Youth Action Program Conference

18th November, 83
This Issue

This issue of CONNECT stands a little differently to the previous issues in a couple of regards. Firstly, it largely concentrates on one group of projects - the Youth Action Program in Melbourne. Secondly, the issue has been put together by people involved in that Program.

The Program is an important one: a cluster of three schools sponsoring a project round the application of youth participation ideas in the classroom. It is also a 'learning' program, in the sense that it aims to discover the needs and constraints for such activities to proceed. So that means it is not above criticism. Rather, such comment and criticism is welcomed to assist the Program to move forward.

The Conference held at Monash University in November 1983 was an occasion for the Program to show what it was doing, but also an occasion for comment and question - both on the Program's operation and on its applicability to other schools. This document is drawn from the Conference records, from comments during and after the day. It is being sent to all participants and throughout the CONNECT network.

The issue has been put together by Program participants, coordinated by Geoff Emmett (from VISE). This has been a welcome support in the publication schedule of CONNECT, and provides an example which other groups may wish to pursue. We would be interested to hear of projects willing to put together all or part of an issue.

The next issue of CONNECT is due in June-July and will probably be a little late, due to sojourns OS etc. But there could be interesting stories to tell! Material for issue 27 should be to CONNECT by the end of June.

Roger Holdsworth

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This issue of CONNECT is being sent to participants in the Youth Action Program Conference, as a follow-up publication. Unfortunately, CONNECT cannot afford to keep sending you free copies without your support.

We hope you find this issue informative and wish to continue to receive CONNECT. We rely on subscriptions and information to keep going. Subscription details are on the back page of this issue. Articles about what YOU are doing are always welcome.
BACKGROUND

The Youth Action Project is a TEAC funded VISE supported curriculum initiative based in three schools - Boronia Technical School (in C school) Pembroke High School (Year 9 group) and Chandler High School (Year 11 group). The project began in 1982 with the three schools and VISE agreeing to implement and evaluate a curriculum which was based around responsible and relevant educational principles. These were

- a small staff team would spend extended periods of time working with one group of students
- groups would be of mixed ability
- students would be encouraged to experience working in co-operative teams
- students would have a large say in the direction of their learning
- involvement of parent and community groups would be encouraged
- assessment would relate to learning goals and would be non competitive and non graded
- students would be challenged intellectually, personally and socially

The final evaluation report of the project will not be completed until later this year.

CONFERENCE

During 1983 there were many requests from schools, parents and educational authorities to discuss the project and its advantages and disadvantages. The students and staff were unable to respond to many of these requests which prompted the idea for the Youth Action Project Conference.
A conference Task Force was quickly formed and it was agreed that VISE would be a central meeting place for organising the activity. Tracey Adams, Julie Bently, Barry Brennan and Peter Ethve from Chandler High School, Greg Lucas and Darren Phelan from Boronia Technical School and Sue Kollosche, Mark Dibdale and Neil McAdam Roberts from Pembroke High School met at VISE each Tuesday for twelve weeks organising the conference. Each individual could be singled out for their specific contributions, Tracey and Mark for their co-ordination, Julie for her graphic design, Darren for his attention to detail and so on, but the testimony to the valuable work of a team is best summed up by Denise Dempsey a conference participant, in her reflections on the conference.

'The audience ranged from the Director of Curriculum to the grass roots people - teachers, parents and students. All came away with the same impression - kids are capable!

The students organised and ran one of the most informative conferences I have attended this year. All of the others were about student participation but this was actually students in action. I feel most people left the conference with minds buzzing - "how can I facilitate such activities by students back at my school?"

The conference consisted of a panel of students, parents & teachers, several workshops on student projects at different schools; discussion sessions and a most enlightening and enthusing talk by Michael Norman.

The students spoke with self-confidence and authority - after all they were speaking about projects they had not only participated in but, in many cases, had initiated, directed and evaluated.'

For the VISE staff who assisted the Task Force it was a pleasure to be able to participate in the planning organisation and conduct of a conference alongside such competent and capable young people. This report doesn't capture the real value of the experience in terms of the educational benefits of the process - the meetings, the writing, the responsibility, the organising, the reflection and so on. It does provide a glimpse of what is a very exciting educational pro-rum which does as Michael Norman suggests 'provide ways for every child to grow and learn in schools of every kind.'
The Task Force felt it was important to provide participants with a range of perspectives on the advantages and disadvantages of the Youth Action Project. We felt that the views of parents, teachers, students and administrators would be helpful and would lead to valuable discussions about the Project. We asked Fiona Lawrence, a student from Pembroke High School to Chair a panel session where these views could be presented. The following is a summary of comments from panel members.

**STUDENT: Greg Lucas**

I first went into the Youth Action Program at the beginning of 1983. I thought it was very different to a normal classroom because I expected YAP to be a 14 period a week course that covered mostly humanities. I thought the activities would be of interest but different from writing a 2,000 word essay on the Australian Political System or What I Did On My Holiday. I soon found YAP to be very different.

After the idea of the course was explained to us, everyone felt a bit lost. It took us a while to get used to it and a while to get started. Because YAP had never been done before and we were guinea pigs, we had to learn to become responsible for ourselves because from there on what we were to do would be by ourselves. A teacher is only there for a resource centre or supervisor to help you when you get stuck, not to tell you what to do.

There have been many projects done in YAP, including going out to social or business agencies to obtain information, which is better than just reading from a book because you can actually see what is being done. For example, students have been out to Thompson, White and Harten Advertising Agency to see how ads were made, because we were really curious about it. We went out there and had a look and we learnt far more than we could have from just looking in a book.

Being a student in YAP I have had the opportunity to show adults that kids aren't just stupid, they are responsible, and I take the opportunity whenever possible to show an adult that I am responsible and mature. An example of this was in arranging this conference. A venue had to be found so I went out to the Ringwood Cultural Centre. Before I went I rang to make an appointment for an interview. I was being called Mr. Lucas, which I wasn't really used to! I finally got out there and the lady came out and sort of looked around the foyer. "Where is Mr. Lucas?" "I'm Mr. Lucas", and she looked down at me and sort of said, "Oh, come into my office". We went in and we started talking and she got used to the idea that I was a person, and was responsible and mature. We started talking about money and she got more interested. From there on we went really well. Later on she asked me about my career, what I wanted to be when I left school. I said something in catering, and she gave me a phone number and a name of a person she knew and said to ring up and mention her name.

**TEACHER: Bruce Wilson**

When I went to teach I joined one side of the great educational debate that has been raging for at least 100 years between two groups of educational thinkers. I joined the side which was called the Progressive side, and at that time in history all of us Progressives had long hair, gentle smiles and a lot of love in our hearts. We had a set of beliefs, and the first and most important of these beliefs was that each child is like a tiny seed, and if you just leave it alone it will grow into a beautiful flower.
I taught first in a fairly conservative school, the sort of school where the Principal argues with you about whether you are going to wear a tie or not, the sort of school where the Principal tells the kids at assemblies that having doors on the toilets is a privilege, not a right. When I taught in those schools I felt pretty alienated from the staff, I felt alienated from the students too.

But I moved to a progressive school, and I thought that this was the chance to really do all the things that I really believed in. It was the sort of school where the Principal is called Tony and wears thongs, and everyone has a vote on every issue, even the littlest child. When I got there, this was going to be my chance to really show them how to teach. When I got there I felt completely lost. I didn’t know what I was supposed to do. I felt guilty again. I felt guilty if I taught the way I had been taught to teach, i.e. to tell kids what to do, and I felt guilty if I didn’t, because nothing happened if I didn’t teach it. I felt I had to stand back and watch while these little seeds turning into flowers made stupid mistakes. I felt the kids were having a really good time, having lots of wonderful experiences - but so what! I came to the conclusion that both of these educational philosophies were wrong, that they fail in opposite ways: the progressive philosophy fails because it undervalues what the teacher can offer kids, and the conservative philosophy fails because it undervalues what students can bring to the educational process. I believe that in the Youth Action Project I no longer think that I know everything, but I think I know this, that the YAP is probably better in practice in lots of cases than either of those pure forms, and from my point of view the main reason why I think it is better is because it offers the teacher a role that makes sense, and neither of the others does.

In the Youth Action Program I think teachers have learnt, unlike all those progressives that we were a few years ago, that there is no natural course from adding and subtracting to the theory of relativity. Getting there involves lots of hard work and lots of disciplined study, and a lot of that would have to be assisted and directed by a teacher. There is no point trying to get there unless the kids want to get there, and that they also see that experience as important. Giving students lots of experience is still very important but it is equally important to give them the background knowledge and understanding that enables them to make sense of the experience that is used to change the world as they see it.

The Youth Action Project lets teachers be what they really are - competent, trained, experienced adults who know quite a lot and who, in an atmosphere of co-operation and sharing, can get together with kids and offer them experiences and knowledge which will help them make sense of their world.

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I THINK MY CAREER PATH IS FINALLY TAKING SHAPE -
I STARTED IN CYSS, THEN WENT ON TO EPUG, THEN CRAFT AND NOW I'M TAKING A VOCATION COURSE.
PARENT: George Dibsdale

Just on 12 months ago, my son came home to me one night and said, "Dad, I'm going to join the YAP program at school", and of course, being fairly inventive, my mind boggled: "What the hell was YAP?" So I went along to a couple of meetings. I was very sceptical for probably two or three months because my main concern was whether a child's scholastic skills would suffer because of a YAP program. I talked to the teachers on two or three occasions, plus various independent parents whose sons and daughters were also in this scheme, and they had the same concerns that I had.

To see the self confidence of these kids develop over the last 12 months has been truly amazing. Most of us have got views on politics, whether they are right, left or centre, and when something blew up in the past I normally said, "Well, this is the decision, they're right, I'm wrong, or vice versa". That doesn't happen any more, because my son forms his own opinions, and we have stand up arguments on politics and everything else.

I think YAP has been a magnificent experience and I believe it is one which is radical. I am an old fashioned type, but this has been a radical change and I believe it has been a tremendous asset to my son and the kids he knocks around with. There is only one point I am a little bit wary on, and I am still not convinced, and that is: are the schools forming an elitist group within the school? I have asked that question on three or four occasions and have been assured that it is not, but I still have this feeling in the back of my mind that perhaps there is this elitist group within the school, doing a special program.

To summarise: radical as the change may be, I believe it has been magnificent for the children of Pembroke High School. This personal development is absolutely amazing in all the students, and I would hope that Pembroke will continue YAP in the years to come.

PRINCIPAL: Ian Chisholm

The Youth Action Program was under way at Chandler when I got there at the start of this year, so don't blame me! I have had time to make many observations and to identify several achievements. In many cases they are observations which we have known about for years. Principals, I am afraid, are very slow learners.

We have known for a long time that to give a teacher a class for just three or four periods a week is wrong, but we don't seem to do much about it. The Youth Action Program gives a group of students two teachers for half the week and it has given the students and the teachers the opportunity to get to know each
other much, much better. It has given the students the opportunity to pursue things that interest them; they don't have to switch off after the 45 minute period is over, to change their allegiance to another teacher and another subject. We have two teachers at Chandler working on this project. Team teaching, again, is something that we have known about for years and never put into practice in most schools. These two teachers have helped each other and they have learnt from each other. YAP has also reinforced our belief that community involvement is valuable and important.

Another achievement which I have identified would be the effects it has had upon the students. It has proved that they are willing to accept responsibility and it has shown that they can gain in self confidence. Another benefit will probably be revealed later on this year. We think that retention rates at Chandler will improve considerably. Many of the students in this project would normally have left at the end of Year 11. Most of them will now go on to finish Year 12.

There are a few reservations. When you have one group of 25 students, out of about 150 Year 11 students, when you have just two teachers involved, maybe they do become an elitist group. The two teachers are very committed and very capable. We must accept the fact that many teachers possibly at this stage cannot cope with negotiated curriculum, or with team teaching, or with extra contact with a particular group of students.

I am a little concerned about the involvement of parents. It has not been as much as we had anticipated. Maybe at a place like Chandler the parents are burnt out, because we do have a lot of involvement in the earlier years of the school. I suspect the main reason is that the students themselves have discouraged parents. These are minor reservations and I have no hesitation in saying I am very impressed with the program.

STUDENT: Peter Etheve

This year I can say I have achieved and learnt a lot through YAP. I have gained many things in doing this course that will help me in my future schooling or in society. I have gained confidence in myself, self motivation, and my biggest achievement of all is being able to work as a group and understand the community. This was something I never thought would be important in my previous years of schooling.

At the beginning of the year YAP was explained to me, but I did not really know what to expect. I felt that it was far different from traditional courses of learning because you work as a group and not as an individual, and on an equal basis with teachers.

Our first project was the Bush Fire Relief concert. It was a project to raise money for the bush fire victims of Cockatoo. We offered the idea to teachers, they agreed, and that was it. There we were, 21 students having
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Our first project was the Bush Fire Relief concert. It was a project to raise money for the bush fire victims of Cockatoo. We offered the idea to teachers, they agreed, and that was it. There we were, 21 students having
to run a full scale concert with only two weeks up our sleeve. The first week was hectic; a class made up of ex-TEAC members, Form 4 mainstream students and three Form 5 repeat mainstream students all having to work together. We got through it successfully. We had six performances, with about 200 people at each performance, and raised $1,000. The biggest thing about it was we all established a working and personal relationship with each other and the teachers. That's how it was for the rest of the year. We'd think up projects, either as a whole group or smaller groups, and offer them to the teachers. If they were accepted we did them; if they weren't then we had to think up other ones.

One thing I learnt in YAP is how much working as a group can be effective. Peer group pressure plays a great part, because you are working with kids the same age, working to the best of your ability. If I did not have any commitment, I would not only be letting myself down but letting the rest of the group down. This sort of learning creates the feeling of responsibility and the urge to complete something with a reason.

**STUDENT: Mark Dibsdale**

Responsibility plays a big part in succeeding in YAP. A lot of trust is placed on us in YAP. If we say we will do something, it must be done. We are trusted to go around a school, learn, look and work out things, just to work off our own bat.

YAP is based on learning by doing instead of the teacher being out in front standing there dishing out papers and just kicking us around. We go out and see things and do things - get out in the community and walk around and talk to people, do interviews - just talk to people. The mixed ability learning approach meant that there was not just a pack of brains in YAP, but different levels of people. YAP works in our favour because the older students or the smarter students can help the slower ones to do things that can't be taught by a teacher. This works because a student listens to another student instead of listening to a teacher.

We use a lot of co-operative learning where we all work in groups helping each other, assisting each other, giving each other ideas. This work comes into the Grapevine (student newspaper), and cross-age tutoring. In cross-age tutoring, we give each other a lot of ideas, we talk about the problems we are having, and work out solutions. The part I think I like the most is that we get a say in what we want to do in our education. It's not like the teacher standing up the front giving out papers and telling us what to do. We talk about the way we are to be taught and can tell the teacher if we are having trouble and need to work a bit slower or a bit faster. The teachers listen to our problems, they are more personal than in mainstream.

There aren't many disadvantages, but a lot of the time we are unorganised. We did not really know what we were doing, we got mixed up and just did not follow through a job, like on excursions. People just decide they aren't coming and it doesn't work out. We have trouble with time also; we don't realise how precious it is and we might stay in one place a bit too long and miss out on the rest of an excursion.

At the start of the year a lot of us abused the program. We slackened off and thought, "Oh yes, this is great. What do we do?" We did not get the idea into our heads that we were supposed to set our own work and get ourselves moving. All we did was sit back and just did nothing virtually - waiting for the teacher to start moving. This is probably where we went wrong mostly; we relied on the teacher too much at the start.
Michael Norman is the Director of Curriculum with the Victorian Education Department and has been associated closely with the Youth Action Project over the past twelve months. As a member of the Project Reference Group which was established to monitor the project Michael has provided invaluable advice and assistance to the students, the staff in the schools and VISE staff. The following is an edited version of the keynote address which Michael provided at the Conference.

**PRINCIPLES AND PROSPECTS**

Michael Norman

What we have in the Youth Action Project is an active realisation within normal schools of forms of learning that ought to be the pattern for all students. This kind of student autonomy - students learning to manage their own affairs and to make decisions - has such radical implications for ordinary scholarship. It calls into question many of the other ways in which we have become used to learning. Many of our young people, through these projects, are actually learning by teaching other people, for example. I know it is the best way for me to learn, and yet why haven't schools been organised like this before? Why haven't we expected much more action from young people? I believe there are all kinds of promise being held out to us and all sorts of promising performances as well coming through programs of this sort. I want to sketch a few of the viewfinders for looking in on the principles of youth action and seeing how they apply to schooling everywhere.

At the start of this year we had some new ministerial policy papers. The Minister for Education, Robert Fordham, has asked us all to start working through educational problems in a new way. Let's review how we make decisions in schools. Let's think about the ways schools themselves can improve their programs. Let's look at school councils. Let's look at making them more democratic and more responsive. The Minister has said that in future it really ought to be a matter for each school to be deciding about its curriculum - a sort of autonomy, a sort of self government for each school, working out what it needs to do in its own district, among its own neighbours.

We have always believed in that to a certain extent, but now we have a policy paper which is loud and clear in its endorsement of such initiatives.

The second thing it says loud and clear is that the schooling we offer has to be for all students, not just for some. Primary schools have been doing that for years; they don't think of discarding kids half way through grade four or half way through grade five. Primary teachers, by and large, have been teaching for all of their students, but in secondary schools for some peculiar reason we feel we have to sort and grade and put elephant stamps on children and say, "Yes you go and you don't. You up and you out. You on, you off" (a type of sorting and grading machine). The secondary school has become this sort of machine over many years until its practices are so deep in our thinking that we don't even question them. Over 16 years as a secondary school principal I heard again and again, and saw again and again, the sort of reports that we hand to students. At the end of Year 10: "Gee Suzie, you have been a beaut kid, it's nice to have you here but look - four D's! That's not really good enough, is it? Perhaps you can find somewhere else to go; we don't want to spoil our matriculation results, do we?"

Now Robert Fordham is saying to us, and through him the government, and through the government the citizenry itself, "Look, we really do want an education which is for all students".

Well, let's look at it very simply. Out of every 100 students who have come into Year 7 in secondary schools over this last seven or eight years, 33 have started Year 12. Twenty two have been allowed to pass because we love a normal curve; fifteen go on to tertiary education, seven enter the professions. Is that education? What about the other 67? What about this shadowy 67 that we have been not accrediting, not confirming, not making them
feel good about themselves, even though they have talents and capabilities of
every kind? We have somehow fostered this idea of a "shadowy 67". We would
rather they got lost; it's just a bit awkward having them around. The world
has not been out there offering them a job. One generation it was. It was
saying, "Yes of course we want you, with your Year 8; my word, you have got your
Merit! Great, she has got her Proficiency, Year 9; she's ready for the world
and the world is ready for her".

Go back a generation, go back two generations and you see a world
wanting young people, kids going out to the opportunities that were there.
Today - no. Today it seems in this big experiment we have been running called
Public Education, we are taking youngsters and saying, "Stay on, all of you;
stay on as long as you can". We have, however, been giving the big kick to
surprisingly few. Stay there, but there is no real room for you to move.

One of the very promising and exciting things about the Youth Action
Project is it is reversing that funnel and is saying to kids, "Yes, look,	here are things you can do, there are projects and programs and worthwhile
commitments that you can make which make sense of your talents and your
capabilities. We do value you enormously; the things you have to say and
the things you can do". That is what makes this such an important project -
a pilot project for schools everywhere, all kinds of schools. To fan kids
out again into a real world as much as possible, instead of that pipeline
narrowing down, narrower and narrower. Schools build pipelines. We keep
kids under watch and under check and in straight lines, and very often in
those pipeline schools we get a few bursting out here and there, but often we
just get a series of drips. Everything has been decided, everything has been
arranged, everything has been organised; just stay there, just sit in your
place in the bus queue and mind your step, all decided for, all arranged.
The Youth Action Project is reversing that tendency.

The third thing that Robert Fordham said is that it has to be done
collaboratively, we have to get together and we have to work on it together.
That is, schools and their communities have to start sharing the task, sharing
the job.

Schooling is a partnership between the governing body (that might be the
Education Department or it might be the School Council), the teachers, the
parents and the students. All four ought to be working together in the life
of a school to make it work effectively. Somehow or other people have felt
a bit shut out; parents and students have been held a bit at arms length.
It has not been a conspiracy; it hasn't been something deliberate. The
Ministerial Paper says: "Look, get them all into the act, make it collabor-
active, build the partnership, come and cover some library books, come on to
the tuckshop, sit on the school council. All these things are worth doing
in a way, but they are thin sorts of bridges. How many of you at breakfast this morning had a family discussion in which you foreshadowed amendments and called for a reading of the minutes? We are a bit inclined to put some people at arms length again by the sort of participation we offer. Some of the things we are offering are available only to certain kinds of people, up front people, perhaps pressure groups. I would want to endorse this participation, but, like the VISE publication "Towards a Socially Critical School", I would also want to question them a bit if that is all we do.

What the Youth Action Project is doing is calling people into much more of a genuine partnership. These Youth Action Projects are showing us something that is more than a token bridge; they are showing young people making fundamental decisions, taking basic responsibilities, being fully caught up in the life of the school. That is the only way in which the whole thing can go forward, and we can only go forward I believe. The Ministerial policies can only come to something if we tackle it in that way, through genuine participation.

There are a number of hurdles, and you have heard some of those raised in workshops. How will students get back into the mainstream? Will Youth Action Project students be wanted at tertiary institutions? Are too many doors being closed? There is plenty of nervous talk to listen to. What is making it awkward for us? What do we have to cope with in making our Youth Action principles more effective?

In secondary schools particularly we have inherited some very important traditions. Let's go back just 100 years fairly quickly. We once had a very multicultural society here in Victoria, particularly in the 1850s, 60s and 70s; they had all come looking for gold, wanting land. They also tended to charge off in their own direction, and so we had dozens of little sectarian schools and denominational schools in one town, one suburb. In the 1870s the State came along in a sensible measured way, identifying the need to provide education which was free, compulsory and secular. That was also interpreted as meaning teaching to the common ground, not the differences. Things like religion and politics and justice and vocations and ethics and sexuality, and all those things that people disagree about, could no longer be discussed. We had other things to put in their place, and they were subjects. There was Charles Darwin and the new science, there were all kinds of exciting new faculties growing up in universities in the 70s and the 80s, and the beauty about subjects was that it was all factual, it was all data, there was no argument. We could set it for a test and find out who passed or failed. It was very convenient. Subjects became an enormous joy to us and we thought that subjects were education. We became fascinated and accumulated a vast fortune in information and facts, and books full of information and facts. We have come to confuse it with education.
We went on from there to build our schools out of subjects. We actually appointed teachers in charge of subjects with their special little shrines called the Chemistry Laboratory and Physics Laboratory, and children are to come like refugees from one territory to the next, stand until they are told to sit, because they are on holy ground. In a funny kind of way we have a new sectarianism.

There is an enormous accumulation of information and we think that knowing is about reciting it all back to the examiner. We think that is scholarship, but it is something else. We have to discover what scholarship means - serious scholarship, serious enquiry, a serious level of personal responsibility for what we learn. This is where the Youth Action Project is starting to turn around the attitudes towards scholarship, saying: "You strike the deal, you help negotiate, you enter into the contract, you say what needs to be known in your world and your life and your talents and your skills" - not just dismissing justice issues and political issues, but seeing that a combination of all these things is vital to becoming a discriminating, self-understanding, intelligent person. There is a fundamental dimension of education which we tend to have lost in a sort of super-sectarian fundamentalist fascination for subjects.

Once upon a time we did our learning in a lovely mixed interactive community of the old, the young, the big and the little, all in together, and we learned from Grandpa and Grandma and aunts and uncles, and it happened in a host of ways. We were taught in the real life of the community, but our fascination for gettings things tidied and orderly and sorted and graded is so great that when we get a little tangled knot in there we decide to move things. Perhaps when Grandpa starts dribbling on his waistcoat we say ..."Oh, oh, what will the neighbours think? He'd be better off in a Sunset Home, with all the other dribblers!" We create a Sunset Home - filing, sorting, grading and tagging - and he is there with the others; we can solve that problem. We will certify the person inside, and we will certify the person who manages, we will institutionalise the problem and professionalise the management.

We have invested millions of dollars in locking kids into age groups for their growing up because of their maths skills, because of their science results, because of their reading readiness. We've forgotten what it means to learn across the ages. The Youth Action Project students know something about it - they are caught up in the spirit of a new kind of interaction, a new kind of togetherness and mutual trust.

As educators and concerned citizens and as trusting people, we should be trying to move towards the notion of the growing person, interest in the growing person in all his/her complexity, and in the learning process. And it is the growing and the learning, the person and the process, that are the
educational goals we must strive for. That doesn't mean pipelines, and it doesn't mean Anderson scores. It does mean every child from the very beginning of primary school, growing and learning.

The principles of the Youth Action Project - of stabilising relationships through extended contact between teachers and students; allowing students to make elective judgements and facing the consequences of those judgements; parent and community involvement; involving students in cooperative ventures across ability groups; and so on - provide ways for every child to grow and learn in schools of every kind.

WORKSHOPS

Nine workshops were conducted by students at the conference. The Task Force felt that these workshops would provide participants with an insight into what students did in YAP. The workshops covered a range of projects ethnic tutoring and autistic children, a community concert, an examination of views of community towards youth, a community restaurant, aged care and drug rehabilitation and community activities. We asked various people to report on how successful the workshop were and the following is a small selection of those reports.

Magazine Workshop leaders - Jodie Jacobsen, Neil McAdam-Roberts

Jodie and Neil used slides, written material and sample magazines to complement their talks on the magazine. They began with an account of how YAP started and how the Grapevine came into being and the processes associated with its production.

During the presentation participants asked many questions about the Magazine and about YAP at Pembroke in general. Questions from the workshop participants included the following -

- How were the magazine tasks allocated?
- Is the magazine sold?
- Does The Grapevine reach the broader community?
- Do senior students offer much support for the Grapevine?
- How does Cross-Age-Tutoring work?
- How much YAP work would be done outside school hours?
- Do you mix with other Year 9 students at recess?
- Does everyone in YAP pull their weight?
- Why do you think YAP students get along so well?
- Are you accountable to the whole school?

Jodie and Neil answered questions confidently and provided the necessary information and background. Their presentation was clear and ordered, yet relaxed and informal.

Workshop participants congratulated Neil and Jodie on their poise, confidence and the intelligence of their presentations. Several expressed surprise that they were only in Year 9.

In informal chats with me over lunch, these participants continued to praise Neil and Jodie for their personal qualities and for the information that was provided.
The workshop was conducted by 2 Year 11 students from Chandler High School - about 12 people participated, most of whom were practising teachers.

The students had prepared a basic program for the session, and they distributed relevant background information at the start.

The session basically commenced with a brief account of how the restaurant project worked at Chandler, generally and specifically. Apparently the project was generally thought to have gone well, although some of the relevant student groups were only nominally involved and probably benefited little. The students who did involve themselves fully would have had practical experience in such areas as:-

- advertising
- menu preparation, budgeting
- food purchase
- food preparation
- organisation of cooking/preparation equipment, plus dining facilities
- transport
- account keeping
- cleaning up
- plus loads of discussion, consultation, evaluation, etc.

The topic of the workshop formed an excellent vehicle for the discussion of goal setting as it applies to a project of this type, including discussion of individual versus group goals.

A SUCCESSFUL JOB APPLICANT

Youth Action Program
Tanya and Simon had prepared folders for each participant in the workshop containing extracts from the YAP students weekly reports; the YAP timetable; examples of work done by the Year 7's.

The approach taken by the four students was a panel, sharing the talking evenly between them. The material was organised chronologically. They went through the weeks of preparation needed to develop the confidence of the YAP students before they would start tutoring and the feelings of both groups at the start. Then they talked about the problems we had when students did not get on and when the teachers tried to take too much control. Leanne Smith and Paula Houims (Year 7) talked about the range of content and skills that the Year 7 have been tutored in and handed round examples of work. All the students talked about the project being valuable in developing or reinforcing skills but mostly they saw the value in social terms or what they had learned about themselves. The students also showed a video they had made.

The participants in the workshop questioned the students about the whole programme as well as the tutoring. I was delighted how fluent and professional the students were in their presentation of material and how relevantly they answered. I had to explain that the students had written all their own material and that they really were Year 9 and Year 7 students.

Throughout the whole day I was told how impressive our students were. One of the P.E.P. officers who had flown down from Canberra commented that it was the best thing he had seen "since sliced bread".
FUTURES  
Gerry Tickell

Gerry Tickell is a Deputy Chairperson and full time member of the State Board of Education. Gerry has a long history of involvement and commitment to the development of responsible and relevant educational programs. The Conference Task Force asked Gerry to provide a reaction to the days activities and the discussion and debate that ensued.

The most consistent theme that I’ve heard today in the workshops and discussions that I’ve attended, is whether the education provided by the Youth Action Programs is for some kids or all kids. It seems to me that if our answer is that it is the best approach for all kids, we need to be clear about our description of the Youth Action Program.

At the moment YAP is not seen as a complete curriculum. It’s called a program, and in most of the schools that we’ve been describing today it exists as an alternative part of the curriculum. So if we’re really going to go to the barricades behind YAP, if that’s the banner we’re going to wave, we may need to think a little bit about changing the name, because for many people it still means an alternative kind of program, for some of the day, and for some of the kids. It’s very easy then for people who don’t like it to say: “Certainly, do have it, as long as it’s only for those kids.”

I think that this is reinforced by the emphasis we have placed today on kids doing things. I think that emphasis is important because we begin with the concern that the traditional curriculum doesn’t allow kids to do anything constructive or positive or active for themselves; they are empty vessels to be filled up with as much as people can ram into their heads in the time available. That’s the old curriculum, and Michael Norman described it very well. Our immediate interest in these programs is in the fact that they do treat kids seriously, recognize their enormous capacities and their enthusiasms, and build a program around activities that the kids can either control or at least share in. But if we speak only about the student action, we are still down one end of the continuum between trendy laissee-faire and competitive-academic. It seems to me that we get a bit close to the trendy end of the spectrum. I think we have to have an answer about where theory fits into all of this. If we say we have thrown out the competitive academic curriculum and we’ve replaced it with a student action curriculum, many people will want to know whether there is any theory to be learnt. And if we’re not saying that, then we have to think very hard about how that theory will get learnt. I know the theoretical answer
to that question is that it gets learnt through practice; it's the practical answer I'm looking for. Many people will find that a bit hard to swallow unless we can develop a slightly better answer than we have at the moment.

I think we need to be careful of the distinction between scholastic skills and social development. In several places I heard people saying: "Oh well, we didn't worry too much about developing their skills, or their scholastic ability, but their social development came along splendidly". Now I don't think any of us in this room believes that this distinction is a sensible one. I don't think we believe that you can develop people socially without developing their understanding of the world they live in, and their ability to plan and think and write and talk systematically. They are scholastic skills, and I imagine most of us would see this as part of social development. On the other hand, we don't think of scholarly people as being people whose social development is distorted. The latter, we think of as clever, but not as particularly scholarly, because there's a measure of maturity in talking about scholarship.

In a sense I think what we've achieved is to bring action into the centre. That's a big win, a major gain. In the past it has been out on the fringes where work experience lurks, and you know basically what happens to work experience in many schools. To begin with, it's not for all kids, it's only for the ones who need it. It's not for the ones who are doing well. Further note, those who need work experience tend to go on work experience some of the year, and the rest of the year they study. So that it doesn't make any difference to them whether they've gone on work experience or not. That's where work experience sits in many schools.

We've said student action isn't out there on the fringes, it's in the middle, and we've brought it in. The biggest task for us in this respect, then, is to see how it links up with all the things that kids do in the rest of the curriculum, so that the two reinforce one another. Until we do that, we devalue action in the way that work experience, in my view, is still devalued in most schools; it's still regarded as a fill-in or something for the kids who can't do well. If we raise the question, "What's this curriculum about?", and say, "Oh, it's a curriculum about student action", then for many people in the community at the moment that's like 'using your hands if your're no good with your heads'.

We have a picture of learning here, I believe, which says that students action is in fact the centre of it, and it involves thought and reflection and planning, and carrying through into action, and getting all that together. And that seems to me to be the challenge for all of us in the next few years, if we want to take this a stage further.
FROM THE TASK FORCE

We would like to thank all the people that took an interest in our conference. We were sorry that we were unable to cater for all those that wanted to attend and hope that the 30 people who we turned away will be the first to apply for this year's conference. We asked the participants to evaluate the conference and were very pleased with the result. Not everyone filled in the evaluation form but we would like to think those that didn't also felt the conference was a success. The following table summarizes the responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>17% 17%</td>
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We also asked a parent to write a report on the conference.

_I have always been an advocate of students and parents having more input into curriculum decisions and course content. It is wrong that students are not consulted about those matters which vitally affect their future lives and career prospects. When they leave school students are expected to take their places in the community and make decisions for themselves. Surely then the school should be the place where with teachers and parents, students should be given the opportunity and encouraged to take part in decision making._

_As a parent with these aims it was great to be part of the YAP conference. Students along with teachers, parents and Education Department personnel took part in all activities. Students told me they had been part of the organising committee and found it a very positive experience._

_A student chaired proceedings for the opening panel. Other students were group leaders and organisers. They coped with this in a very competent manner, due they said to their YAP background._

_During the morning I was part of a group where 2 students described how their school organised their YAP Programme. After their presentation the two students were able to answer the questions put to them by other members of the group - once again the student remarked how their YAP background had helped._

_Other comments from students - the use of jargon by some participants - why can't people use everyday English._

_In conclusion my thanks to all the organisers who made this day possible._

19
Having seen the competence and assured manner of all the participating students I certainly agree with the concept of YAP. I would personally like to see the idea extended right across the year levels, so that our students have the advantage of being part of the democratic decision-making process throughout their schooling.

Jean Lawrence

We would like to like to thank the following people for their help and support

Ian Chisholm Principal, Chandler High School
Geoff Coleman Victorian Institute of Secondary Education
Kelley Day Victorian Institute of Secondary Education
George Dibsdale Parent, Pembroke High School
Roger Holdsworth Editor, Connect
Debbie McCaffrey Victorian Institute of Secondary Education
Rob McDonald Transition Education Advisory Committee
Lindsay Mackay Executive Secretary, V.I.S.E.
Michael Norman Director of Curriculum, Education Department
Christine Paynter Victorian Institute of Secondary Education
Ken Thompson Transition Education Advisory Committee
Gerry Tickell Deputy Chairperson, State Board of Education
Harold Turner Victorian Institute of Secondary Education
Bruce Wilson Boronia Technical School
Jean Lawrence Parent, Pembroke High School

Finally, we feel sure that if people would like to find out more about YAP the students in the program this year would be only too pleased to assist

---

**Conference Task Force**

**CHANDLER HIGH**

Tracey Adams
Julie Bentley
Barry Brennan
Peter Etheve

**BORONIA TECH**

Gregory Lucas
Darren Phelan

**PEMBROKE HIGH**

Mark Dibsdale
Sue Kollosoche
Neil McAdam-Roberts

**VISE PERSONNEL**

Geoff Emmett
Jim Cumming

---

**GANGES CHUTNEY**
Regional Student Participation Working Party:

It is important that students have a way to meet students from other schools regularly.

The REGIONAL STUDENT WORKING PARTY was set up in 1983 by the Supplementary Grants Program. This group meet once a month to talk about things like S.R.C.'s, Curriculum, Student travel etc.

It is hoped this group will get bigger in 1984 to include all Schools in this region.

This group could offer a way to speak out on issues that are important to Students right across the region.

It could also be a central point for Student Participation for this Region.

If you want to know more about this group contact PAMELA WARD, or BARRY HANCOCK on 314 3011 or BARRY MCDONALD on 318 3222.

Student Action History:

There has already been some Action on the Student Front. You may remember a huge FORUM DAY in August 1983, or a VIDEO DAY for T.E.A.C projects. There have been heaps of great projects and events happening in this region.

We hope the STUDENT ACTION project will keep things going and record those things that are already happening.

1984 should be a great year for STUDENTS in the WEST.

Thanks to The Australian Children's Television Foundation for permission to reproduce the illustrations herein.
This year, Student Action started work with Student Action at Parry Bay High School in 1983 and Barry worked as a T.E.A.C. officer. Student Action is based at the Western Region Education Centre, 34 Kingsville Street, Frankston, Victoria. Student Action is funded by the Transition Education Advisory Committee. T.E.A.C., is a federal education project funded by the

Barry Hancock
Pamela Ward
and

are the Student Action Project Workers.

Funding etc. on meeting procedure.

Workshops, presentations, travel and so on. Concerns about curriculum, etc.

Information and running of S.R.C.'s.

Assistance in the setting up of the project.

Student Action is a project for the students and teachers from all over the region. The sort of things that will happen are:

Projects, contacts, and an alternative education in S.R.C.'s. to school. Student Action will offer help to them have some outside help.

Contact Barry or Pamela on 314 3011.
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Thanks to The Australian Children's Television Foundation for permission to reproduce the illustrations herein.
This year, started work with Student Action at Pakenham High School in 1983 and Barry worked at P.A.C. office. She worked at St. Alban's S.S. in the third term 1985. Before that, Pamela started work on the project.

The sort of things that will happen:

STUDENT ACTION will offer help to students in S.R.C. and on school projects. And an alternative Councils to those out side help. They have some outside help. Running of school is important and their education and the process of decisions making decisions about their education and the project are important. Now that students are interested, they are looking for a project for their own. This year, Student Action is a project for students participating.
Cartoons by Tony Smibert, Moreland High School; originally for Ascolta Radio Group report published by TEAC (Vic) 1983.
S.P.A.N.
CONFERENCE

On February 8, 1984 Ms Robyn Hartley from the Maroondah Region T.E.A.C. office, came to speak to our Year 11 Transition Class. She sparked the idea (along with Ms Lindsay Ryvitch, our teacher) that Mooroolbark High School could host the first S.P.A.N. Conference for 1984, and our guinea-pig class could organise everything for this conference from inviting neighbouring schools, right down to providing sugar, tea and coffee. We decided we could do it, and so started three long weeks of mad, hurried organisation.

The class divided up into groups of four or five students with each group taking responsibility for different facets of the conference: catering, invitations, venue, welcoming committee and the agenda for the big day.

The catering group organised the food and drinks for the occasion. One student's mother, who is a professional caterer, kindly supplied the culinary delights (at a price, of course!).

The group in charge of invitations issued invitations to sixteen different schools in the area and followed these up with telephone calls to confirm attendance and numbers.

Our venue group pledged for three adjoining rooms for the day, in which to hold the conference in (a difficulty within itself) and was successful.

The welcoming committee took control of the putting up of arrows and signs, welcoming our guest and handing out "mix & mingle" sheets on the day.

The program for the day was taken care of by our agenda group, which was responsible for the topics of discussion, the mapping out of times, etc.

The big day arrived. Students and teachers from the invited schools poured in, plus our T.E.A.C. and regional officers.

First item on the agenda was a "get-to-know-you" session. This enabled all participants to meet and exchange greetings in an informal and friendly manner.

Then participants formed groups of ten in order to discuss the various issues on the conference agenda. An energetic hum of intense conversation soon filled the conference hall.

This atmosphere marked the tone of events for the entire day — until 3 pm when the conference disbanded.

In all the day was productive and gave new insight into the direction of student participation in schools. It was certainly enjoyable.

REQUEST

Connect has received a request from Prue Gill for information about student participation in decision making at a primary school level. We're interested to pass on experiences, ideas, stories of successes and failures. If you can help, please send contributions to CONNECT and we'll pass them on.
WIND IN THE WIMMERA

Publication of the Warracknabeal High School community.

In 1979, I worked on developing a book of student writing whilst teaching at Ballarat East High School. The book finally came out as The Golden Shaft and was mentioned in earlier editions of CONNECT. When appointed to Warracknabeal, in the heartland of the Wimmera wheathelt, I felt a similar project could be of value.

The idea was mooted and supported by the English faculty. The whole school community was informed of the project through meetings and newsletters, and all invited to submit contributions. The aims were four:

1. to involve students in work that had meaning for them beyond the usual "student-teacher-correction and return" role;
2. to produce a book of high quality - typeset and signature sewn;
3. to encourage a sense of achievement and pride through 1 and 2 above;
4. to allow students to voice their feelings about the Wimmera, a very special area of Victoria which has inspired some of the very best in Australian painting and poetry (Nolan and John Shaw Nielsen).

The books finally arrived - all 400 of them - on the very last day of school in 1983. 220 had been sold through a pre-ordering system, so we managed to off-load most of those in the school holidays.

We were bitterly disappointed that the books were held up at the Melbourne bindery as the late arrival meant that an official launching was no longer possible. In fact, returning to school in 1984 with still over 100 copies unsold was rather an anti-climax.

The school community is very proud of the final result, a 152-page book of writing, drawings, abstracts and photographs which, taken together, do give the 'feel' of this mystical land.

Copies of the book are still available from:

Wind in the Wimmera,
C/o John Martin,
Warracknabeal High School,
PO Box 285,
Warracknabeal 3393

for $5.50 plus $1.50 postage and handling.
WESTERN READERS

I enclose some material which may be worth reporting:

The Work Experience Diary was developed by John Cobley, Transition Education Consultant, Western Region NSW, with Careers Advisors Bob Wilson (Dubbo), Dick Rochford (Nyngan), Jeff Edwards (Orange) and Peter Dargin (Western Readers Editor, Dubbo). The diary was trialled in various forms with students by the teachers concerned. They required a handy pocket-sized diary for the personal use of the students. The colour scheme was based on the material produced by the WA Department of Education.

The Work Experience Diary features: Pre work experience planning, contact person details, on the job tasks, feelings, first day check list, how to get to work, daily comments, evaluation, notes pages and work contracts.

Its reception in NSW schools has been excellent with the State Contract Board issuing tenders for large scale production.

"Work Experience With a Difference" was developed by Careers Advisor Neil Urquhart of Cobar High School. This excellent 16-page book shows pupils of Cobar High School engaged in their work experience. It is printed in the same colour scheme as the Work Experience Diary. The reading level is well within the range of the slower secondary student but the book's greatest value lies in the students seeing their peers in work experience situations. One spin off with this book has been its use in primary and secondary classes with slow readers, who aspired to being old enough to go on work experience.

Further work experience material is being planned for production during the year.

Copies of the Work Experience Diary are 95¢ and of Work Experience with a Difference are $1.25.

Peter Dargin
CAP Western Readers,
PO Box 865,
Dubbo NSW 2830

PEACE EDUCATION I.S.

A useful starting point in "peace education" is to help teachers understand how a democratic school may be structured. The basis of this would be to outline a possible school organisation that would promote "a more conciliatory attitude to resolving disputes and an understanding of negotiation and discussion in this process rather than settling disagreements by force or by intimidation through authority or by oppressive rules (tactics)."

This approach is not new but involves attitudinal change in teachers, students, parents and administration.

It will be difficult to promote because it is really a challenge to established and often traditional thinking on how schools should be organised and run. Hence resistance will come from staff, parents and administration.

The old catchories of: "students cannot handle their own affairs", "they don't know the issues, cannot understand", "will become too demanding" and "discipline will go out the window" will abound.

Hence an in-service on these issues (The Democratic School) is being organised. It will cover areas of student rights and curriculum action.

For more details, contact: Bill Tepper, Brunswick Technical School,
Dawson Street, Brunswick 3056.

AUDIO TAPES:

Adding to our already vast stock of tapes, CONNECT has available copies of addresses given by Art Pearl at the opening of the Student Action in Education Project (AF7) and at the Peace Education for a Liveable World conference (AP8). These audio tapes are available for $4 posted or for $2 if you supply the tape. Art will be back in Melbourne in August (hopefully).
MATERIAL AVAILABLE

Publications Received:
We wish to stress that the following publications are not for sale. However, they are available for perusal by arrangement: contact CONNECT: (03) 489.9052.

AUSTRALIAN STUDENT PUBLICATIONS:
Eagle Eye (Gladstone Park HS, Vic) Vol 1 No 3 December 1982
Ascolta (Brunswick Schools, Vic) Vol 10 No 6 Nov 83; Vol 11 No 1 March 84
Will the Last Class Survive? (Bourke HS, NSW)
Work Experience With a Difference (Cobar HS, NSW)
The Visiting Football Club (Menindee Central School, NSW)
The Adventures of Yabbyman (Dubbo, NSW)
Ivanhoe Rage (Ivanhoe Central School, NSW) Vol 3 Nos 6, 7, 3 & 17 June 1983
Mallacoota Mouth (Mallacoota School, Vic) No 339 2 March 1984

Other Sources:
Fringe Bugle (Fringe Network, Vic) Nos 20, 21 March, April 1984
Tightrope (Fitzroy Community Youth Centre, Vic) No 1 March 1984
NIE Bibliography (Newspaper in Education, Washington DC, USA)
Update NIE Vol 10 No 3 March 1984
Communication Research Trends (Centre for the Study of Communication and Culture, London, UK) Vol 4 No 3
Education Exchange (Western Region Education Centre, West Footscray, Vic) No 2 March 1984

EDUCATION EXCHANGE

Education Exchange is a compilation of papers put together by the Western Region Education Centre. Number 2 (March 1984) is subtitled "Strategies for Student Participation in Decision Making" and contains articles on that topic from Barry McDonald (Western Region's post-primary consultant on student welfare), outlines of the Student Action in Education and Youth Voice Projects, an article on the implications of student membership of School Councils and reprinted papers: "Hope" (Ken Polk, from Connect 21) and "Curriculum Principles of Youth Action Projects" (from the VISE conference, Nov 1983).

There is also a useful list of resources, including contacts and suggestions for further reading.

Education Exchange No 1 was called "Cross Age Tutoring" and future papers are planned on the subjects of Disabilities and Integration and Student Research.

Copies are available for $0.4 plus postage from:
Western Region Education Centre,
34 Kingsville Street,
West Footscray 3012
Ph: 314.3011

FRIENDS OF Y.P.

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

PATRON SUBSCRIBER ($20 pa):
Rene Ploegmakers (Deepdene, Vic)
TEAC Task Force, Maribyrnong HS (Maidstone, Vic)
Barwon South Western TEAC (Geelong, Vic)
Ann Borthwick (West Melbourne, Vic)
Mrs B Gibson (Albert Park, Vic)
Kevin Moloney (Ivanhoe, Vic)
Mrs M S McPhate (Warragul, Vic)
PHOTOCOPY: COMPLETE: RETURN:

PHOTOCOPY this page; COMPLETE all the details; RETURN it:

To: CONNECT, The Newsletter of Youth Participation in Education Projects,
12 Brooke Street, Northcote 3070 Victoria Australia

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