Negotiating the Curriculum: 3 Perspectives

Students Active Today, Building Tomorrow

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This Issue

With two major national conferences in one week of interest to those engaged with supporting and extending student participation, this issue of Connect picks up themes that are likely to emerge in those gatherings.

The 4th National Student Participation Conference - well, regular readers will know we’ve been urging you to attend for months now. And over 100 people are already registered. However, some last minute places are still available - see page 3 for the details. It looks like an exciting, engaging and valuable Conference - as we expected. Congratulations already to the team of students and teachers from New South Wales who have worked so long and hard to make it a reality.

That will be followed by the Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA) Curriculum 97 Conference, around the theme: Negotiating the Curriculum: Whose Agenda? We’ve taken the opportunity to compile some articles here as background reading - stories about negotiation in three different arenas. We look forward to putting curriculum negotiation back on the national agenda! We look forward to the student-run workshops at this national Conference.

And we look forward to meeting you at both these events.

Coming Up

As indicated earlier this year, I’m planning to take a break starting in September. At this stage it looks as though the easiest course might be to produce two larger, double issues of Connect - the first in August (issues 106 and 107 combined) and the next in February 1998 (issues 108 and 109 combined). If you have any thoughts on this, I’d love to hear from you.

If that is the course settled on, Connect will need a massive number of articles for both these issues. This is your chance!! We’ve already got some pieces put aside from this issue, and expect the National Student Participation Conference and the ACSA Conference to generate more. But there will be plenty of room for your information. Don’t wait - send it in NOW!

Roger Holdsworth

NEXT ISSUE: #106-7 - August 1997
Deadline for material: end of July
Monday 7th July - Wednesday 9th July 1997 at Sydney University

4th NATIONAL STUDENT PARTICIPATION CONFERENCE

Almost two decades ago, two ‘gurus’ (Charles Kingston and Roger Holdsworth) sat down and brought to a reality a dream ... In Melbourne, 1980, the first National Student Participation Workshop was held. The next year, a second workshop was held in Adelaide, with Pat Thomson playing a key organising role.

Sliding forward to the 1990s, it was also seen that students who had attended previous ACSA (Australian Curriculum Studies Association) Conferences were requesting the opportunity to meet prior to the Conference to be briefed on current curriculum issues that would be discussed there - so that they could really take part in the discussions.

In 1995, the Third National Student Participation Workshop was convened and held successfully.

So here we are: 1997, and with the Fourth National Student Participation Conference. This year it will be held at the University of Sydney, NSW, who have very generously donated their facilities for the 7th, 8th and 9th July.

People - students and non-students alike - from different levels of study and in both government and non-government areas of education are asked to show interest. One day is especially designed for Primary School participation.

The Conference has been designed to provide a platform for the participants to share skills and ideas, rather than as ‘training’ for them. With this function, NASPAC IV can cater for those who want to observe or learn, and others who want to share or teach.

Groups from all over the country have shown keen interest in attending and participating in this national project. The Victorians in particular have a special motive to begin designing their own Student Representative Network.

In time, the organisers of NASPAC IV wish for all Australian states and territories to have delegates representing students at a national level. In 1998, fifty members of Student Representative Councils in Australia will be selected to be part of a delegation to the USA for their national forum of Student Councils.

By the turn of the millennium, in association with similar bodies in the USA, Europe and South-East Asia, conferences of this type will diversify into an international event, setting the groundwork for a formal International Student Representative Structure, to discuss issues of Participation, Leadership and Representation.

So there you have it: the Past, Present and Future of NASPAC IV. A small idea, with great goals.

I hope to see you there!

Jordi Jiminez
Merrylands High School
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NASPAC IV Facilitator

Some last minute places are still available: urgently contact:
Until the end of June: Conference Organising Committee C/o Michael Selway,
Sydney Boys High School, Moore Park, Surry Hills NSW 2010
Phone: (02) 9361 6910; fax: (02) 9361 6206
Or: Ralph Murray, PASTA, C/o Learning Skills Program, University of Newcastle,
PO Box 127, Ourimbah NSW 2258
Phone: (043) 484 342; Fax: (043) 484 065; Home Phone: (043) 851 888

June 1997
Conference Location: Carslaw Building, City Road
Transport: Buses 422, 423, 426, 428 stop near the building (depart from cnr Loftus and Alfred Streets in the city)

Greyhound Buses: are offering 25% for travel to the Conference - contact the Conference Organising Committee for further details.

Accommodation: You need to make your arrangements, but the Conference Organising Committee can help with information.

Cost: $25 per person for three days ($10 per day) - covers participation, lunches and materials.

Bring: an object representing your participation/project.
The PASTA Menu

We are all looking forward to seeing you very very soon. Details of NASPAC (7-9 July) are elsewhere in Connect. We hope you can come and meet many others from around the country at Sydney University.

In addition to NASPAC, current major initiatives we are pursuing are presentations at the ACSA Conference which follows it, the CSC (Community Service Certificate), the proposal to send a student/staff contingent to the NASC Conference in Kansas in 1998, and the proposed First International SRC Conference during the Olympic Year in Sydney. We will also continue to provide publications and inservices for our members and remain active on whatever relevant other bodies we can. We have continued our liaison with the Joint Council of Professional Associations and warmly thank its Executive Secretary, Pam Smith, and all her dedicated crew for their enthusiastic support of our new organisation.

We have also continued our warm and mutually productive association with Roger Holdsworth, who was (incidentally) one of our two keynote speakers at our inaugural conference. Unfortunately, to date, time and limited contacts beyond NSW have slowed the process of advancing the next step into an active national association. However, thanks to Ross Appleby of Karingal Secondary College in Victoria, we are able to report that the first efforts towards having a branch association in Victoria will soon be underway. Ross will, in fact, be coming with a group of seventeen students to the National Student Participation Conference.

Our second official PASTA Newsletter, with lots of bits and pieces - and some really serious stuff too - is soon to be available to all members. It contains a special insert on SRC history: ‘Western Region and Beyond’, which was completed last year. This follows the pattern set with the first newsletter, which featured the old Metropolitan North Region of NSW. With four newsletters to be published each year, we hope to have at least one and perhaps two special inserts each year which provide the up-till-now largely unavailable history of the Student Council movement in various parts of Australia.

We (and ‘we’ wish to emphasise strongly that this now means many more of us) are once again confident that our progress is real and that our potential as a national organisation encompassing all levels of organisation, types of schools, and sorts of student advisers, is fabulous. The first AGM confirmed this active and forward-looking approach as, per most of our meetings previously as a Steering Committee, we didn’t have nearly enough time to do all we had hoped for. As co-convenors since February 1995, to attempt to get PASTA off and running, Ralph Murray and I are ecstatic that it has, at last, happened, and warmly welcome anyone to join and become involved in whatever ways and with whatever commitment you feel you can make. PASTA’s officers are now no longer just ‘acting’ but are for real. We are:

- Ralph Murray (Newcastle University, Ourimbah): President;
- Charles Kingston (Bathurst): Vice-President;
- National International Affairs;
- Colin Ellis (Granville, Sydney): VC, Primary;
- Lucinda Bartram (Maroubra, Sydney): VP, Metropolitan;
- Gae Regan (Lismore): VP, Country;
- Bob Kijurina (Campbelltown): Secretary;
- Jeanne Bow (Kogarah, Sydney): Assistant Secretary;
- Ken Page (Gorokan, Central Coast): Treasurer;
- Michael Selway (Sydney Boys High) and Peter King (Ungarie): Committee Members.

One other Vice-President position, tentatively designated for non-Government schools, remains vacant at this time, as does a third position as a general Committee member. We hope these will be filled shortly. We also hope that, in time, our members from other states and territories will participate in the Committee.

We trust that this necessarily all too brief explanation has for now satisfied what we know is your huge appetite for PASTA. Equally, we very much look forward to you ‘orders’ and hope that the menu continues to be a varied and satisfying one. Who knows, perhaps even Leo Scofield will see fit to taste it and review us in the Sydney Herald? or add us to the list of those tantalising (and unique) Melbourne restaurants, or South Aussie vineyards, or Queensland coastal haunts, or Tassie wilds, or WA ... or NT ... or ACT ... well, you get the picture.

Yours in student leadership and participation, and in supporting each other in advising them ...

Charles Kingston and Ralph Murray on behalf of PASTA nationwide

PASTA can be contacted at PO Box 577, Leichhardt NSW 2040
Phone: (02) 9564 3322;
Fax: (02) 9564 2342
JSCs are all the go ...

Here is some news from various Junior School Councils in Primary Schools in Victoria:

Rosanna Primary School

The aims of the Junior School Council are to:

- give students the opportunity to participate in school decision making;
- develop citizenship and student responsibility;
- help the School Council, parent group and staff with fundraising, social activities, school policy, maintenance of buildings and grounds and advise on school programs.

In their role as members of Junior School Council, the students are asked to:

- at all times set a worthy example in what they say and how they act;
- serve the school to the best of their ability;
- uphold the school rules;
- try their best to represent fairly and equally all children in the school.

Meetings

A meeting is when you get together to share information and to decide and plan things. A meeting needs rules so that everyone understands what is happening and so that people can work together.

Our Rules:

- Be on time for meetings;
- Use your manners;
- Compromise - you can’t have everything your own way;
- Cooperate;
- Only one person can speak at a time;
- You have to ask the chairperson for permission to speak;
- Wait until the chairperson asks you to speak;
- Everyone listen when a person talks;
- When a decision is made, it’s a decision of the whole group, even if you didn’t agree with it or vote for it.

Rosanna Golf Links Primary School

Student Council 1997

Grade Student Council meetings are to be held fortnightly with time allocated for these meetings within every grade. Class teachers are asked to support this program by ensuring regular meetings take place.

Two student representatives from every middle and senior class attend Student Council meetings. (to be held weekly). The Assistant Principal attends Student Council meetings. Classroom teachers are invited to attend if available. If the Assistant Principal is away, Student Council meetings may still be held, with the Principal attending or another teacher on staff.

Representatives are chosen by voting. Interested children offer themselves for selection. Selection is made within the grade, to the grade's own criteria. If a grade is unhappy with the performance of its representative, it may choose another by voting. Justification for changing representatives may be that they are not communicating well between Student Council and the classroom, or that they are not doing the job properly. If representatives lose interest, they can resign and others are voted into their place. Once representatives resign, they cannot be re-elected in the short term. If the Student Council feels that the representatives are not doing their job, they may send a representative to the grade to explain reasons why the Student Council feels the grade needs to choose a new representative - it is up to the grade to act or not act upon the request.

If a grade does not have a meeting, Student Council representatives still attend Student Council meetings.

Non-participants will abide by decisions made by the main body. At least 3/4 of the participants must be at the meeting to make decisions. If an issue has not been discussed at grade level, representatives will not vote on the grade’s behalf.

Student Council meetings are held between 12.15 pm and 12.30 pm with extra extensions into lunchtime being made whenever necessary to avoid a backlog of items. A day is chosen for Student Council to meet where there will be the least disruption to specialist and grade lessons.

Student Council gives reports to School Council (written for teacher representative by the Student Council secretary), staff (as above) and grades (by the Student Council grade representatives). The staff report should be presented to the Student Council via the Assistant Principal eg reports about school/staff changes, how repairs are progressing, changes in policy.

Children run the Student Council meetings with teachers helping when asked.

The Student Council has a President who is in charge of liaison with staff/students, speaking to grades about Student Council representatives' jobs, checking to see how things are progressing, oral reports by representatives, and making sure grades have meetings.

Rosanna PS, Bellevue Avenue, Rosanna 3084
The Secretary takes minutes, writes letters, writes reports, reads minutes, and reads the mail.

The two school captains rotate the positions of President and Secretary on a monthly basis. The President is the Chairperson.

Rosanna Golf Links PS, interlaken Pde., Rosanna 3084

Preston-Reservoir JSC Network

The first JSC Training Day for this Network in 1997 was held on Wednesday 21st May at Preston North East Primary School.

The introductory activity had each student trying to discover what number was stuck to his or her back, by asking questions that had a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer. This then grouped them six teams (all had the same number), which were the work teams for the half-day activity.

The first workshop focused on ‘Why do we have JSCs? What can they do?’ Students in each group compared what they were working on and came an agreement about the most important reasons and most important activities. The groups then had to work out a small mime or charade to show everyone about their decision. Everyone then had to guess what was being acted out.

After a break, a couple of activities encouraged cooperation: the ‘knots’ game (the group joined hands at random then had to sort themselves out into a circle) and the ‘amoeba’ game (each circle joined arms, shut their eyes and had one member in the middle - with eyes open - who directed them how to move round an obstacle course).

Last year, students and teachers in the Network wrote a book about their activities. This year, it has been decided to try to use the internet to develop World Wide Web pages about the work of the JSCs. So there was an introduction to what was on Web pages using overheads of existing school pages - the Training Day didn’t have a computer available to show the ‘real thing’. In school groups, JSC members then discussed what they thought should be on their web pages. They started to design what the pages might look like. These ideas were then shown and explained to the whole group.

Finally, the session finished with a communication game in which a team of students stood in a row, each facing the back of the student in front. An action was then shown to the final student in the row, who had to tap the person in front on the shoulder and ‘pass the action on’. The very front person then showed what they thought the action was and explained what they thought they were doing. This led to a discussion about the need to be accurate in communicating, listening and watching.

The evaluations at the end of the morning reported a very high level of satisfaction with all activities, with the games being rated most highly. The Training Day was called: “exciting”, “pretty hard and funny”, “fun and interesting”, and “embarrassing”.

Students said: “It gave us more ideas.” “It helped me understand JSC.” “It tells you to cooperate, listen and work as a group.” “I enjoyed mixing with other schools.”

There’s a further day planned for late August, to concentrate on better meetings and on reporting to grades. Contact Connect for further information.
Imagine 120 students from all three school systems, some from interstate, coming together to debate the issues surrounding racism with one another and with experts in the field, and being inspired to bring back to their schools and communities a number of creative and constructive ideas on ways in which we can together address those acts and attitudes which undermine the dignity and worth of all humanity?

Such is our vision for Under Our Skin - a one day seminar for senior secondary students in Geelong on Sunday 10 August. One of the features of this day will be interactive theatre, directed by the highly acclaimed producer - Bryan Derrick. Bryan has spent many years working with young people and in fact recently won a major Education Award for his work. In this theatre style, which originated in South America, a group of players will enact a 20 minute scenario on racism - then begin to act it again, except the audience will join in and change the story. In the morning of the seminar, a group of students will work intensively with Bryan to prepare the initial scenario. Then, after lunch, everyone will be involved in solving this 'hypothetical'.

Last year our non-profit, non-affiliated network of secondary and tertiary students, teachers and community leaders, organised the national student residential conference 'Poverty - Some More Than Others!', a film of which was shown on national ABC television earlier this year. Recently we were announced as the winners of the inaugural Barry Wood Award for Social Justice for this work.

Our own student members will be leading the Action Groups, which are woven throughout the program. It is part of our philosophy that students must be given real leadership opportunities and times in which they can share together their beliefs and dreams, experiences, values and opinions in an open, accepting, inclusive and supportive environment without a teacher present.

A number of the schools which participated in our Poverty Conference have reported that their students came back inspired and empowered, as a result of the trust and encouragement they received, stating that it had been a 'life-changing experience'. Many of these students now have set up major initiatives in their schools and communities, and have become far more active in social justice issues and in school, community and church programs which work in some way in the field of poverty.

Our final session is the culmination of all that has happened, when the students all give their response to one another - whether it be reading out the poetry they have just written, performing creative movement and music, or distributing the media releases they have written together (and so on). This is the session which has the potential for inspiring the establishment of ongoing supportive networks and long-term effective action, both of which have arisen out of our Poverty Conference. Our events are not simply 'talk-fests'.

The rural venue was selected by our student members, many of whom are from Victorian rural areas, because they felt that rural students are rarely given the opportunity to have major events in their own areas. Geelong was considered to be a very accessible, major rural centre.

This is an event for students who care about racism and the damage it can cause, and who are prepared to give of themselves to help shape a better tomorrow today.

The cost of the seminar will be $50 per student, which includes all meals. Applications are due by Friday 27 June. Late applications must be accompanied by an additional $10 late fee. We would stress that this fee represents the actual cost to us. We do not charge for our work. We have also been trying to gain sponsorship for students so that the seminar is accessible to all students, regardless of their financial position. Whilst it is not necessary, a member of staff may accompany students, also at a cost of $50 per person, and will be provided with alternative discussion sessions whilst the students are involved in their Action Groups.

For more information, or for copies of the program, brochures and application forms, please contact the Secretary. The Poverty Conference Report is also available on request, at a cost of $5, including postage. The conference video may also be ordered through the Association; it is an excellent resource for student discussions on social justice issues.

For all information, please contact:

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The theme of this year's Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA) Conference in Sydney - July 10th - 13th - is 'Negotiating the Curriculum: Whose Agenda?' Now, negotiation means many different things to different people, but to those active around issues of student participation, it has long been recognised that the negotiation processes that occur between students and teachers are at the heart of what we mean by 'student participation'. Whether it be the written work of Garth Boomer and James Beane, or the active experience of students and teachers in classrooms and in curriculum projects, the processes of mutual respect and recognition of the diverse roles that exist within teaching and learning, underlie the best practices.

So this section of Connect explores various recent and contemporary experiences of the process of negotiation. "I think negotiation has become very unfashionable here," wrote one correspondent. "... too many demands on outcomes!" How can we move the spotlight back onto the essential basics of what it means to work, plan and learn with students?

NEGOTIATION? negotiation!

The Grange, Werribee, Victoria

Integrated Year 7 Curriculum Project 1997

It all started as a weird idea. Mr Paul Higgins (Maths/Science) and Mr Andy Moffat (English/Humanities) were trying to think of ideas to make English, Maths, Science and SOSE more enjoyable and connected to all their students.

They thought of the idea of integrating the subjects together and team-teaching them in the one large classroom. This started out to be sixteen fifty-minute periods a week but finished up as being seven. This happened because our school is a big one and it was difficult to timetable teachers and rooms for any greater amount of time.

The project has started out involving two classes in our year seven team. There are four classes all together. All the teams in our school are given names. We are called JADE team and all of the teams have teachers teaching pretty much in the one team. We will also go on with our teachers up to about year nine.

Now back to the integrated projects. The project started with all fifty of us students talking in small groups about our concerns about the world. In our school these small groups are called 'table groups' and are the same kids in all subjects. Anyway, some of these concerns were: "Will I get a job when I grow up?"; "Will the world continue as we know it?".

We got all of these concerns together. Mr Higgins wrote them down on large pieces of paper. Our teachers told us we were following a process tried before by an American teacher called James Beane. We haven't been able to describe here all the steps in the process before we were able to find a concern which most people agreed was the most important; that would take too long! It turned out to be "will the world continues on as we know it?".

From this point we formed a group of students and a teacher (Mr Higgins) who workshopped ways of studying this concern.

During the very first planning stage, Mr Higgins and Mr Moffat had begun a partnership with Victoria University of Technology - Education Faculty. They knew that this university, which they had worked closely with in the past, was pretty flexible in the way its students and teachers worked in schools.

Three tertiary students - Jackie, Michelle and Rachael - were
interested in helping develop the integrated projects and were able to come to school for five out of the seven combined periods throughout the year.

After the list of activities and ideas was produced, we all had a look at them and decided upon the ones which interested us most of all. I remember they were all looking at the same concern but some were making and doing activities, while others were involved in filming, writing and viewing.

Jackie, Michelle and Rachael grouped us into five workshop areas which reflected the ways we would like to study our concern.

It was here that Mr Higgins and Mr Moffat changed the concern into a question; instead of “Will the world, as we know it, end?” it became “In what ways can I make a difference to the world?”

We set a date (about eight weeks into the future) to demonstrate our answers to this question.

There are five groups - model-making, two video-producing groups, a drama group and an environment/horticulture group.

Each student is working on a group project and is keeping a journal and a portfolio as well. We will be producing an individual answer to the question “How can I make a difference to the world?” and a group answer.

We will be having a day and an evening of displays, performances and talks to demonstrate our answers. We will be doing this for our parents, other year seven students, teachers in our school and other interested people.

We'll keep you posted how things turn out.

Publications Group: Aracely, Jenni, Kim
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Hoppers Crossing 3029
The STC (Schools Year Twelve and Tertiary Entrance Certificate) course was a response from a small group of inner Melbourne high schools in 1976 to the needs of students who, because of their particular temperament and background, found traditional academic courses did not suit them. The demand for STC grew to such an extent that by 1991 some 22,000 Victorian Year 12 students from 114 schools had taken part.

The course was entirely school-based according to a strict set of STC principles:
- negotiated curriculum;
- non-competitive, descriptive assessment based on individual progress; and
- student involvement in all aspects of the course.

By giving students responsibility for their own learning, the STC course was delivering confident, motivated, independent learners well-suited to the challenges of tertiary education or the workplace.

In these extracts from the STC Archive we have a snapshot of what was happening in Year 12 Classrooms in the mid 80s:

**In Approved Study Structure V: STC Course** (VISE, Melbourne, 1985), is the following perspective on negotiation:

**Teachers** bring to STC classrooms, as to all other classrooms, their expertise and experience. Accordingly, STC teachers plan directions for their subjects or courses before the year begins. These plans are based on the teacher's knowledge of content and materials appropriate to a demanding Year 12 course of study, on the teacher's knowledge of the students and their needs, and on the teacher's knowledge of the constraints placed on possible activities by the school's resources, the nature of the subject and so on. STC teachers explain the basis of their plans to their students, answer students' questions, gather students' responses and adjust their ideas in the light of those responses and of the students' own goals for the course . . .

**Students** bring to STC classrooms some ideas about their aims and goals for the course, an interest in the general area of study, a willingness to participate and a desire for real learning. They participate in discussion about the direction of the course in terms of their personal aims. They co-operate with other students in planning, in action and in evaluation. They enter into the spirit of co-operation which is the essence of the STC course.

Negotiation of the curriculum is about discussion, collaborating, sharing control over and responsibility for the learning process between all members of the class group, students and teacher alike. In particular, it's about mutual respect and recognition of the particular contribution each person can make to group members' learning.

If negotiation is looked at in this light, the responsibility for broad, preliminary decisions about the content of a course and the way it will be conducted are still seen to rest with the teacher, and rightly so, whilst details of what exactly will be studied, how and when, remain with the group, of which the teacher is also a member.

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about mutual respect and recognition of the particular contribution each person can make to group members’ learning.

Negotiation is a characteristic of a certain style of teaching and learning. It is not a single event which must be carried out according to a set of rules before learning can begin to take place. In fact, it cannot be reduced to a set of rules at all and attempts to do so tend to allow its fundamentals to be overlooked or avoided. Efforts to work out such a set of rules may stem from uncertainty about how to teach properly, how to get it right; and may give rise to myths about what has to be done in every classroom by every teacher. There are few, if any, hard and fast rules about that. However, ideas behind negotiation are not fundamentally new to many teachers and if we strip away the intervening layers of rhetoric and rumour in many respects, it looks pretty much like what we always thought of as good teaching. However, practised for some of the time in some classes, in a piecemeal way, negotiation doesn’t have the same impact as it does when it’s the common practice of all teachers in all classes. Discussion about negotiation has been a major way of helping teachers to focus on what they do, and improve their own practice.

That does not mean, of course, that it’s easy to get it right. But it’s not difficult to work out where to start: we must discuss what we do, with our students. And the hardest part of that is really listening to what they have to say, trying to understand what it is they are telling us, and working out how the course can be organised to make best use of such opinions.

It’s not so much that the details of a process of negotiation require definition so that they can be closely followed but that all participants in the process, particularly the teacher who may not be used to viewing the job to be done in that light, should be prepared to negotiate or perhaps better, collaborate over the content and conduct of the course they’re undertaking together, right to the end.

It does not mean:

- that the teacher must abrogate his or her responsibility for overseeing the design and conduct of the course. Thorough planning and preparation is a fundamental part of good teaching;
- that the teacher must set aside what he or she knows about the study area in question and the most appropriate methods of exploring it;
- that whatever students suggest must be acted on without discussion or refinement; even, sometimes, acted on at all;
- that students are expected to know in advance and be able to articulate what they want to gain from the course, what they want to study or how they want to go about it; or that everything is automatically up for negotiation in the first class of the year.

The following case study by Jill Anwyl is typical of the STC classroom:

Last year, we decided to start the course by reading the play Travelling North by David Williamson. We began tentatively as some students weren’t very happy with the theme, but they were willing to try it out. We were reading the part where Frank’s daughters thought their 74-year-old father had been intimate with his friend Francis, when Anna exclaimed: ‘Sex? At that age?’. It was from here that our English class took off. We discovered that most people in the class knew very little about old people. Of the twenty two class members, all but two had parents born overseas and for many there was no direct contact with grandparents, although some did have a grandparent living with them.

We finished reading the play and followed The Age series ‘The Nursing Home Crisis’. This led us to wonder about the many old people who spend their last years in a home. At this stage we began to write weekly journals and the first piece of class writing, ‘Old Age’, was handed in. Mostly, they were contrived essays with little personal reflection. When we talked about this writing, we thought we should find out more about old people. The idea of going to visit a group of old people developed and Marie offered to call in to a nursing home she passed regularly to arrange a visit. One or two others made enquiries, but nothing came of it. After a few days some persistent class members raised the idea again. As Mount Royal was on the train route from Coburg and we could use the school rail pass, Sue and Kathy volunteered to try to arrange a visit there.

It was possible. We had to go in two groups and the day for the first visit soon arrived. We discussed beforehand the kinds of questions we might ask and a few strategies for starting conversations and we thought we were prepared. I was to go twice. We arrived at the designated building and all felt rather embarrassed as it was physiotherapy time and a large group of old people were
exercising. All of us were nervous and we felt diffident about our task. With the help of two nurses we finally set off to engage some of the residents in conversation.

The train trip back to Coburg was astonishing. Everyone was swapping stories about the interesting people they'd met, how they'd forgotten about age as they talked to the residents and how happy most people seemed. The next group of students was excited about their visit, having had much enthusiastic preparation, and the numbers swelled from twelve to fourteen as Anna and Sylvia went a second time carrying chocolates and flowers for the ladies they had befriended the day before.

The class discussion afterwards was animated. Jose had spent his time with a lady who talked to him of the problems of his country, Timor; Joe had learned about Brunswick in the 1920s; Gina heard about the many activities for the residents from a lady who had lived happily at Mount Royal for sixteen years. Writing under the title ‘After Visiting Mount Royal’ was inspired. Many students wrote of their thoughts about the visit, the people they had met and how their ideas of nursing homes had changed. The contrast with the earlier piece of writing was marked.

That experience was a reference point for the whole year. Everyone in the class had shared a common experience which they had planned and carried out. Permanent links were formed within the group and I, too, felt I had learned much.

We went on to read Death of a Salesman and Of Mice and Men, to see the film Annie’s Coming Out, visit the new Arts Centre and see No Worries and much much more. We talked and wrote about everything we did. Students became confident and articulate. They listened to others’ views and developed their own. All of them were successful in a number of their tasks. Anna’s interest in old people gave her the idea of doing her work experience in a local nursing home. When I visited her there I was humbled to be taken around by her and introduced to the forty-two residents and watch faces light up as she entered their rooms. She had a word for each of them and I saw that she had a gift for communication that had always been undervalued at school where she’d often been seen as too talkative and lacking concentration. Her work experience report described that fortnight as one of the happiest of her life!

During the year, there were many students who became self-confident and keen to build on their successes. There was George, previously judged a failure, who became the most articulated class member in explaining the principles of our course to our visitors. He got to making speeches, sometimes to class applause, when he put into words what he felt he was achieving in the course. There was Sonia who developed great organisational skills and initiated a number of class activities; there was Carmelina who was shy and reluctant at school but who became convinced that she could work hard and go on to further study once she gained confidence. Virtually all students met the group goals we had set, generally completing work on time and putting effort into it. Many met individual goals of writing in particular formats and using references to develop skills for tertiary study. Everyone became more confident in talking to others. All of the students and I became valued members of a cohesive group where decisions were thrashed out and immense learning took place.

End of the year self-assessments showed what great leaps the whole class had made.

"I can now write much more easily and can organise my ideas better before I start."

"Keeping a journal has made writing enjoyable for me."

"I am much more confident in explaining my ideas to others."

"Writing long pieces has become easier."

"Doing the Work Project gave me independence to investigate primary teaching and I became more confident at arranging interviews over the phone and speaking to people in charge of courses."

"My Work Project made me positive about doing a course in designing next year."

"I feel more relaxed and confident in speaking to a group of people than I ever believed possible early this year."

"My opportunities to talk to visitors to the class about our course gave me the confidence to explain my ideas and be well equipped to face the outside world."

"By keeping a journal I overcame the difficulty I had always had in getting started with writing."

Keith White
Lavender Hill Multimedia
Creative Text, Music and Multimedia
PO BOX 180, Red Hill South 3937
Phone: (03) 5989 2219

Keith White is a member of a group currently developing a CDROM-Internet Archive based on the teaching and learning principles underlying curriculum approaches like the STC Course.
Negotiating Years 5 and 6

The Context

Holy Eucharist is a Catholic primary school in the outer north western suburb of St Albans in Melbourne. The current enrolments at the school total approximately 600, with most students coming from low socio-economic and non-English speaking backgrounds. There is a staff of 35 including full- and part-time teachers. The school is a member of the National Schools Network.

Twenty different nationalities are represented within the school. Recent trends in migration to the area have seen marked changes in the community profile, with Asian cultures, particularly Vietnamese, being the most predominant groups arriving in the area. However, a significant number of students in the school are from established Croatian and Maltese families. The school enrols a number of students each year from countries such as Lebanon, the Philippines and Hong Kong.

The school is organised into twenty classes: three classes of Prep, Grade 1, Grade 5 and Grade 6, and three Grades 3/4. The average class size at Holy Eucharist is thirty students.

Holy Eucharist was initially invited to join the Innovative Links Project by the Western Melbourne Roundtable because of its status as a National schools Network school. At that time, the school was working on an existing project in Improving Literacy, which became the initial substantive issue addressed by their Innovative Links action research project. These early days saw initial meetings characterised by teachers having conversations about problematic aspects of their work in classrooms. The group was able to explore deeper layers of the problem and, with academic support, was able to connect to whole school and whole profession issues. It was at this developmental stage that the issues were related to structural and organisational impediments to teaching practice such as the timetable, decision making within the school, student groupings and the development of more appropriate curriculum.

The Negotiated Curriculum

The time came for coherent restructuring and this had the support of the National Schools Network and the Innovative Links Project. An essential element in this process was the attendance by a small group of teachers from Holy Eucharist at a two-day workshop with James Beane and Barbara Brodhagen at Southern Cross University. This became the catalyse to restructure the school. As one teacher writes:

What was this wonderful answer to all our prayers, I hear you say? The Negotiated Curriculum - Student Planned Curriculum. I found the 'missing link'...a curriculum that is negotiated by the children and the teacher.

(Teacher)

The workshop by Beane and Brodhagen had stressed that there is a need for children in years 5-8, the middle school, to be involved in their learning. The teachers at Holy Eucharist became enthusiastic about the possibilities for their school.

We couldn’t wait to come back and convince our colleagues and Principal that this would be an exciting and worthwhile way to work. James and Barbara had us involved in actually going through the negotiating process ourselves. So we were not just sitting and listening... we were doing!

(Teacher)

Upon their return to Melbourne, the Principal supported the idea and agreed to a Negotiated Curriculum in years 5 and 6 the following year. This was the first hurdle; the next was getting the teachers of years 5 and 6 for the following year to support the idea and be prepared to work with it.

And they all said yes, thankfully. If it did not have everyone’s commitment to the project it could not have worked at all. Thank our team for their confidence in us and their willingness to become innovators... we couldn’t believe that we were about to become 'pioneers' of a new and innovative curriculum.

(Teacher)

A lot of time was spent working with people, keeping them well informed and feeling really comfortable with the process involved. The whole staff was involved in the process of developing the Negotiated Curriculum. It was fully acknowledged that a change of this magnitude can be overwhelming and indeed threatening.

Senior school teachers have now negotiated the year’s curriculum with their students, devoted specific time to team-building skills and group dynamics, implemented cooperative program planning and teaching with specialist staff and refocussed their attention on skills and processes, before content.

The children and teachers involved in the Negotiated Curriculum at Holy Eucharist took to the program with enthusiasm and it has been a success. As the teachers involved will testify, the children’s attitude towards their work has completely changed, and both teachers and students come to school with enthusiasm. The quality of work produced was a
of a very high standard, and students’ interest was held throughout the whole year. Pupils were able to evaluate their chosen topics and make changes. The topic of sport was found to be less interesting than they initially thought, so a collaborative decision was made by the children to move to the next topic earlier than expected. The teachers became as enthusiastic as the students about the learning that was taking place and shared this with the entire staff, both formally and informally.

The Negotiated Curriculum focus has emphasised the importance of cooperative learning groups, as opposed to groups of students working on a problem. Such a structure allows students to communicate with one another and provides more time for group dynamics and interaction - student/student, teacher/student and teacher/teacher. In such a way, content becomes the vehicle for students to gain skills.

Following the success of the year 5 and 6 model, and extensive in-serviceing of the entire staff, there was interest shown by the middle and junior school staff to implement a version of the model modified to suit the needs of the younger children.

As the Negotiated Curriculum has proved such as success with years 5/6 (both staff and students), the year 5 students are now starting to plan ahead for next year’s topics. A team of junior years teachers has also become interested in implementing a Negotiated Curriculum. Continued in-serviceing of school staff and other schools’ staff on this model is envisaged in the future.

The teachers have been able to generate change within their school, and this change raises questions that are worth reflecting on. Is there a connection at Holy Eucharist between the way in which the teacher are behaving and the way in which the students behave in negotiating the curriculum and their work? One could ask if this approach is only suitable for the middle years, and what indeed is the role of personal enquiry in learning?

One of the teachers at Holy Eucharist wrote in their reflections that teaching is not ‘telling’, but helping the student to learn. They state that learning is personal, yet it also has the potential to be a shared experience.

We, as teachers, should aspire to facilitate learning. Yet we can ask, how do we know when learning has actually taken place and what knowledge has been learned? (Teacher)

For the students of Holy Eucharist, the change generated from the Beane and Brodhagen workshop has led them to work on the three Ds that Beane stressed during those two days - Democracy, Dignity and Diversity. To that Holy Eucharist has added Dialogue, the most important component of which, they say, is listening.

One of the things that has run through the program is that the student, no matter how young, has an understanding of what is going on - and has a point of view that is worthwhile having...

that is really explicit in regards to our curriculum. Kids do know! (Teacher)


For further information, contact Peta Cesarec, Holy Eucharist Primary School, Oleander Drive, St Albans South 3021; phone: (03) 9366 2899
Negotiation Questions

In discussing curriculum negotiation, three names keep emerging: Garth Boomer (from South Australia), James Beane (from Chicago, USA) and Foxfire (in Georgia, USA). Each bring valuable perspectives to the ideas of collaborative curriculum negotiation by students and teachers. Their approaches can each be characterised through three questions:

**Garth Boomer**
- What do we already know about this?
- What do we want to know about this?
- How will we find out?

**James Beane**
- What are our personal questions/concerns?
- What are our questions/concerns about the larger world?
- How and where do these questions/concerns intersect?

**Foxfire**
- Is what we do chosen by and of value to students?
- Is what we choose to do of wider value to our community?
- Does what we choose to do meet/exceed the curriculum requirements?

Refer:
Garth Boomer, ‘Negotiating the Curriculum’ in English in Australia, 44, June 1978
Garth Boomer (ed), Negotiating the Curriculum: A Teacher Student Partnership, Ashton Scholastic, 1982

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Introducing ...

**Professor James Beane**
Professor of Education at National College, Chicago

Active professionally, James Beane’s research and scholarship have concentrated on curriculum theory and self concept.

He was a founding member of the National Middle Years of Schooling Association of the USA. He is a longstanding authority on issues relating to middle school education including adolescent development, self esteem, social justice, and middle school curriculum. His book A Middle School Curriculum: From Rhetoric to Reality outlines a curriculum program in which the design, implementation and evaluation of curriculum can be based on the needs and interests of middle school students whilst taking into account the overall purposes of the national curriculum framework.

His teaching program involves field based professional development, masters designed program, drawing on teacher-produced, school-based research.

Some quotes from A Middle School Curriculum which give an indication of what James Beane is on about:
- "I want to argue that the middle school ought to be a general education and that its version of general education ought to be of the kind based upon personal and social concerns."
- "If we take the characteristics of early adolescence seriously and see them in the context of present trends in and future forecasts about society the proposed curriculum is logical."
- "... the idea of democracy ought to permeate the middle school including its curriculum."
- "... the concept of human dignity and the related ideas of equality, justice, and peace ought to permeate the curriculum."
- "A complete curriculum must offer opportunities to explore and appreciate the workings and values of diverse cultures."
- "The centrepiece of the curriculum would consist of thematic units whose organising centres are drawn from the intersecting concerns of early adolescents and issues in the larger world."

Refer:
James Beane, ‘Rethinking the Middle School Curriculum’ in Middle School Journal, May 1990
James Beane, ‘Curriculum Integration and the Disciplines of Knowledge’ in Phi Delta Kappan, April 1995

James Beane material available from the National Schools Network, Private Bag 3, Ryde NSW 2112

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Foxfire material available from Connect

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Connect 105:
Anti-Violence Kit for Students
produced by the St George District SRC Association

In February 1995 (the International Year of Tolerance) a survey was sent to every secondary school in the NSW Metropolitan East Region. Each school’s Student Representative Council (SRC) was asked to answer a number of questions related to the incidence of violence or harassment taking place amongst its students. Of the responses received, physical violence was reported to be the most common, with 89% of the schools’ SRCs commenting that it was a problem. Sexual harassment ranked second, with almost 60% and racial violence third with almost 30% of schools commenting.

The workshop manuals used at a Conference, held in May 1995 to Raise Awareness of Alternatives to Violence, were produced by students of the St George SRC Association’s Action Group on Anti-Violence and Student Welfare, based on these survey statistics. We were assisted by a number of specialists.

During the Conference, we hoped that the 128 students representing 42 high schools in Metropolitan East Region would learn many new skills that they would be able to take back to their own schools to share with their peers. After compiling information from student evaluation forms, we believe this goal was achieved. As a follow-up, sets of the workshop manuals on Sexual Harassment and Conflict Resolution and related papers were distributed at the Metropolitan East SRC Annual Conference and also at the New South Wales State SRC Conference in 1995.

St George SRC Association Action Group resolved to go a step further and produce an Anti-Violence Kit to pass on to other students the things learned from this experience. They wishes to encourage students to take a proactive approach to issues of concern in their schools. The kit was produced by students for students.

The Kit represents the collective view of students present at the Anti-Violence Conference in 1995, and the Anti-Racism Conference in 1994, their views of different types of violence, and also their considered thoughts on what can be done at the school level by individual students when they are confronted by violence.

How to Use the Kit

The introductory module defines violence and lists some alternatives to violence. Read this first. Modules 1 to 7 are about different faces of violence. Each module contains student descriptions of violence. Each gives some helpful hints on what students can do in the school situation. The problem and the strategy make a single page handout to assist individual students. Some information is useful for discussion. Most pages can be used for making overhead transparencies for discussion groups.

Module 8 is about Action Planning. Modules 9 and 10 are for taking things further: how to run a youth forum; resources and reading.

Each module is user friendly - short and to the point.

Cost and Availability

How much does it cost? $20 including postage. Please make cheques payable to the “St George District SRC Association” and forward to:

Mrs Jeanne Bow
Kogarah High School
Gladstone Street
Kogarah NSW 2217
Phone: (02) 9587 5815/(02) 9587 6259
Fax: (02) 9553 8315

Editors: Annette Rubots and Anna York
St George Girls’ High School
for the St George District SRC Association

Published by the St George District SRC
Association Coordinator, Jeanne Bow, with the help of students at Kogarah High School.

Letter from Germany

I write to you as a member of a school student organisation which is the official and democratically elected representation of all 2.56 million school students in Nordrhein-Westfalen - one of the federal countries of Germany. This organisation is based on the principle of delegation. Schools send delegates to regional representation and these regional representations send delegates to the federal-country representation. I am a member of the Board of this federal-country organisation.

My school is a UNESCO project school called Oberstufenkolleg Bielefeld, founded by Hartmut von Hentig, a famous German pedagogue. I can translate and send you some of our information material if you are interested.

My main issue about democracy in schools in our federal-country is to inform school students about their rights and duties. Also try to convince the government to change the school law and so to improve the rights of school students in every field which deals with democracy and co-determination. Last, but not least, I discuss with other members of school student organisations, premises for democratic learning like ‘no pressure by marks’ and so on.

Our organisation is involved in curriculum organisation in our federal-country but in a very small way. Some adult experts write the curriculum and, in the end, the government asks some organisations from teachers, parents and sometimes also school students, what they think about it - but nobody really cares about our opinion.

Julia Luening <luening@metronet.de>

June 1997
Port Macquarie High School SRC Youth Week

During Youth Week, PMHS SRC normally carries out a range of activities. In 1997, the following program was implemented. The Tuesday concert featured five volunteer bands, including Messiah’s Daughter from Heritage Christian School, as well as composite bands featuring PMHS students (and even one McKillop student). Students had to pay $1 to be in the Hall for lunch and period 7. Over $400 was raised. About $110 of this went to pay for expenses incurred in other Youth Week activities such as the free food ($50), Red Spot Day at the Canteen and the small prizes for the Youth Week awards assembly. The balance of the money was offered to the Music Department for their assistance during the concert, and they have graciously suggested a 50/50 split with the SRC.

The PMHS SRC has 22 members, plus the two School Captains and the two School Sports Captains. There are also four Senior Coordinators who are non-voting members of the SRC, in charge of Charities, Fund-Raising, Senior Study and Socials.

Elections are held at the end of term 2 for two males and two females from each Year group. Two students enrolled as part-time DE students also are elected to represent DE student interests. Year 12 students attend after these elections in a voluntary capacity.

The SRC has students as reserves in case replacements are needed, and these are the students who come third on votes in the election. These students are often asked to help out during major activities when more number of workers are required.

The SRC receives all the money paid by students for lockers during the year (approximately $1400) and has, from time to time, been able to raise other monies and use grants from Community Health.

The SRC puts all of its money back into student activities, including supporting State or Australian level athletes, sports-people or students involved in significant cultural or social activities.

The SRC meets every three or four weeks using class and lunch time. A planning day is held in Term 3 for the incoming SRC.

from Port Macquarie District SRC Newsletter No 1, April 1997

ACSA Conference presentations involving students and student participation themes ...

At the ACSA 1995 Conference in Melbourne, there was one student-presented paper (on students on Regional Quality Assurance Teams in the South Coast of NSW). Other students, from NSW and Victoria, also took part in different workshops and worked on reporting the Conference through the internet.

At this year’s Conference in Sydney (which, as in 1995, immediately follows the NASPAC Conference) there will be a noticeable increase in both the number and variety of student participation. Thanks to the encouragement of the ACSA Committee, which genuinely believes that greater student participation in curriculum matters is vital to successful innovation, PASTA has organised several student speakers who will, with others, respond to the various keynote addresses each morning.

In addition, there are at least eight separate papers, roundtables or coffee conversations wherein PASTA members and students working on the NASPAC Committee or attending the Conference in other capacities will be present to put forward their research, outline their views and facilitate genuine discussion about student participation. Even more so than the papers, the other formats are designed to enable anyone attending to share their views, highlight their activities or raise issues of concern to them. The following is a brief guide to those presentations for those who may wish to attend one or more of them (all in Building A 35):

Day 1 (Thursday 10 July): 11.30-12.25 Roundtable: “Primary Student Involvement in Decision-Making and Curriculum Implications” - Colin Ellis, Greg Jones and primary students as presenters; Room 731.

Day 1: 1.30-2.25 pm Roundtable: “Secondary Student Involvement in Decision-Making and Curriculum Implications” - Michael Selway and NASPAC students; Room 418.

Day 2 (Friday 11 July): 2.00-2.55 pm Roundtable: “Where-To Student Involvement?” - Les Vozzo and Roger Holdsworth and students; Room 419 (same time, next door).

Day 2: 3.00-3.55 pm Paper: "The Student Leadership Curriculum" - Charles Kingston, Bathurst HS and NASPAC students; Room 408.

Day 3 (Saturday 12 July): 2.00-2.55 pm Coffee Conversation: "Jargon that inhibits progress - eliminating the 'extra' in 'extracurricular' and other hurdles" - anyone who would like to share a cuppa together and be part of the conversation; Room 419.

Day 3: 3.00-3.55 pm Paper: "Collaborative Partnerships - Keeping Sight of the 'Big Picture': Value Added" - Joanne Bow, Anna York and other St George District students; Room 614.

Day 3: 3.00-3.55 pm Student Paper: "Students on School Councils - the Bathurst High Experience and Beyond" - Lisa Lloyd, Greg Arrow, Stephanie Young, Kate McKeown; Room 418.

Workshop (6 hrs - each day): "Youth/ Student-Focused Educational Reform" - Marie Brennan, Lew Zipin, Roger Holdsworth, Joan Brown, Dev Mukherjee

In addition, it is hoped that many more students than in the past will be taking advantage of the ACSA and PASTA invitation to hear the keynote speakers, participate in workshops and attend other papers and roundtables of interest to them. There is a special daily rate for students of $25 for the ACSA Conference, which entitles you to attend all events on that day, receive copies of papers and have morning and afternoon tea. If you attend the entire 4-day conference, the total cost is reduced to $80 ($20 a day) for students.

Charles Kingston

Connect 105:
SRCs and JSCs are a million dollar resource, providing industry in schools, yet few people know this. The students in them are valuable sources of information and insight into the important welfare needs of students they represent. For these leaders, the SRC/JSC and other school leadership opportunities also provide invaluable opportunities for real teaching and learning through activity projects and representational responsibilities. In brief, they enable students to achieve for themselves and for their schools and communities. They are a vital part of the overall curriculum of any school.

To assist PASTA in promoting the status of SRCs and JSCs, other student participation, representation and leadership programs and the important roles of the SRC/JSC staff advisers in schools, we would like your assistance by supporting this column in each edition of the newsletter. Please take a few minutes to fill out this student activities report, copy it and then fax it to:

Ralph J Murray - President of PASTA  
(Professional Association of SRC Teacher/Advisers)  
Manager, Learning Skills Program  
University of Newcastle - Central Coast Campus  
PO Box 127, Ourimbah NSW 2258  
Phone: (043) 484 342; Home: (043) 851 888  
Fax: (043) 484 065

**Part A:**

Name of School: ________________________________

School Address: ________________________________

Phone: _________ Fax: _________ E-mail: _________

Type of school:  
- primary □  
- secondary □  
- government □  
- non-government □  
- city □  
- country □

Enrolment: ___________ Principal or Head of School: _______________________

Name of your student organisation: ________________________________

Your name: ________________________________

Your title/position: ________________________________

(Other) Advisers to your student organisation: ________________________________
1. Describe how you elect your student reps (ie classes/years/roll groups/home groups/prefects etc)

2. What are your Office Bearers called, and how do you elect them? (eg President? Prime Minister? Captains?)

3. What are main functions/duties of your elected student group?

4. How are staff involved in your elected student body?

5. How often are meetings held? How effective are they?

6. What sort of committees/student activity programs operate within the elected student body?

7. What activities does the SRC undertake? How do you do these? How successful are they?

8. How do your representatives consult with the student body? How do they individually and/or the student group as a whole report to the students? To whom else does it report? How often? How successful are these methods?

9. What other types of leadership or representational programs exist within your overall curriculum and/or activities program at the school? (eg School Council, Peer Support, Stage Teams, Leadership Courses etc)

10. Comment upon the extent and relevance of student representation in the school's decision-making structures (eg number and level of involvement on School Council; the link between these students/this representation to the elected student group; participation in other school committees etc).

11. Are you/your student group/your school a member of PASTA? Would you like more information on it?

12. Any other comments or specific needs you would like to have addresses in future newsletters or by other means such as specific targeted workshops within schools or in-services for teachers and students?

Thank you for completing this survey and regularly keeping in touch. Best wishes for continued successes in your student leadership endeavours.
Do SRCs have a role beyond their own school?

Yes, at District and State forums.

District

- There are 40 districts in NSW and you and your school belong to one of them.
- Students from your school may be elected to the DISTRICT SRC.

The District SRC:

- helps to improve school SRCs within districts
- helps to improve communication between schools
- deals with issues that affect the district
- provides leadership training.

State

The NSW SRC:

- is the peak student leadership organisation in the state
- has 20 elected members from across NSW
- meets regularly, and is consulted on student issues by senior officers in the Department of School Education, other government departments, business and community groups
- represents the views of NSW secondary students.

State SRC Conference Working Party:

- plans and organises the Annual State SRC Conference
- encourages the exchange of ideas, views and skills regarding student leadership and SRCs in NSW at this conference.

IT'S HEAPS OF FUN!!

Districts

- Moree
- Lismore
- Port Macquarie
- Maitland
- Orange
- Dubbo
- Griffith
- Deniliquen
- Walloonang
- Queanbeyan
- Armidale
- Lake Macquarie
- Northern Beaches
- St. George
- Granville
- Campbelltown
- Ryde
- Fairfield
- Mt. Druitt
- Port Jackson
- Tamworth
- Tweed Heads/Ballina
- Taree
- Newcastle
- Batemans Bay
- Broken Hill
- Wagga Wagga
- Albury
- Shellharbour
- Clarence/Coffs Harbour
- Central Coast
- Hornsby
- Sutherland
- Blacktown
- Liverpool
- Parramatta
- Bankstown
- Penrith
- Bondi

This pamphlet was developed and designed by a group of NSW SRC members:

Barbara Cullen, Campbelltown Performing Arts HS
Ingrid Kloetje, Dunheved HS
Andrew Zaw, Arthur Phillip HS

Cover design: Luke Blyth, Hawkesbury HS
What is a Student Representative Council?

Students are happier and participate in their education more effectively when their ideas are listened to and their opinions valued. Schools benefit when students are involved in school organisation and planning.

A Student Representative Council is a group of students in a school elected by their fellow students. They represent the students in the school and organise ways for them to participate in school life.

A Student Representative Council is...

- **EDUCATIONAL** by developing skills in leadership and communication
- **DEMOCRATIC** because every student has a voice
- **RESPONSIBLE** for solving real problems and making real decisions
- **SHARING** decision-making with the school executive, teachers, other students and the school community
- **CARING** about the school, what happens in it and to it
- **FUN and REWARDING** for everyone in the school

**SRC**

The support of the principal and staff is ESSENTIAL to the operation of an effective Student Representative Council.

What do school SRCs do?

- Identify and voice student opinions and ideas
- Encourage school spirit and pride
- Improve school amenities and appearance
- Discuss student rights and responsibilities
- Become involved in environmental education
- Become involved in curriculum issues
- Provide study help
- Promote careers information and workplace learning
- Assist the orientation of new students
- Focus on student health and personal development
- Encourage school competition in sport and debating
- Develop International awareness
- Publicise and communicate achievements
- Promote creative, visual and performing arts activities
- Recognise students' achievements of excellence
- Run social and recreation activities
- Organise fund raising activities
- Participate in community service programs

School SRCs encourage involvement in specific programs such as:

- Student Welfare
- Peer Mediation and Conflict Resolution
- Peer Support
- Gender Equity
- Drug Education
- Anti-Violence
- Student Leaders on School Councils
- Aboriginal Student Leadership
- Student Leadership and Primary SRCs and Parliaments
- Stress and Time Management
- Study Skills
- Anti-Discrimination
- Anti-Racism

**SRC structure**

- NSW SRC
- State SRC Conference Working Party
- Paired Districts
- Districts
- School SRCs

**NSW SRC and State SRC Conference Working Party**:

- 20 representatives elected from paired districts across NSW.

**Paired Districts**:

- 2 geographic district pairings
- 1 district elects a NSW SRC representative
- 1 district elects a State SRC Conference Working Party representative
- elected representatives alternate roles each year, if possible
- paired district activities may occur, eg conferences.

**Districts**:

- 8-15 secondary schools
- co-ordinated support from district student welfare consultant working with teacher/adviser co-ordinators
- may choose to become involved with other districts for various projects and activities.

**School SRCs**:

- operate in the usual manner
- elect students (usually 2 per school) to the district SRC
- receive support from teacher/adviser co-ordinators in schools
- receive support from student welfare consultants in district offices.
Local and Overseas Publications Received

**Connect** receives many publications directly or indirectly relevant to youth and student participation. We can't lend or sell these, but if you want to look at or use them, contact us on:

(03) 9489 9052 or (03) 9344 8585

**STUDENT PUBLICATIONS:**

**Australian:**

College Scene (Mount Carmel College, Tas) April 1997

Port Macquarie District SRC Newsletter (Port Macquarie, NSW) No 1, April 1997

**OTHER PUBLICATIONS:**

**Australian:**

Education Alternatives (Caulfield East, Vic) Vol 6 Nos 3, 4 (issues 53, 54) May, June 1997

Education Links (Glebe, NSW) No 54; Autumn 1997

Making Groups Work, Benjamin, Bessant and Watts (Allen Unwin, June 1997)

Other Ways (Alternative Education Resource Group, Chirnside Park, Vic) Issue 72, June 1997

Rights Now! (National Children's and Youth Law Centre, NSW) Vol 5 No 1, March 1997

Starlink (Extra Edge Program, DSE, Vic) Issues 15, 16; April, May 1997

Swan Hills Homeschooler's Grapevine (Jane Brooke, WA) Issues 13, 14, March-May, June-July 1997

The Double Life of the Family, Bittman and Pixley (Allen Unwin, July 1997)

YACSA Round (YACSA, Adelaide, SA) March/April 1997

**Overseas:**

AERO-Gramme (AERO, NY, USA) #21, Spring 1997

Communication Research Trends (Centre for the Study of Communication and Culture, Missouri, USA) Vol 16 No 3, 1996

Leadership (National Association of Secondary School Principals - Department of Student Activities, Reston, VA, USA) April 1997

National Coalition News (NCACS, New Mexico, USA) Vol 21, No 1, Spring 1997

Is Your Connect Subscription Up-to-date?

The number on your Connect label tells you the issue with which your subscription expires. Please renew promptly - renewal notices cost us time and money!

Documents

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

A full, computerised index of these documents is now available from Connect for $3; this can be accessed and printed by topic, key-word etc or simply sequentially.

**Code** | **Description/Pages/Cost**
---|---
437 | Port Macquarie District SRC Newsletter No 1 April 1997 (16 pp; $1.60)
438 | Rethinking the Middle School Curriculum, James A. Beane, from Middle School Journal, May 1990 (5 pp; $1.00)

**NSW and Student Participation**

The priorities for the NSW public school system for 1997 are outlined in Agenda 97. One section is:

**Partnerships in public education**

"The education of our children is not the exclusive domain of any one group. Education is best advanced through a series of partnerships based on mutual respect, shared goals and trust. Partnerships involve students, parents, teachers and other staff, and the wider community. The partners need to be well-informed and their contribution must be recognised as legitimate and welcome. If the partners are to make good choices and take effective decisions, they must have access to information, including evaluation data."

In 1997, we will:

- make further advances in reporting student learning outcomes;
- promote student participation in decision-making;
- develop parent and teacher partnerships for improved student learning;
- report on school performance to parents and the wider community;
- extend our commitment to quality and customer service.

"We will measure our success by:
- improved reporting of student outcomes;
- greater levels of student involvement in school and system decision-making;
- a wider range of effective parent and teacher partnerships for student learning;
- the acceptance of a new school annual reporting process;
- enhanced customer service and improved performance."
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Miscellaneous Resources:

- Democracy Starts Here! - Junior School Councils at Work (1996) ($7, or $12 for 2 copies) $ ...........
- SRC Pamphlets Set (6 pamphlets from Youth Affairs Council of Vic) ($5) $ ...........
- Democratic Decision Making in Schools - Victorian PEP (1987) ($3) $ ...........

Foxfire Resources:

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

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