special edition of Youth Issues Forum discusses the research and related areas of policy and program development.

The report and its summary are included in a specially priced package. Postage and packing costs are included. There are special discounts for YACVic members.

WHAT PRICE INDEPENDENCE?

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<tr>
<td>Youth Issues Forum</td>
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(YACVic members: $3)

The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria
14-15 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy Vic 3065
Ph: (03) 419 9122

The arguments about a young person's right to an adequate income have been bounded by assumption, prejudice and ignorance. Do young people really have lower living costs than adults? Are all young people able to be economically supported by their families?

Until now, there has been no reliable, comprehensive and up-to-date research on the incomes and living costs of young people. Now we have current information from young people on their costs of living and how they meet them. This research is unique.

This research study is the culmination of a three-year project carried out by the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria to examine the assumptions underlying Australian economic policies affecting young people. The study has involved the critical development of research design, an analysis of existing data sets and extensive field research.

The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria commissioned the Australian Institute of Family Studies to carry out and report on this research, with support from the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme. Funding from the Myer Foundation enabled the Council to initiate and develop the project.

This report provides new, detailed and vital data with which to question assumptions, challenge prejudice and dispel ignorance.
The Inner City Education Centre is a progressive, independent education cooperative which runs projects, carries out research and develops resources in a wide range of educational areas. Set up in 1975 with funding from the Commonwealth Schools Commission, the Centre no longer receives any recurrent funding and is reliant on project funding and sale of resources for its continuing existence.

Support for student participation has been a consistent area of work for the Centre for many years. The Centre continues to develop and distribute resources on student participation.

The Inner City Education Centre has produced a catalogue of resources available personally or by mail. They also produce a newsletter, the Inner City FLYER. This is available on subscription for $12 pa.

Contact the Inner City Education Centre at 37 Cavendish Street, Stanmore NSW 2048 or phone: (02) 516,3550.

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**Hands On - A Journal for Teachers**

Hands On is a journal for teachers, published quarterly by Foxfire in the United States. It provides a network between oral history education projects, lists resources available and records case studies of projects throughout America.

The article: "But I teach in a city; what can I do?" and the Nine Core Practices, both by Foxfire's Eliot Wigginton are from Issue 32 of Hands On - Summer 1988.

This issue also contains nine case studies from the Skyline Network in Atlanta, Georgia - articles on 'Brown Elementary Memoirs', 'The Vine City Domed Stadium Project', 'We Have Accepted the Responsibility to Care for the Next Generation', 'Fourth and Fifth Graders make Blueprints from Scratch', 'Using Foxfire-Type Projects in the ESL Classroom -From the Cuckoo's Nest to Worldview and Beyond', 'Richards Middle School Students Go on a ... Rampage!', 'Fayette Portraits', 'The Billboard Project' and 'No, we want Chinese Food'.

Subscriptions to Hands On are US$5 a year for 4 issues, from The Foxfire Fund, Inc., Rabun Gap, Georgia 30568, USA.
Local & 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:

AUSTRALIAN STUDENT PUBLICATIONS:
OVERSEAS STUDENT PUBLICATIONS:
Foxfire (Rabun Gap, Georgia, USA) Vol 22 No 4; Winter 1988 (#86).
Spew 2 (War Resisters League, USA)
OTHER SOURCES:
Options (Youth Bureau, DEET, Canberra) June, July 1989.
Australians in Poverty (Brotherhood of St Lawrence, Fitzroy, Vic) - kit.
Collective Notes (COSHG, Melbourne, Vic) Nos 42, 43; June, July 1989.

Hands On (Foxfire, USA) # 32, Summer 88.
Youth Affairs in Australia (YACA, St Kilda Vic) June 1988.
NIE Update (ANPA, USA) Vol 15 Nos 4,5 June, July/August 1989.
Communication Research Trends (UK) v9 n2
World of Work Newsletter (CDC, Canberra, ACT) No 10, June 1989.

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Articles:

With this issue, we resume listing of some articles relevant to student participation. They are of background value or otherwise not appropriate for reproducing in the columns of Connect. However, they are available on photocopy for research purposes. The length and cost (copying and postage) are listed. Please order by code number. (A fuller listing is available in Connect 46/47 (to October 1987).

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<tr>
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<td>326</td>
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<td>Students and Teachers Working Together In-Service (Vic. Goulburn North East Region, April 18 1989) - notes. 9 pp; $0.80</td>
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