This Issue .... Next Issue

This is the 50th Issue of CONNECT! This is quite an achievement for a magazine which has been wholly dependent on unpaid labour and on income provided by its supporters and subscribers. As most of you would know, CONNECT has become what it is very largely because of the time, effort, network and friendships of Roger Holdsworth. The value of the magazine can be seen not only from the many people who continue to subscribe year after year, but also from the number of new subscriptions and the flow of news and articles. Roger's contribution to encouraging students, teachers and administrators to consider the benefits and appropriate processes related to youth and student participation has extended well beyond the production of CONNECT. We have celebrated the milestone of the 50th Issue by publishing part of a consultancy report by Roger. It follows on from the articles by Mary Conway and Eliot Wigginton in the last issue, and provides a helpful perspective on the "State of play" in Victoria.

Several of the other articles in this issue are reprinted from the final two issues of Ascolta. Ascolta has been a very important voice for students in the Brunswick area, but a cut in its funding has meant that it will no longer be published. While there is some uncertainty about what may follow, there is no doubt that the benefits of Ascolta and the commitment to student publication will continue to be felt for some considerable time. The articles reprinted here provide an interesting insight into the range of topics which have been covered over the years: reports on the dance eisteddfod, on initiatives to improve the career options and lives of women, and the report of the Student Research Team of the Ministerial Review on Student Participation.

Thanks to the contributors of our other articles. The year is now well under way, so please think about writing an article for CONNECT and showing what you are doing with others. If we can help, don't hesitate to contact us to discuss what you have in mind. Best wishes!

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CELEBRATING THE 50th ISSUE!!

Roger Holdsworth prepared this discussion of student participation as part of a larger report that he prepared for the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria in 1986. What follows is an extract from the final report, entitled Youth Participation and Student Participation in Education: Proposals for Program Work in 1986/7. It is very helpful in clarifying some basic issues.

Youth and Student Participation in Education

2. STUDENT PARTICIPATION

2.1 What do we mean by student participation?

In preparing the discussion paper for the Schools Commission, three understandings of the term emerged:

2.1.1. student participation in school:

"When the concept of student participation is used in this way, it is primarily concerned with strategies and policies that are designed to encourage young people (and adults) to extend their involvement in the processes of schooling. Student participation is equated with staying at schools for longer periods."

2.1.2. student participation at school:

"...the concept of student participation at school embraces the notion that students should be actively involved in defining and choosing their schooling experiences and in considering school and wider administrative concerns."

2.1.3. student participation through school:

"...student participation is seen as developing an approach to participation in social issues and action through education. The question of what it is students are participating in becomes paramount...the concept of student participation is inadequate unless it is also linked to or combined with views about what constitutes substantial issues and worthwhile goals which provide students with challenging experiences... (I)deally, all aspects of a young person's education would be socially, politically and personally relevant and challenging and provide young people with opportunities to contribute to improving their community and the well-being of others."

The paper went on to define student participation as "student sharing in decision making and action about the determination and implementation of education policies and practices and in the key issues that determine the nature of the world in which they live" and then specified a number of criteria for such participation.

It is clear that participation rests on bases of "human rights" and "learning".

We can also move on to point out that when we talk about student participation, we are talking about something broader than representation:

"The concept of youth participation often brings to mind the notion of youth representatives on boards and committees, and of
keeping young people busy. While the mere involvement of youth in adult activities is worthwhile, it is not the essence of youth participation. Participatory experience on boards and committees is usually limited to token representation. Generally, adults are in control, the work of the group consists of what adults want to do, and youth members are often not given power, appropriate skills and/or the self-confidence to make themselves productive members."

National Commission on Resources for Youth Participation in Youth Advocacy, p.4.

"Effective, meaningful and powerful participation must happen at a local level if young people are to have the confidence to cope with committee procedures politics and politeness. These turn off so many people who have never been prepared for them."

Give Us a Say in things GUST, Somerset, UK, 1981; p.4.

The Schools Commission paper also goes on to point to the important connections between participation and representation and to advocate the development of "participatory representation" where specific roles of representatives are to develop participation of all students in issues under consideration, in ways that are more active than the traditional ones of receiving reports and giving advice.

Further details on such a concept are contained in that paper and in the article "Putting the Participation Back Into Representation" in Connect 37-38, February 1986.

2.2 The current situation

A brief summary of the current situation can help to analyse what is happening at a number of levels. This section presents a description of current practices.

2.2.1 Classroom

Increasing attention is being paid to classroom collaborative approaches and to negotiation of curriculum. Such approaches are supported by Ministerial policy directions, by in-services and by publication of case-studies and other support material. Naturally practices vary. With some schools paying only lip-service (if that) to such principles, others giving token support to negotiation, others attempting to implement such curriculum approaches in some areas, and others where whole-school curriculum development and implementation is a co-operative exercise of students, teachers and parents.

Such negotiation of curriculum covers goals, content, methods and assessment and also includes evaluation of curriculum directions.

In Victoria, the processes of curriculum negotiation are most advanced and articulated in the Schools Year Twelve and Tertiary Entrance Certificate (STC) Course.

The development of the STC Course has been particularly important to other areas of student participation in a number of ways, including:

* clarification of principles and procedures that may be extended to other year levels;
* provision of academic credit at a senior level for students involved in a variety of student participation activities (see below).

In other areas, the development of middle-school (year 9-10) negotiated curriculum has been aided by the examples of the Youth Action Program (YAP) at schools in Melbourne's eastern suburbs. Initially supported by VISE and with funding from the Transition education program, these school courses are based on a set of principles that include shared classroom decision making on goals, content, methods and assessment.

The development of such negotiated curriculum approaches has however exposed a large area of uncertainty in teacher readiness for processes of negotiation. It is generally not something of which teachers have experience,
either in their own schooling or in their pre-service training. This has been particularly true as, for example, the STC Group of schools has expanded from 6 in 1977 to nearly 100 in 1986 - the teachers involved are no longer the small core of already committed and experienced people who initiated the principles upon which the Course was based.

While the existence of the STC Group provides a team approach to teacher support and offers some curriculum in-service in this area, much more needs to be done if teachers are to feel competent in sharing what has traditionally been teacher-centred classroom power.

Further, the same insecurities are experienced by students faced with negotiating their curriculum. Even less support exists in this area.

Within negotiated curriculum (and, for that matter, within curriculum practices that are entirely teacher directed) there are activities that can involve students in decision making about real issues. Criteria can be developed to indicate that some forms of learning activities are better than others in achieving the sorts of goals indicated in Ministerial Papers and in the above section. For example, Rath's suggested in 1981 (J D Rath, "Teaching without specific objectives" in Education leadership v 28 n 7, April 1981, pp 717-718) that one activity is more worthwhile than another if it:

* allows young people to make informed choices and reflect upon those choices;
* assigns active rather than passive roles to students;
* engages students in intellectual enquiry into current problems;
* requires students to examine topics or issues that are typically ignored by the major communication media;
* involves students in risking success or failure;
* requires students to rewrite and polish their initial efforts;
* gives students a chance to share the planning, implementation and evaluation of work with others.
Many examples exist of activities that are active, co-operative, useful, productive, aimed at significant issues. They include:

* research: students carry out research on behalf of agencies into issues that they, the agencies and the community regard as significant. For example, students have investigated community use of railway stations for the Ministry of Transport, vandalism for the Premier's Task Force, truancy for VISE and so on. In each case, the significant aspect is that the research is acknowledged by and intended for some body other than the class/school, and that it proposes actionable outcomes. Similar projects have been proposed in the area of housing and could easily be developed in most fields;

* media: as an outcome of other studies and researches, students publish results, views, arguments, cultural statements, etc. through a variety of media. School-based community newspapers exist - in fact in some areas these have become the town/district newspaper. In other areas they provide a multi-lingual publication to serve the particular needs of the community. In other areas, students produce radio programs for broadcast on public (and, in some cases, commercial or ABC) radio. Production of these programs often becomes an end in itself, but is most effective when seen as a means of connecting other forms of worthwhile school-based activity to the community. For this reason, video productions have been badly lagging, but moves to establish a student video magazine or to develop access time on future public television provide hopeful futures.

* tutoring: students tutor other students, either within a year level or across an age difference (cross-age tutoring). While such programs occur naturally within collaborative classrooms or within small schools, there is some value in recognizing the importance of the development of specific tutoring programs within schools. Structured to allow tutors time to prepare, tutor and reflect - especially in small groups - they become powerful means for changing school perceptions as to the value of students. They are also relatively easy to institute, extremely justifiable in traditional research-oriented terms and ultimately effective in increasing student participation in education decision making.

* work: students develop work and career structures in response to community needs. While there has not been a great deal of work done in this area, a few programs contain the seeds of possibilities for future school-based career-creation moves - for example the School-Work Program at Moreland High School which has now developed into the Victoria Indigenous Nurseries Cooperative Limited. Without indicating that there is specific work to be carried out by VACVic in this area, links with Unions, Youth Guarantee Directorate and Traineeships indicate that VACVic should maintain an interest in such programs.

This list is not meant to be conclusive but rather to indicate the range of school-based projects that have students actively involved in making decisions about acknowledged significant activities.

2.2.2 Representation within schools

Legislation now require that all Government post-primary schools in Victoria have a School Council that includes at least two elected students. In many cases, the number of students on the School Council ranges from 2 to 4. Such Councils have significant decision-making and advisory powers within the school community.
Though lacking similar legislative requirements, some non-Government and primary schools are also developing structures that have students represented within their decision-making levels.

The particular challenge to schools and students is to ensure that such student representation goes beyond the tokenism quoted earlier. This means several things must be considered:

* how students are elected to the council, and the degree of seriousness accorded to such representation by students;

* the links student representatives are able to make with student bodies and with the student population - opportunities to report back and to gain advice, support and direction;

* the nature of the topics considered - that is, whether students are admitted to the full decision-making powers and structures of the Council - sub-committees, inner discussions etc.;

* the processes by which decisions are made and the degree of seriousness accorded to students representation by adult members of the Council and other adults in the school community.

There is value in having these aspects spelled out and brought to the attention of School Council members and other member of the school community through publication, audio-visual material and in-service activities.

Students report difficulties with structures, with attendance, with reporting back, with being seen to be doing important things, with being seen to be effective, with getting time to do the effective work, with getting ideas, with getting enough money, with having too much money and so on. The positive side is that there has been a dramatic increase in student consciousness about what is possible, what should, be and where current arrangements fall short of those possibilities.

While it is possible to be quite cynical about the value of SRCs and to see them an another mechanism for controlling student action and trivialising student concerns, it is also possible to recognise their potential for organisation and action among students.

The challenges for SRCs are similar to those outlined above for representatives on School Councils - the nature and process of representation, the nature of the issues considered, the seriousness with which a student organisation is viewed by students, staff and administration.

And overlaying both levels is the challenge associated with student work within representative structures being recognised by allocation of time and academic credit. Substantial work has been done in this area in 1984-5, and the publication of Credit and Support by PEP in the near future will greatly assist this discussion.

2.2.3Regional Structures

As with School Councils, regional Boards of Education are legislatively required to include two students. In some areas these have been selected and co-opted by the Board itself. In other regions, a complex process of the development of electoral colleges has occurred to enable students (through their School Council representatives) to elect their Board representatives. In others, the Board has recognised the existence of a regional student network and has asked that body to either directly appoint or to arrange the processes for election of the students. Presently, the situation is uneven across the 12 regions, with many not having student representatives in place.

2.3 Issues

We can identify a number of issues that need further exploration and action in the area of student participation:
2.3.1 Accreditation

The issue of accreditation emerged in 1984 as students began to be involved in school and inter-school representative structures and to suffer academically for that involvement.

It has been argued that the long-term solution is to transform representation into a curriculum rather than an administrative issue ("Putting the Participation back into Representation" in Connect 37-38) but short-term needs remain.

The Schools Commission paper summarised the argument:

"Students engaged in educational work in student organisations and formal decision-making bodies need time to carry out this work. Otherwise such participation locks students out of access to learning and credentials offered by the school and disqualifies them from proceeding with their studies - "passed participation, failed English"? Such time is needed to participate in meetings, prepare for and follow-up such meetings, reflect, report to constituents, gain direction from constituents, lobby and so on. Side-by-side with the need for time is the need to recognise both the time and effort spent and the learning that has occurred through extension of formal school credit. If such time and credit is not forthcoming the alternative for many students is to withdraw from participation to concentrate on "normal" "non-participatory", "credentialled" forms of learning. This then selects those students who can participate, reinforcing class, gender, age and ethnicity criteria that have traditionally excluded some students from access to meaningful learning experiences and decision-making power." (p.73).

The publication of Credit and Support in the near future will extend arguments and practical examples of action in this area.

2.3.2. Resources

All forms of student participation require specific allocation of resources, both material and personnel. The Ministerial Working Party has been charged with specifying such needed support in detail but we can point here to a couple of areas.

Firstly, experience with regional networks has indicated the necessity of support personnel to work with student groups, to facilitate their meeting, to provide back-up between meetings, to negotiate access to facilities, to advocate to bureaucracies and soon. This form of support is further explored in section 2.4 below.

Secondly, a variety of written resources is needed. Take A Part, due for launch on June 5th, will provide a substantial resource to students and student groups, but it must be supplemented and added to as needs are identified. For example, the need for a series of brief and easily used pamphlets on such topics as "meeting procedures", "what is a good representative?" and so on, has been pointed to.

Thirdly, we pointed earlier to the need for a range of in-service activities both for students and for teachers around such topics as negotiation. This could be extended further to supplement some initiatives already developed for SRC support teachers, and proposals for establishment of regional student support networks.

Fourthly, the analysis of issues associated with student participation has been particularly light on consideration of factors of class, gender and ethnicity.

2.3.3. Information and Input

Students are not well informed about proposed changes, policies and structures. They frequently complain about the obscure language of reports and, increasingly, about the lack of consultation or chance to have
input, before such reports are released.

While part of this issue rests upon the development of an informed and active state network, part can also be addressed directly. The proposal by students of a Student Interpretation Group to re-write documents, would be a valuable curriculum exercise in understanding these documents as well as making them available to more students.

2.3.4. Representation and Participation

The arguments around distinctions between these two concepts and the weight to be lent to aspects of each need to be continued and resolved. In particular, the concept of participatory representation mentioned earlier needs to be developed further.

2.3.5. Other Issues

Previous papers have pointed to a large list of issues to be confronted and worked on in the area of student participation. We need only recognise that they exist, at this point, and indicate that YACViC should maintain a keen and positive interest in their resolution:

* incorporation of support for student participation into school staffing allocations;
* the relationship between classroom based decision making and the decisions made in the broader forums of the school, the region and the state;
* the nature of who participates, with particular reference to questions of gender, class, age and ethnicity;
* the relationship of student participation to questions of assessment and credentialling;
* legal liability;
* procedures for committees to be inclusive of the needs of their members;
* the range of issues considered and acted upon by student representative bodies;
* the form of student representative structures best suited to enabling and encouraging all students to become active participants;
* the speed with which representative and consultative structures can make decisions.
The Dance Eisteddfod 1987

A growing number of schools are now participating in the Dance Eisteddfod conducted by the Victorian radio station, EON-FM. While some concerns have been raised about the conduct of the eisteddfod and its curriculum relevance, there is little doubt that the students involved find it to be a terrific experience. Preparation takes an enormous amount of time and commitment from students and the results are often spectacular to say the least. This issue of CONNECT has comments about the participation by three schools in the Eisteddfod: Moreland H.S., Brunswick H.S and Keilor Heights H.S. The first two articles were written by students (and are reprinted from Ascolta); the third is from a case study on dance at Keilor Heights prepared for the national project which explored the ways that the Arts curriculum can value and incorporate the interests of young people.

MORELAND H.S.

Congratulations to students of Moreland High School for their contribution to the annual EON-FM ROCK EISTEDDFORD 1987. The 6 minute dance routine involved a preparation of 3 months of giving up lunch, staying back after school, weekends and school holidays for the students who made the decision to give Dance a go. With no previous dance training the novice dancers excelled with their presentation. They discovered the enormous amount of pleasure that one obtains when movement and music are combined and presented on stage. Although many of the students were initially reluctant for fear of making fools of themselves, their attitude was soon changed when their dance teacher pointed out to them that the word "can't" should be omitted from their vocab and replaced with "try", for as long as you try, you are winning.

Ms. Annette Christopherson by profession is a fully qualified Dance Teacher with the Commonwealth Society of Teachers of Dance, with 15 years of teaching experience and 30 years of dance experience.

Annette commenced employment at Moreland High in March 1987 as an Integration Aide. She was approached by a few students who expressed a strong desire to participate in the Eisteddfod but were reluctant as they had not had any previous dance training. They asked if it would be possible for them to learn a routine in time. Annette gave the students the incentive to try and so the school’s gymnasium became the rehearsal venue. The school’s Principal, Paul Clancy, and staff welcomed and fully supported the dance classes.

Annette’s dance classes are not directed towards producing the future professional dancer but more as a means of instilling self confidence in students. "Dance is a need for self esteem and self confidence" says Annette, and the "A large number of students and adults are extremely inhibited. They lack a great deal of confidence and without confidence one fails to achieve the goals that one would like to achieve. A confident student will always do well in the academic field. To be physically fit is to be mentally fit. The students who participated in the dance classes have certainly learnt the importance of physical fitness and that dance is one way of obtaining such fitness and stimulation".

The event also involved the textile class, art class and many individual students who worked and put a great effort in
costume, backdrop and backstage work. Their time and effort was appreciated by all. Overall a
great group effort by all students involved and the
enormous support and help of staff members. It was wonderful
to see the students working harmoniously to represent
Moreland High School at the
EON-FM ROCK Eisteddford.

The work has not stopped. Next on the agenda is Morelands' Multi-Cultural Days to be held on
15th of October. The dance section, among many other events, will present dances of many
nationalities.

Congratulations to all the staff and students who participated. A great effort!

BRUNSWICK H.S.

This year a group of students from Brunswick High School decided to participate in the
EON-FM Eisteddfod. About 120 schools competed, each doing their own original mime and dance
to a song, or a couple of songs.

At first we couldn't decide what song to do. We did not want a disco song, or a heavy metal
one, just a song that was exciting enough to do an energetic dance to. In the end we decided on an introduction
with "Working Class Man" by Jimmy Barnes, and a dance to "good times" by INXS and Jimmy Barnes.

After a few weeks of rehearsal, we had a skeleton of a
dance. Well, we had basic ideas. But there were squabbles between us. During rehearsals some kids worked harder than others, introducing new ideas and being co-operative, while others just mucked around. Despite this, the
dance was coming along well.

After about two months of rehearsal, the group broke up. Rehearsals had deteriorated dramatically, up to a point where we wasted more than half of our
time arguing. About half of the group dropped out. They felt we were wasting our time.

At this time the rest of us had to decide whether to continue or not. Essentially, the dance
needed twenty people to work. We decide to continue, although we were sceptical whether we could
get anywhere.

But to our aid came a group of girls. They decided to help us. We showed them what we had
done, and they were impressed. They became part of the group.

In the time we had left we worked very hard, even during the holidays, preparing everything
and on the day we were ready. Unfortunately, we couldn't get all the costumes made, so we
improvized by doing up wind-cheaters and leggings for the backing dancers. The leads
costumes were made by a parent. Our props were great and the dance was ready. Apart from a
few minor hiccups, we were perfect.

What we had come up with was a dance that was fun to do and fun to watch. Our theme was
Australian Made. Our dance was a tribute to Australian music and artists and the successful
Australian Made concerts that were held earlier this year. We wore yellow and green-Aussie
colours and just had heaps of fun on stage. It wasn't a serious or meaningful dance, but rather we
were saying "hey everyone, lets have fun!"
The day loomed ahead of us. We finally all arrived at the Show Grounds. Not all of us could fit in the school bus, so some of us straggled along in cars, public transport, or whatever. Our school was called for rehearsal, but we weren’t all there yet. But when we did all get there we had our rehearsal. Everyone was nervous so there were heaps of mistakes.

Everyone was a bit deflated. All the other schools seemed so good! We could never beat them, we thought.

Each school had some time in the dressing rooms before the actual competition. We were all nervous while we got changed and finally set up our props ready for our turn. The overall effort was good.

The music started, we danced our hearts out. There were mistakes but I think we were all proud of ourselves. Although we were a bit disappointed because of those obvious mistakes.

After all the schools had performed their routine, there was a cheering (yelling) time. Our school, with the help of supporters who had come along, yelled and cheered louder – at least we thought, than the rest.

Two representatives from each school went up for the presentation. Jane and I went up for our school. All the schools received a certificate. The crucial time had come.

Craig Bruce from EON-FM announced the third and second place getters. Then he announced that Altona North High School, with a Madonna double, had won. We were a bit disappointed but we were happy when we learnt that Brunswick High School (us) came fourth and only missed out on third place by one point.

Quite happy with ourselves we went home. The Eisteddfod was an experience which I think everyone who participated in, learnt a lot from. It was lots of fun and all of us are looking forward to next year’s competition.

On behalf of all those who participated, thank-you to Vince Perri, Cathy Wall, Anna Annikolis, Daniel Frigo, Maria DeNino (my mum for making our costumes) and all those who helped us, Thank-you.

Cathy DeNino......

KEILOR HEIGHTS H.S.

Keilor Heights has had a history of involvement in rock and roll projects, drawing on students’ interests and experiences for many years. In 1980 an original rock production ‘Kidstuff’, was produced, reflecting significant student, staff and parent interest in this kind of activity. ‘Kidstuff’ was published, a 12” recording was made and it was subsequently performed in other states. It was followed in 1982 by ‘Why Me’. Much of the preparation for these productions occurred in Drama classes.

Students worked in small groups to produce written material, choose music and shape movement to music. This style of production allowed for much more student input and reflected the influence of such professional productions as ‘Hair’ and ‘Jesus Christ Superstar’.

During these years the Drama Camp at Easter began to take on greater importance as an annual rehearsal camp. It has been held since 1980, at Launching Place. Approximately 30 students from all levels attend, although most are from years 10 and 11. There are always a lot who want to come (as soon as the forms are distributed, they are handed back in). The older students organise food and transport, and some ex-students might attend to help out (they like to see what’s happening and to share what they know).

The camp itself is very structured. There are three 3-hour blocks each day for five days. The program involved some drama activities, work for a performance such as the eisteddfod,
tradition has been fashioned out of the trip home. The students always stop and put on impromptu performances in front of the Launching Place milk bar and the Essendon Post Office: "while these performances have been a bit egotistical it's also because they're on a real high - because it's happened before they should be able to do it."

Throughout the year the momentum of the camp is maintained by the Wednesday night dance workshop which is held in the Drama room from 6.30pm until 9.00pm most weeks of the year (usually by student demand). While part of the time has often been spent in preparing for productions the workshop has a life of its own. Approximately 40 students attend each week and the warm-up exercises are usually led by one of the students.

Activities might include work on choreography, small group discussions, planning or review sessions, rehearsal or making sets or costumes.

The approach of the staff to the eisteddfod was very much shaped by their experience in 1986. The students and staff, buoyed up after their success in 1985, had put a great deal of effort into a narrative fantasy, "The Boy in the Box". Whilst they felt themselves that they had achieved a very high standard of performance they were completely overlooked in the final. Their experience together with that of several other schools led to a good deal of controversy about the eisteddfod, particularly the lack of clarity about the criteria for judging the dancing. For Brett and Lindy, the teachers, it led them to think more broadly about the significance of the eisteddfod in their approach to productions. Of particular importance for them was maintaining their focus on the educational benefits that could flow from involvement in the eisteddfod, and ensuring that the students were not undermined by the competitive aspects.

general art/craft and dance. On any one day they might explore the possibilities in make-up, make masks, do some choreography, talk about lyrics for a song, and rehearse a dance routine. The activities are often focussed around problem-solving. The camp also has considerable social value. The students get some excitement out of making their own meals together. They know also that they have to accept a share of the responsibility for the success or otherwise of the week. The key to its success is summed up in three characteristics which sum up a good deal of the overall approach: good relationships, simple and clear rules, and a sense of achievement.

The camp is the heart of what is described as the "tradition" of drama/dance in the school. A pattern of events has been developed by the Faculty which is now almost self-generating. The students themselves maintain the tradition by becoming enthusiastic and excited about getting involved with the various activities (perhaps as a result of hearing stories or seeing photos of previous productions or camps). A bit of folklore develops around things that have happened and a lot of storytelling goes on, often at the behest of the students: "tell us about when..." or "do you remember when...". Apart from the camp in itself, another part of the
Planning the 1987 dance routine began with everybody sitting in a circle working through the issues. Brett and Lindy questioned whether the school should enter the eisteddfod in 1987. Brett particularly played the role of the devil’s advocate, suggesting that the eisteddfod was really very limiting. Every person had the opportunity to have their say and eventually the decision was made by voting. Despite Brett’s line, the students wanted to take it up.

Brett drew a set of aims from the discussion and they were subsequently endorsed by everybody involved. If the school was to participate in the eisteddfod in 1987 it was to be on the following terms:

a) to come up with a new form or style;

b) to enjoy it (not get caught up in the competition)

c) to reach as high a standard as was possible.

The process of developing a dance for performance is slow, complex and depends on the willing exchange of ideas. Brett provides the initial stimulus by bringing in different pieces of music to which everyone listens, thinking about the kinds of images which it conjures up in their minds. In past years it has been a song but this year it was an instrumental piece, which in itself represented an advance. The students initially struggled with imagery as a form but eventually they all agreed that the music and theme was worth pursuing.

One girl took it home and developed some steps which she then showed to other students who helped to develop the ideas. The Drama camp at Easter was an important part of the process of developing the work; it involved tearing apart what they have constructed to date and rebuilding it.

The result of this process this year was “Changes”. The group moved right away from a narrative form and worked around imagery related to a social issue: the third world and contrasts within our society. The result was a quite distinctive, spectacular, creative and vibrant performance which reached the eisteddfod final. The group itself felt that they had achieved a great deal. They enjoy their dance a great deal and still perform it for themselves, almost on a weekly basis.

creating a classroom newspaper

The International Reading Association and the American Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation jointly sponsor a "Newspaper in Education Week". Part of the preparations for the week includes publication of a series of instructional materials. One of the materials produced for 1988 is entitled Creating a Classroom Newspaper. The blurb indicates that "Approximately 30 pages in length, this NEW curriculum is available for Newspaper in Education Week 1988 and is designed for five days of instruction. It allows your class to practice, prepare, and create their own newspaper. Each day’s work has been organised with a teacher’s lesson plan, student worksheets, and ideas for additional activities. For elementary, middle and secondary levels. Available in mid-October 1987".

The material costs $US5.00 and can be obtained from Jim Sawyer, IRA Headquarters. PO Box 8139, Newark, Delaware 19714-8139, U.S.A.
What is this?
This report has been put together by the Student Research Team for the Ministerial Working Party on Student Participation.

What is it for?
To share with you what we know about student participation.

For you to use in discussing student participation.

So that all members of schools or college communities can work together to improve the curriculum and decision-making for all.

How can you use it?
Read it at home, at school or college with your family and friends.

Show it to the School Council, and the student body.

Why does participation matter?
It's important to use so that people have a say and share in the decisions that affect their lives. That's true for jobs, personal relationships, where people live and so on. It means learning how to work co-operatively with other people.

All these don't come naturally - we have to learn them somewhere. One of the best ways of learning something is by doing it and having a chance to think about it as well as talk about it.

So the part of students in curriculum helps us learn how to control our own affairs and take part in a democratic society. It is also important because government policy supports the idea of student participation and we are helping to think how it might work in schools in the future. If we want students to be involved in our own curriculum we need to be supported by teachers, families and fellow students. We need support inside the classroom and outside. For example, in the classroom, we could start by negotiating homework, then move to bigger issues such as when an assignment should be completed, the contents of an assignment, and then planning a whole year's course.

Outside the classroom, students may have increased influence in curriculum by starting small and working their way towards bigger things, for example:

* knowing how the student school council works;
* organising social events such as walkathons;
* finding out what students need, such as a student phone;
* dealing with student problems, and helping to work the school rules.

Learning and how it happens
Learning takes place inside and outside classrooms:

Parents, students and teachers all learn things in many ways and a variety of settings.

Learning takes place when we observe, read, write, think, discuss, argue... and when.

: it is relevant and meaningful and everybody has a say;
: we work as individuals and as part of a group;
: we have good working relationships;
: and we can negotiate and build on previous experience.
Participating in school at school and through schooling allows for learning to include and extend into the wider society.

If people participate in decision-making about their curriculum then they may become more committed to their learning. With an increased part in decision-making more groups of people who previously may have been neglected or excluded from participating fully in their learning may be offered greater rewards from their schooling, e.g. girls, migrants, Aborigines, the disabled, rurally isolated and the economically disadvantaged.

**STUDENT PARTICIPATION**

Student participation means different things to different people, and takes different forms. For students it means having a real say in what we learn, how we learn, and what the places and structures we learn in are like.

The easiest way to explain this is to look at some of the different ways students can participate as partners in education. The issues paper – *Students: Partners in Education* includes an outline of the ways in which many schools have enabled us to participate.

**In the Classroom**

We can participate in the classroom through:
* having opportunities for class discussions;
* sharing ideas and opinions;
* having a choice of topics or projects within subject areas;
* having a choice of subjects or electives;
* negotiating what and how we will learn in an option, a subject course;
* having a say in our own assessment;

**Beyond the Classroom**

Students also participate in many ways outside the classroom such as being on school councils, in sport teams or being representatives on Regional Boards.

Such examples are:
* Student committees and SRC’s;
* Student membership on school councils and sub-committees;
* regional student networks;
* students helping to plan curriculum days;
* student organizers for "extracurricular" activities such as theatre, bands, productions, socials, debating teams and sports teams, and
* student productions radio and newspaper.

Students learn many skills and develop in many ways through participation in decision-making and activities both within and beyond the classroom.

We learn to:
* develop communication skills orally and in reading and writing;
* extend our knowledge of words, concepts and ideas;
* gain confidence in our own abilities;
* learn about decision-making structures and how to influence them;
* understand better the society in which we live, and
* become our own teachers and teachers of our peers.

**PROBLEMS**

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE PROBLEMS FACED IN MAKING STUDENT PARTICIPATION HAPPEN?**

Students in particular areas are not aware of many issues in schools and colleges and across the state, or of their responsibilities and powers.

Students don't have enough time to participate actively, for example not enough time to negotiate our work or to prepare before and after meetings.

Some teachers and families don't accept or actively support student participation.

Reprinted from Ascolta
HOW CAN STUDENT PARTICIPATION WORK?

Below are some examples identified by schools in their response to the Ministerial Working Party's survey on student participation:

* creating a strong partnership of student, families and teachers in planning what is taught and learned at school;
* students and teachers working together in the classroom to negotiate what is decided about projects, assessment, class discussions and subject outlines;
* students having a say in decision-making, for example, the school council, the curriculum committee and setting up a strong student representative body;
* setting up good communication links so that students, parents and teachers know about issues and concerns that face the school. Students and teachers need to have open and friendly relationships so that they can work together;
* giving proper credit and support so that students participation can work, and
* explaining documents and holding discussions before and after meetings. Students have difficulty understanding issues and structures in education in the ways they are officially presented.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

The Ministerial Working Party has identified six key areas for discussion in relation to student participation in the schools sector. They are:

1. Why student participation?
2. Learning and decision-making
3. Student participation and equity
4. Support for student participation
5. Representation and students on committees
6. Accreditation of student participation.

We hope that people will discuss these areas, realizing that they are all inter-related.

northern region radio network

Hi, my name is Tery Janezic and I'm the radio co-ordinator for 1988, replacing Vivian Stranieri who spent two years with the Network. (How did she last?). I hope you all had a relaxing break.

My involvement in radio began during my secondary schooling. Here I learnt how to use equipment which I never thought I would ever get near. After having enjoyed my work here, I joined up with the local Theatre Company who allowed me to use their sound equipment. I also trained students at school and helped produce programmes which were broadcast in the school grounds and at public radio stations. I then enrolled in an electronics course at Preston T.A.F.E. and am still there part-time. Well that's enough about me, what's happening in radio?

Already hundreds of students and teachers were involved in the music show which was held earlier this year at the showgrounds. Schools organised and participated in workshops involving radio activities. Students also had the opportunity to present live shows which were broadcast in the vicinity of the showgrounds.

If you would like information on the Northern Region Radio Network or anything else about radio, I have got three filing cabinets full of information that I would love to share. I can be contacted at Reservoir High School on 470-3555. (Mon-Wed, 9am - 3.30pm, Fri. 9am - 12.30).
TYLDEN Junior School Council

The Development of Tylden Junior School Council

The establishment of Tylden Junior School Council has been supported by the Kyneton and District School Community Development Program. These notes were passed to us by Marg Cattanach from the Bendigo Regional Office. The original suggestion came up at a Staff Meeting when the School Community Officer was present.

Then followed:

1. investigation of other Junior Councils:

back copies of "Connect":
information from Deb Wardle (another School Community Officer):
information from Sue Williams (parent helper at Junior Council of Kangaroo Flat P.S.

2. discussion of idea with School Community:

informally:
at Parents' Club:
through Newsletter:
at School Council.

3. Staff and School Community Officer drew up a rationale which was circulated to School Community.

4. Staff and School Community Officer made some decisions about the Council:

to include Grades 4, 5, & 6: Council meetings to be fortnightly in students free time:
that the Principal and School Community Officer would initiate the Council and School Community Officer to gradually fade out! But that an adult liaison person was needed on an ongoing basis to help follow up decisions, and to coach in Meeting procedure

The mass visits

Grades 4, 5, and 6, the Principal and School Community Officer visited Macedon Junior Council, observed a meeting and asked questions of the councillors afterwards. It would have been better to have been to two different Junior Councils so that the students could have made a comparison, but travel costs and time did not allow it. Perhaps being able to see a video of Junior Councils in action could have helped.

The big meetings

All the Grades 4, 5, and 6 students met twice in lunchtime to thrash out some major decisions. Minutes were taken.

a) To have a Council.
b) They decided, by the students bringing suggestions and then voting, on the name - Tylden Junior School Council.
c) They voted, after discussion, to have equal representation from each of the 3 grades, (4 reps from each) and for the positions not to be gender-tagged, but "the best person for the job".
d) Meetings to be open to observers.
e) Reps to report verbally to own grade, at Assembly, and to Preps-Grade 3 (who have no representation on the Council).
f) Principal, or a Junior Council rep. to report to School Council).
g) Suggestion boxes in each room.

Council business

Small groups worked on a list of possible areas for Council to work on. These included:
Suggestions about playground.
Suggestions about excursions.
Fund-raising: raffle, car-wash,
guess the number of beans in the
Buying pieces of playground equipment or books.
Surveys to find out what students want.
Entertainment at lunch time.
Taking part in School Fair.
The 125th Celebrations.
Computer Usage.
Suggestion boxes.
School Camp once a Year for every grade except for Prep. and One.
Note: some of the discussions were quite rowdy - with over 30 students taking part. Also some students found the call of the playing field too great as the big meetings were held at lunch time. However, after 20 minutes, and the exodus of the eager sportspople, a sizeable group of keen students still remained.

Nomination forms

The students and School Community Officer worked out all the necessary information to have on a nomination form and the students then drew up an appropriate form on the computer.

Election of reps.

Nomination forms were distributed to all grades 4-6 children and closing date was set. This format was not successful. Children lost their forms because a weekend intervened. Principal decided that classes meet (individually) and nominations were called for from the floor, nominations were then written on the blackboard. Preferential voting system was used. Scores were tallied and children with lowest scores were elected to council. In one grade two of the nominees scored the same number of points. Principal and class teacher decided to hold another election to resolve the deadlock.

The inaugural meeting.

The School Community Officer chaired the inaugural meeting of the Council so that the students had a model of getting though an agenda, speaking through the chair, and listening to each other. It was suggested by Rob and the School Community Officer that the President of the Junior Council and the School Community Officer should alternate chairing the meeting, but the President declined this assistance.

At the time of writing (six meetings on) Rob is going to take the Chairperson aside and suggest he softens his manner somewhat (did he model himself on Clare’s chairing of the first meeting??!) and explain a few further details of meeting procedure that the President has obviously confused.

Subsequent Meetings

For the first five or so meetings it was very useful to have two adults present: the Chairperson needed coaching and encouragement and the minutes Secretary needed also quite a lot of assistance.

Now we all feel that the Council is running well and there is no need for more than one adult assistant.

And how's it working?

Junior Council meetings are still held weekly, 100% attendance is the norm, and the meetings which are limited to half an hour are lively. So the interest is definitely there.

Some matters brought to Junior Council have produced concrete results (like the Grades 5/6 classroom door) and others are obviously in train (like the footy posts). Still other concerns - like the compasses and dictionaries - have resulted in some creative conflict with the Principal: airing of own opinions and listening to the other sides, and acceptable resolution of issues.

We feel that the Council still has some way to go on orderliness at meetings, participants listening to each other, and speaking through the chair. But these skills will grow with practice, and we feel the foundation of a democratically organised, student-run forum for student affairs has been laid.

Rob Taylor - Principal Tylde Primary School.

Clare Claydon - School Community Officer.
Work Work Work!

Jim Cumming from the Curriculum Development Centre in Canberra has advised that a student resource book, *Work! Work! Work!* is now available. Jim is the person responsible for development of the CDC's project on Curriculum and the World of Work.

The main aim of the materials is to develop young people's understanding of the structure of work, the relationship between work and life, as well as changing attitudes to and patterns of employment. In considering the many issues in these materials, another aim is to develop student's sense of responsibility and control over their own lives. An important objective of the materials is to integrate work across a range of subject disciplines. The CDC video *The Meaning of Work* also explores these ideas and makes a good introduction to the issues raised in these materials.

The resource materials contain a range of activities for students at individual, group and class level. It is important to note that these are by no means exhaustive and are designed to stimulate rather than to prescribe student activity.

The purchase price for an individual copy is $7.50. To assist schools, a special offer is being made in 1988 to purchase the materials in bulk. The purchase price for a pack of ten in $48.50. There is also a special offer of a pack of ten, a copy of the video and one year's subscription to the *World of Work Newsletter* for $75.00. Further details about ordering can be obtained from the Publications Officer, Curriculum Development Centre, PO Box 34 Woden ACT, 2606.

People Working With People

Introduction

The "People Working With People" course is a training program offered by the Australian Red Cross society - Victorian Division for all voluntary community workers. It originated as a training program for all Red Cross volunteers, however in 1985 it was decided that this course could be adapted for young people involved in school-based or youth-based community involvement activities. In offering these courses to young people the Society recognises that adequate preparation for community involvement is essential for young people to successfully participate in community involvement programs.
In providing young people with training and an opportunity to reflect individually and collectively on their expectations and experiences, considerable personal, cognitive and social development is encouraged.

The "People Working With People" training course covers an introduction to community work and community resources, exploration of volunteering, personal development skills i.e. communication and assertiveness skills, confidence building and examining values and attitudes.

As a result of several successful pilot courses with students in 1985, the Red Cross Youth Department now wishes to offer the courses to all secondary school students involved in community work or voluntary helping activities.

Aims of the Course

The "People Working With People" courses are designed to enhance the skills of young people involved in community activities and aims to promote young people as effective community workers offering special skills which are learned and enhanced through training.

This training course also aims to

- promote the value and importance of voluntary work in the community;
- enhance young people's communication skills, enabling them to operate more effectively in their personal, social and professional life;
- increase young people's awareness of community resources thus making community resources more accessible;
- foster the involvement of young people in the work of their local community;
- foster a sense of group cohesion and cooperation between group members.

The Course

The "People Working With People" course has been designed as a short course comprising a total of 15 hours. It is a sequential course which includes information, activities and discussion sessions on

- getting started;
- exploring community, community work and community resources;
- communication skills;
- values and attitudes;
- developing confidence and building self esteem;
- rights and responsibilities of community workers;
- evaluation and celebration.

All sessions are based on adult learning methods which encourage students to participate through practical exercises in small groups.

All courses undertaken by students will be planned in conjunction with school staff.

How Can the Course be Structured

The "People Working With People" course is designed as a 15 hour course, which may be structured using 2-3 hour training blocks. Schools may wish to time-table the course over 3 full days (3 x 5 hours), or over one or many weeks. The minimum time for each session is 2 hours and courses under 6 hours will not be negotiated. The maximum number of students per trainer is 20. Teachers should negotiate structures with Youth Department staff to ensure maximum compatibility with school timetables.

Venue

The "People Working With People" training course can be run either at school venues or at Australian Red Cross Society - Victoria Division Headquarters, South Melbourne (depending on availability).

Who Runs the Course

The "People Working With People" training courses are run by
professional trainers, experienced in working with adults and groups of young people. Different trainers will be involved from time to time depending on their availability.

Cost of the Course

$450.00* per 20 students for a 15 hour course.

* or as negotiated. Prices of courses less than 15 hours are as negotiated.

All prices include one set of course notes per student

Who to contact

For further information regarding the "People Working With People" course please contact

Heather Bane
Project Officer - SCIP
Australian Red Cross Society
Victorian Division
171 City Road
South Melbourne 3205

Phone - 616 9911

Publications Received

AUSTRALIAN STUDENT PUBLICATIONS.

FOCUS (Hobson's Bay Secondary College, Issue 1, March-April 1988)

OVERSEAS STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

FOXFIRE (Rabun Gap, Georgia USA) Vol 21 Fall 1987 No. 81.

Other Sources

WORK! WORK! WORK! (CDC Canberra) - see Reviews)

Learning for Living: meeting challenges in integration (PEP, Vic) 1987

World of Work Newsletter (CDC, Canberra) No 5, March 1988.

Options (Youth Bureau Newsletter, DEET, Canberra) March and April issues, 1988.


Network (Surry Hills, NSW) March 1988 (plus ACM information).


NIE Update Vol 14 No.3.

April 1988 (Washington, U.S.A.)

Friends of Connect

We gratefully acknowledge receipt of the following financial contributions since the last issue of Connect:

PATRON SUBSCRIBERS ($20 P.A.)

D.S.P. Resource Centre,
(Errskineville, N.S.W.)

David Croasbie, Grassmere Youth Services, Doveton, Vic)

Graeme Kent (Ballarat, Vic)

Pat Thomson (Prospect, S.A.)

YACVIC (Fitzroy, Vic)
The establishment of student organisations in all of our post-primary schools is to be encouraged, and their use as a desirable component of the school decision-making process should be taken seriously.

Director-General of Education, 22 March 1985

Yet few resources have been available to assist student organisations. Until now . . .

Six pamphlets, produced by the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, are essential resources for SRCs. They can be used for general reference, for individual reading or for workshop discussion.

Topics covered are:

- **#1 Why Have an SRC?**
  - what you get from an SRC
  - what an SRC can do

- **#2 Making Decisions**
  - different ways
  - small group approaches

- **#3 Meeting Procedures**
  - roles in a meeting
  - formal procedures

- **#4 A Good Representative**
  - what a representative does

- **#5 Getting Ideas and Reporting Back**
  - working with a class/group

- **#6 Making It Happen**
  - action plans
  - getting resources and support

All pamphlets also contain suggestions for discussion and activities and a list of further references. They are attractively presented and illustrated.

The pamphlets are either available individually ($1 each) or in a packaged set of all six ($5). Each pamphlet is also available in a 'class-set' of 20 for $10. All prices include postage and handling.

Order now using the attached form.

Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, 14-16 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy 3065. Phone: (03) 419 9122

To: Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, 14-16 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy 3065.

Name

Address

Postcode

☐ I enclose $ . . . for . . . copies of SRC pamphlet # . . . ($1 each)
☐ I enclose $ . . . for . . . sets of all six SRC pamphlets ($5 per set, postage included)
☐ I enclose $ . . . for . . . 'class-sets' of SRC pamphlet # . . . ($10 per set of 20)
☐ I enclose $ . . . for . . . 'class-sets' of all six SRC pamphlets ($60 per set of 20 each)
To: CONNECT, The Newsletter of Youth Participation in Education Projects, 12 Brooke Street, Northcote 3070 Victoria Australia

From: NAME: .................................................................
ADDRESS: .................................................................

Postcode: .................................................................

SUBSCRIPTION: $10 for a 1-year subscription .........................$ .
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LITERATURE:
* Back issues of CONNECT (circle one/s wanted) ..................$ .
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  18, 19, 20, 21, 22/23, 24, 25, 26, 27/28, 29, 30, 31, 32,
  33, 34, 35, 36, 37/38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46/47,
  48, 49, ... ($2 each)

* Riff Raff Soundtrack LP ($8 plus collect) .........................$ .

* Students Publishing ($2) - Connect reprint #2 .................$ .

* Students and School Governance - Connect reprint #4 - coming SOON (send no money yet) ..................$ .

* Students and Work ($2) - Connect reprint #5 ...................$ .


* 'Youth Radio' issue of CRAM Guide (3CR) ($1) .................$ .

* Youth Advocacy Report ($2) - LaTrobe University .............$ .

PHOTOCOPIES: Copies of the following articles:
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17 (October 1982) (80c) ...........................................$ .

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