Come Out '83; Better Life Than Them;
Radio in the Primary School Classroom; SCLP;
Small Groups; Tutoring; Governance; STC Work Experience

...... and more!

This newsletter is produced in the first week of every second month.
Registered by Australia Post; publication no. VBG 3555. ISSN 0158-4995
This issue:

This issue looked like blowing out of all proportion, and we finally decided to hold over most of one article - on Work Experience (etc) within STC. So we know that for the August issue we'll have:

* the rest of the STC Work Experience article;
* more on the Come Out '83 Festival in Adelaide;
* more on the Student Centred Learning Program at St Albans Tech.;
* ideas on adapting mixers for a cuing facility;

and more .... depending on what YOU write.

Recently (and you wouldn't know it from this issue) articles have 'dried up' and we've had to chase or commission most of them - usually from our friends. It would be great to find articles arriving 'out of the blue', say, from other states. How about it?

Thanks are also due to Rebecca Coyle for helping with the layout, and to Sheryl Callinan for a constant dedication to the mailing process.

If you want to help put out CONNECT, just let us know. Putting together an issue this size is an enormous job, and the more people helping, the less traumatic and faster the process is. Call us on: H: 489.9052; W: 529.2055.

The next issue is due out at the start of August, so copy is due by the end of July: offers of help will be taken up for a weekend early in August.

Roger Holdsworth

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CONNECT is edited by Roger Holdsworth, 12 Brooke Street, Northcote 3070
Published by High Pollution Publishers, 232 Albert St., Brunswick 3056
Come Out is a forum for young people to celebrate the Arts, not only as participants and spectators, but to exchange ideas and new skills; and for our kids this unique Festival provides a step towards self-discovery in developing expressive skills and identifying artistic talents.

John Bannon: South Australian Premier and Minister for the Arts

Well, it is for kids - it's a festival for kids ... It's supposed to be the second biggest ... Festival especially for kids in the world and it's the biggest one in the Southern Hemisphere. The biggest ... Festival for kids is one in Canada ... and Come Out is just really to make people enjoy life. Also I think it's part of the idea of South Australia being the Festival State and having another festival for South Australia.

Rob Dent: 17 year old participant in Come Out '83.

Every second year, Adelaide experiences a fit of May madness - at least, that's how it seems when you walk into the city during a certain two-week period. The streets are lined with flags, banners and joyful, colourful posters. Everywhere, events are advertised as part of this Come Out Festival. Even scaffolding and fences around building sites proclaim this celebration of youth and Art with wonderful pictures, slogans and splashes of colour.

The 1983 Come Out Festival was tinged with elements of silliness. As Rob Dent explained, "This is Come Out '83, and this year it's represented by the clowns and if you see the posters, there are lots of clowns on the posters ... We here at Come Out believe that everyone should be a clown at least once in their life, and if you haven't been a clown before, be it now!" Rob romped around Elder Park, the major venue for Come Out outdoor activities and under the shadow of the Adelaide Arts Centre, painting people's noses, faces and bald patches in various colours. In addition, an exciting part of Come Out '83 was the Flying Fruit Fly Circus combining skillful and impressive performers and their acts with humorous asides and lots of knock-about clowns.

Come Out '83 kicked off with a giant parade with the city taken over by dragons, mutant cockroaches and an assortment of wild things. The parade finished at Elder Park with an official launching and music performed by the "Wild Things" Rock Band and "Max" in his wolf suit. This event was coordinated by artist and mask-maker Glen Ash. Glen was one of the many artists who ran workshops in schools and at other venues to help young people learn different skills and become involved in the festival. Many people are invited from all different parts of Australia to be part of this event. Glen Ash worked as an artist-in-schools. Colin Offord is a rather amazing soloist and music innovator, using traditional and non-traditional instruments to build different sound sources. He conducted performances and workshops in schools and unusual sounds wafted over Elder Park, calling people to his tent for his own performances.
Colin commented on why kids get involved in these sorts of workshops: "I think that the technology is very simple. They're not daunted by 'Oh gee, I have to have 3000 watts of PA and a latest video clip to be a musician'. There's something very simple there from which they immediately can get a response, and while the bow is a very simple instrument, there's no end to it - I mean, the limitation is yourself, not the instrument - to the subtleties to which you can go into it. But to get something very simple happening is really not too much work. A couple of months playing (mouth) bow and you have a really nice sound happening. The trumpet you get an immediate blast out of, and when you get half a dozen kids blasting on them you get accidental chord combinations. So it's a mixture of the simplicity of it and the fact that there's a fairly immediate response in it. And, you know, it's working at a gut level rather than a 'Oh what's your horn in - A-flat', you know..."

There is so much to see and be involved in for *Come Out* that it is difficult to know where to begin to describe all the different aspects. Events range from highly-participant to minimal participation. Akio Makigawa constructed a series of sculptural forms in and around the waterfalls and pools of the Adelaide Arts Centre Plaza. Their pastel shades and unusual forms pointed to an awareness of environment. Than couple is an Aboriginal ceramic artist who was involved in *Come Out* through her exhibition of large assertive ceramic work and her storytelling sessions for children.

The South Australian Media Resource Centre showed various Australian independent films and documentaries for various age groups, as well as showing some overseas independent films chosen specifically for their interest to young people. In addition, groups from other states were involved in showing their work. One such example is *Schools Like This*, a video prepared by students and their teacher from Lynall Hall Community School that covers four community schools in Melbourne.

There is a multitude of theatre events to be part of throughout *Come Out*. Theatre-In-Education, Children's Theatre and Over To Youth are all groups working with drama and school students. Theatre groups also come from interstate to perform for *Come Out*. Also, outside groups stage performances. One of the more innovative of these was by Phoenix Group in the show "Dance 'Til The Drummer Drops Dead". This was staged in the disco above the amusement centre called Tilt which is situated, appropriately, at the centre of Adelaide's nightlife. The play centres around such nightlife, and emphasises the problems youth face dealing with corrupt, competitive, self-centred people-of-the-world. Disco lighting and effective use of props and sound effects highlight the points made.

Dance and music are a major part of *Come Out '83*, involving school groups, interstate groups of performers and local bands, dance studios and Dance Companies. Some performances were held outside in Elder Park. Performers from the Australian Dance Theatre set up space with scarves placed in a circle. Using simple props and movements, they danced to the children's tales, holding even children of 4 and 5 years of age entranced for an hour.

School bands and other young groups participated in the Battle of the Bands, giving them the opportunity for technical advice workshops and information about the music industry. Other bands were set up specifically for *Come Out*. Hungover formed around a group of established jazz musicians and performed with casual ease at the *Come Out Club*. This venue also featured bands like the Randwick North High School Jazz Ensemble. This group has achieved a semi-professional standing with the help of Robert Murphy, jazz pianist and composer, who has worked with them for four years.
The Come Out '83 Club was situated in the Adelaide Boatshed building close to Elder Park, the Adelaide Arts Centre and the Central Railway Station. One performer described the Club as being "for young people involved or interested in the Come Out Festival ... to come out at night and sort of, have a good time, no hassles ..." It was well located and decorated. The inside was dimly lit, the windows painted over with funny pictures, the mixer placed in a beaten-up shell of a Mini Minor. There were two stages, one at each end of the building, to allow for a group to set up while another performed. The Come Out Club made brilliant cabaret and was open from 8pm to around midnight. The acts included bands, clowns, magicians, mime artists, rock and revue performers and all verged on hilarity. The tone of the Club was set by regular acts performed by a core group of students working with Sydney actor Russell Cheek. These were Cafe Dracula and Normal Max and described by a Hungover performer as "... mime entertainments ... very foolish, quite clever, very physical, lots of fun ... I think they're very clever, very witty. I think they're not subtle by any means, but extroverted, happy ... which is part of the Festival or feeling, I guess, that's around at the moment here in Adelaide." The young people worked on rehearsals and preparation for the Club for about four weeks. Russell Cheek helped them devise the acts around ridiculous satires on the movie Mad Max and the musical The Rocky Horror Show. The performers had a particular degree of control and the acts changed to allow for their ideas. Minimal sets or props were used, with imaginative use of actors to serve as set constructs.

Sue Arnold (a year 10 student) who played Normal Max, saw the Club as providing "... great fun, it's fabulous ... It's just the atmosphere of the Club and all the people ... sort of great friends, new friends and everyone's ... so enthusiastic and everything and the Club's nice and dingy you know ... It's been so much fun - everything about it." Chris Sykes, a year 10 student who played Igor in Cafe Dracula, compared the Come Out '83 Club with the last one: "It's good, it's great ... It's a
great boost in youth performance - like, we're all under 25, but before it was about 18 up ... A few more participants in it than the Arts Festival ... I've learned just general acting experience but in a different way ... I've got lots of good friends through this now. I've been acting since I was about 8 and I've done about 30 plays - 30 proper plays, not school plays - but I've enjoyed the Come Out Club the most out of them 'cos I've been acting with all kids and all the people that are nice people ... generally."

Russell from Hungover commented on the Club and on Come Out generally: "Of course it should be done by kids and the more it's done by kids, the better. I think most of the acts that are on are done by kids. If they're not done by kids, there's an adult who's offering the kids ... his or her knowledge of what they've learnt and sharing it with them in some kind of ... rehearsal process. In the end result, they produce something together ..."

The Come Out Festival is an established celebration of youth and the arts. It is constantly being evaluated and changed to cater for new ideas and young people's differing needs. One of my concerns about it is how much it challenges existing structures on a broad or on a limited level. The Randwick North High School Jazz Ensemble, while overwhelmingly skillful, does not in its presentation or method of operating, challenge the pretensions and male domination of the jazz world.

When I asked many of the young people if their role in Come Out would flow into and set precedents for new, continuing projects in their schools, they all seemed particularly negative about this. Sam Harvey, one of the many workers for Come Out, and voluntary assistant to the coordinator of Come Out '83 (Rob Brookman), talks about his concerns in this area. "I personally would like to see even more involvement from the youth ... I mean, don't get me wrong - there is quite a large involvement in performances and projects which don't just happen in a theatre. For instance, painting a subway project ... that could broaden out in '85 - we could have 20 ugly, smog-ridden suburban subways painted by kids from the local schools. And they'll design the project etc etc. I would like to see a lot more of community activity, perhaps, involving young people ..."

This leads into questions about how much say over Come Out activities and operation the young people have, what part to play in the decision-making. Come Out could not only provide methods of expressing ideas and opinions for young people, but ultimately could even be a way of working through many social problems and worries of young people. Of course, this offers an incredible challenge to the Festival - how to maintain the joyfulness of it and combine this with structures to deal with issues concerning young people. But ultimately, it could provide more long-lasting meaning for participants with such an approach.

In the next issue of CONNECT, I hope to give more information about some projects operating throughout the year as well as during Come Out. There'll be an updated coverage of the SCARP (Schools, Community and Radio Project) at 5MMM-FM. Also, there will be more details about other youth projects operating through the Education Section in the Adelaide Arts Centre.

Rebecca Coyle, Ascolta Radio Group, C/o Moreland High School, The Avenue, Coburg '3058

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**FRIENDS OF Y.P.**

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

**PATRON SUBSCRIBERS ($20 pa)**

- Jan Hargreaves (Roma, Q)
- V. Ferguson (Glen Iris, Vic)
- C B Moller (Goodwood, SA)
- Brian Couper (Lake Bolac, Vic)
- Rebecca Coyle (North Fitzroy, Vic)
Better Life Than Them

I used to think that whatever I wanted, my Mum and Dad would get for me. If I wanted an education, they'd get it for me - hand it to me on a silver plate. It's different - a holluva lot different.

Julie; 16 years

Spili appeared in my office one morning in third term (in the middle of typing). "What can I be, Sal? Find me a career can ya?"
"What do you like doing best Spili?"
"Sleeping."
"How 'bout a job testing mattresses?"

Being based in the Careers Office somehow gave lots of students the impression that I had a miraculous network of jobs that I could slot any semi-willing student into. Being a school-to-work transition Project Officer was even worse. If you couldn't find them a job then at least you held the solution to what they were supposed to do whilst waiting for one. I had neither.

Within the four walls of the Careers Office, not many jobs materialised, but a lot of discussion did - of which Better Life Than Them can be thankful for.

Imagine being 15 years old in 1983.

I cringe at the thought and I bet you do too.

Fortunately most 15 year olds aren't cringing at all. They're just dying to be 16 and to be independent.

Julie: "(I want) to leave school ... I'd be rapt. I'd go straight down to the CES, get a job, work for two weeks, get a bond, get a flat, then I'd be set for the rest of my life."

Do you really think it would be as easy as that?

"Nuh."

Contact with year 10 students at Fitzroy High School, like Spili and Julie, made me realise how hard it is for students to make decisions about their future. Unlike five years ago, students are acutely aware of youth unemployment and I decided to document how this affected their future expectations within the context of their three major influences - school, parents and peer group.

Better Life Than Them is a documentary featuring seven 15 and 16 year olds, who are on the verge of leaving school. They talk about their attitudes towards school, parents, work, unemployment - and their future.

The students begin by discussing their thoughts and reasons for leaving school:
Silvana: I'm leaving school either in the middle of form 5 or at the end of form 5. You see, most of my friends are leaving then. Anyway, what's the point in keeping on at school - I mean, I don't want to go on and be a Professor or something.

Peter: I did in grade 6. I wanted to leave school. I'd had enough of school. I thought another six years of my life gone for nothing, but now I want to go on. I know I want to get a job. I don't want to be a dole bludger.

Reasons for these responses are complex. Silvana sees that the final years of school are purely academic - she doesn't want to go to University, so what's the point? Anyway, her friends will have left by then and after all, friends are what is important to most students.

Giovanna: I mainly keep going to school because of my friends. If they weren't there, I don't think I'd even bother going to school.

Peter originally saw school as being a waste of time. However, now he's acutely aware of unemployment and definitely wants a job. He sees that a good education will provide him with one.

Peter: If you've failed, you're not in the race for a job.

Julie and Zoran see things differently. They think that the longer you stay at school, then the longer you are off the streets.

They have friends and relatives who have done HSC, gone to University and still haven't got jobs - so, what's the difference?

All the students are influenced by their parents who worked in factories and were immigrants to Australia.

Giovanna: When they came to Australia, they didn't have no education and they just ended up getting a job in a factory. They don't want that to happen to me. They want me to get an education and a good job.

Zoran: 'Cos they've seen how hard it is for them and they don't want our lives to be like theirs: slaves all the time and that. They want us to do a job that's nice and clean and get good money for it.

They are acutely aware of how demeaning and exploitative factory work is and how dangerous it can be. A few of them recount stories of their parents' work injuries, parents who are now on the pension. Unemployment too has hit their parents.

Zoran: My Dad's factory's closed down, so he's looking out for a job - so he can't find a job and I can't find a job.

All the students want a job, but a job that's interesting and pays well. For some, the possibility of ever getting an interesting job is so remote.

Joanne: I really don't want to work at all. It just seems meaningless 'cos all you do is sit around and wait for a pay cheque. Unless it's an interesting job - it doesn't mean anything.

Surely there's lots of jobs that are interesting?

Yeh, but I haven't got the ambition. Like if I wanted a good job, I'd have to really study hard and there's nothing at school that I want to learn.

The fact that a lot of the curriculum in the school is irrelevant or is taught in such a way that the students become bored was a common complaint. They express the contradictions with their own set of values and those of the school clearly and perceptively.

Julie: I'm rapt to say that (I'm not a brain). I don't want people looking at me and saying "Ooh, look, she works!" I don't want to be a dud. Why? 'Cos if you're too smart, you have no friends.

Is it more important to have friends?

I reckon. No books's going to help you when you need help. Friends will - books don't.
Many students realise the importance of friends and are not prepared to compete against them in school for fear of losing them. Few schools operate on a system of mutual cooperation and learning as a means of achievement. Unfortunately, schools tend to function as mechanisms for perpetuating the existing inequalities of class structure.

The future is confusing and unknown. Will they simply join their unemployed mates on the dole, or get married and have six kids in the Fitzroy flats?

They don't demand much.

Zoran: Life and job. If you haven't got a job you can't lead your life properly. If you haven't got a job - no money. If you haven't got money, you haven't got a life to lead 'cos you need clothes, you need food, you need to pay bills for your house - so you need quite a bit of money.

No, they don't demand much and despite all odds, remain optimistic with remarkable realism.

Giovanna: Never lose hope - if you want to try for something - just never lose hope. Keep on trying; you've got to be determined, ambitious and never let it get you down, 'cos if you do, you're gonna lose all hope.

Sally Ingleton (currently overseas)

Better Life Than Them was written, directed and edited by Sally Ingleton.

It is a 30 minute colour video with music, set in the inner city of Melbourne. The tape focuses on the young people who relate their ideas in a narrative style with anecdotal humour, in and around their own environment of the local milk bar, the pool parlour and the swimming pool. It is most suitable for use in the classroom with years 9 to 12, or with community groups, unemployed groups, migrants, parents, teachers, youth workers etc, or for general in-service purposes.

A kit is being prepared to accompany Better Life Than Them. It will contain a background discussion paper; statistics on the youth labour market and an overview of causal factors of unemployment; discussion starters and tasks; and suggested further reading. The kit will be illustrated.

The tape and kit will be available by July through the Audio Visual Resources Branch of the Education Department of Victoria.

It has been made with the assistance of the Transition Education Advisory Committee, Victoria; Vocational Orientation Centre, Melbourne; Open Channel Cooperative, Fitzroy, Victoria.

Enquiries can be made to Margaret Piesse, Publications Officer, TEAC: phone: (03) 529.2055.
The Nuclear Environment

A Handbook on Nuclear Power for Schools and the Community

"This new book brings the nuclear debate up-to-date in Australia.
"How does a nuclear reactor work? What is radiation and why is it harmful? Does nuclear power really have anything to do with nuclear weapons? Are there alternatives to nuclear power?
"The Nuclear Environment authoritatively answers these and many other questions. It's factual, straightforward, lively, comprehensive. It looks at Australia's uranium mining industry and the potential for uranium enrichment. It examines nuclear power and the growth of nuclear weapons. It discusses social and environmental issues. All in the Australian context. Ideal for community groups and school use in environmental and social studies."

Available from: Friends of the Earth, 366 Smith St., Collingwood 3066
Movement Against Uranium Mining, Environment Centre,
285 Little Lonsdale St., Melbourne 3000.

Cost: $6 plus $1 postage; (more than 10 copies: $4 each plus postage).

The Photography Resource Book

The Western Region Education Centre has produced this clear and useful guide to EVERYTHING you could want to know about basic photography. The Resource Book has been written by John Stachlewski and Stephen Walters, and is available from the Western Region Education Centre, 34 Kingsville St., West Footscray 3011.
Phone: 314.3011.

The book covers such topics as: The Camera, Flash Photography, Film, Enlarging and Developing, Special Techniques, Photographic Silkscreen, Setting up a School Darkroom, and also includes a comprehensive Glossary and Bibliography.

Extremely useful, well illustrated and easy to follow.

For The Tutor

"For the Tutor" is a reprint of idea-starters for use in a cross-age tutoring program. It was originally published by the National Commission on Resources for Youth.

It contains: ideas that have been used with all tutees, starting with the very beginning reader;
ideas that work best with tutees who can read 2nd grade books or higher.

The ideas have been put together by tutors. The introduction says: "The minute something is not what you or your tutee need, change it! Add to it! Take things away from it! Make it your own! For YOU and YOUR TUTEE!!" All up - 124 pages of good ideas.

There are a few copies available at VISE - contact Peter Cole or Geoff Emmett to check on availability. (VISE, 582 St Kilda Rd., Melbourne 3004)

Riff-Raff

Yes, copies of the Riff-Raff Soundtrack album are still available from CONNECT. It's a great album, with music from an early "Men At Work" and dialogue from West Community Theatre's production. Cost of the album: $8 - plus you must arrange to collect the album (too difficult/dangerous to mail).
Radio in the Primary School Classroom

During 1982 our class, a composite Grade 5/6, worked with Rebecca Coyle and 3CR to produce three-weekly 30-minute programs as part of the Ascolta Radio Group - the Brunswick schools' project.

Many of these children had experience in participating in Radio Production during 1981 as part of a joint Media/Thematic Learning experience. To our delight early in 1982 we were consulted about the prospect of continuing and furthering these children's experiences in the field of radio production on a more permanent basis. As our teaching and learning program is centred around an integrated experiential approach which is often thematically based, we felt that this was a golden opportunity to give the children a final refinement of their written and oral communication skills.

Thus we developed our year's program around an overall media influence which was incorporated into our other Thematic units. Throughout 1982, units focusing upon leisure, space, Australia Today, colour and food provided stimulus for the content of children's writing and thus radio presentations.

In our classroom, the approach we use to written language is based upon the Donald Graves writing scheme. Children are encouraged to write every day on topics and ideas they choose. These are then written into the final radio product and read or performed on air. This really gives the children the ultimate satisfaction because not only are their stories and poems published in books, but they are also "published" or performed on air.

In keeping with this approach and our philosophy, this provided a meaningful purpose for their published works, plus allowing for creative, individual input re planning, implementation and recording of these programs. In addition to this, it allowed our children to broadcast their ideas and feelings to the wider community, not only of Brunswick but to the whole of Melbourne.

Not only did it allow all children, including previously labelled non-achievers, to be fully participant, but it also enhanced the children's self esteem and pride which carried over into all our classroom activities.
The results obtained were indicative of children working together to provide child-centred quality products.

Programs were dubbed onto cassette and listened to by the whole class. This follow-up was an important part of the process, providing a time when children were able to constructively evaluate the program and recommend improvements in areas such as use of music, announcing style and content for future shows.

We would like to point out that whilst this program was highly successful, both in the standard of production and the quality of work the children produced for such programs, it did place extra pressure upon us as teachers of this grade. Had we not been team teaching in a more that cohesive and congenial atmosphere, this may not have been possible.

This problem was alleviated somewhat by the assistance of Rebecca Coyle, then a teacher at Lynall Hall Community School (now Project Officer for the Ascolta Radio Group) who came on a weekly basis and worked directly with the children as well as providing opportunities for the class as a whole to have first-hand experience at reporting. She organised visiting speakers to address the class and then to be interviewed by the particular group producing the show later. Cassettes of relevant songs were prepared so as to correspond with the theme.

Apart from stimulating radio production, such experiences also generated further learning experiences and exercises for the class. The actual procedure we followed for these productions was to take the respective children out of their normal language activities for a period of three weeks. During this time those children worked intensively upon their radio production. At the completion of these three weeks, one of us would then drive the children in our own car to 3CR and later to Moreland High to record their programs. As teachers can appreciate, this involved undertaking special legal precautions, plus an increased teaching load for the teacher remaining at school. The legal precaution was overcome by the sending of a note several days beforehand to the parents of the respective children. This note was to be returned by the parent indicating permission and relieving us of liability.

As to the added teaching load (50 to one teacher for an afternoon) we were more than happy to accept this as we knew the benefits to the children far outweighed any extra pressure we had to cope with.

Unfortunately, in 1983 we have both left the Brunswick Network area, and we are very disappointed that we can no longer be involved. However, we would encourage any primary teachers who have the opportunity to participate in such a program to do so. We would like to make known our deep appreciation to Rebecca Coyle for providing us with such an opportunity as teachers to participate in this program and sincerely hope that in the future we will once again be given such an opportunity.

Pauline Hagen, Deer Park North Primary School, Mawson Ave., Deer Park 3023
Jenny Douglas, Eastwood Primary School, Alexandra Rd., Ringwood East 3135

3CR is a public broadcasting station. This means that it relies on listeners to provide financial support to keep broadcasting and to continue offering access to community groups otherwise denied media coverage. Through 3CR, students and other young people are able to communicate their ideas, opinions and material of interest and relevance to them.

3CR is currently facing a financial crisis. The station is looking to buy a building of its own, to purchase a new transmitter that will enable the station to be heard in all areas of Melbourne, to raise money for publicity materials such as T-shirts, windcheaters, stickers and badges, and to just keep operating effectively.

You can become a listener sponsor for:
$20 for employed people;
$10 for unemployed, pensioners and students; or
$5 for unemployed, pensioners and students without the CRAM Guide.

If you'd like more information about 3CR, ring 419.8377 or drop in to 20 Cromwell Street, Collingwood 3066.
The Link Between the Community Projects Program and SCLP

In the previous issue of CONNECT, an article outlining the Community Projects Program at St Albans Technical School explained how students were involved in community-based learning experiences. This program involves students in a wide range of activities including cross-age tutoring at local Primary Schools, Kindergartens and the Spastic Centre, toy making, parkland planning and development, radio broadcasts etc.

In the course of the on-going monitoring of this program, a number of outcomes became clear, including:

1. The fact that participants were volunteers meant that there was a great deal of interest and enthusiasm towards their project work. This meant that students worked very hard in their 'placement', often much harder than they did in classrooms at the Tech.

2. Many students seemed to get a great deal out of this type of activity, or activities structured in this way - more so than the traditional classroom structures. This was especially true of students who didn't adject well to didactic methods.

3. Strong and congenial relationships were developed by the participant with the host organisation and supervising teacher who negotiated and followed up the placement.

4. A positive attitude towards the community based activities had possibilities in developing the participants' attitudes to learning and schooling in a positive way.

5. Participation in activities did a lot to increase positive motivation, self-esteem, willingness to take on responsibility and talk about the activities with parents.

6. A lot was gained by teachers and students negotiating the placements.

These outcomes and others made it clear that there was something to be learned from these processes in relation to curriculum practice and the structure of learning and teacher-student relationships.
To cut a long story very short, it was these learnings, plus the results of a very comprehensive School Review by external reviewers, that led to the total school being divided up into sub-schools, with one of these sub-schools, the STUDENT CENTRED LEARNING PROGRAM (SCLP) being given the role of applying the learnings of the Community Projects Program to curriculum and organisational structures. The task was to develop a school operation that incorporated the factors that led to the positive outcomes above.

The Development of SCLP

In developing the model for a student-centred program, a great deal of thought was given to the things students had been saying about school (eg "it's a bloody prison!") and observing carefully areas of school activity that captured their interest and enthusiasm.

It was clear that various groups of students were extremely interested in several activities offered in the school to the extent that they were prepared to spend time before and after school, lunchtimes and even weekends and holidays involved in them. The activities noticed were: music and the school band; weight-lifting; and community projects. Students had reached high levels of performance in these areas and had developed a high level of commitment to them, but were forced to 'squeeze time' to participate in them. The question arose, "Why does the school curriculum make time for subjects not valued by these students, force students to do them and not offer in a rigorous way the subjects/activities they valued?"

After some thought around this, several related issues and the learnings of the Community Projects Program, some basic directions in SCLP were evolved:

1. That the curriculum would use as its focus these areas of demonstrated interest and ability. (This 'subject' is called 'Special Interest'.) Also, that an attempt be made in each Special Interest to integrate other subjects into its activities;

2. That students would not have future options limited and so would still be required to do certain basic subjects, but that the methods of teaching/learning must:
   a) be related to, as often as seemed appropriate, the Special Interest subject, and,
   b) encourage student/teacher negotiation;

3. That a structure would be developed where genuine involvement of parents and students in decision-making would be encouraged;

4. That procedures that permitted students, parents and teachers to develop meaningful and regular lines of communication be developed.

Our approach to recruitment was to seek out students who were involved in the three areas of interest and invite them and their parents to a meeting where the curriculum was explained. Our aim was to recruit approximately 60 students. This did not prove to be any problem, with parents and students in every case (but one) enthusiastically accepting the offer. It should be noted that interest
in the 'Special Interest' area was the only criterion used in selection, hence each group had students in it of varied academic ability, and also that although we were only able to include 20 students from each of year levels 8, 9 and 10 in our first year of operation, the Special Interest groups comprised students from each of these year levels.

The basic structure of the weekly timetable was:

- **Special Interest**: 6 hours
- **Sub-school activity**: 2 hours
- **Personal Project**: 2 hours
- **Mathematics**: 3 hours
- **Humanities**: 4 hours
- **Science**: 2 hours
- **Graphics**: 2 hours
- **Trades**: 4 hours

**Total**: 25 hours

A brief description of each 'subject' follows, although a more detailed account will be given in the next issue of CONNECT.

**Special Interest**: (one area only is taken by each student)

In the first year of SCLP's operation, this included:

1. **Music**: Instrumental tuition, playing in various bands and ensembles, studio and recording techniques, concert performances, arranging, science of sound etc.

2. **Sport and Physical Education Studies**: Weight training and/or track and field; sports science including anatomy, injury prevention and treatment, training techniques; graphics in sport ie graphing progress; nutrition and diet etc.

3. **Community Projects Studies**: Involvement in a community placement, community radio and newspaper, community awareness, film-making etc.

**Sub-School Activity**:

This is a time that is designed to encourage activities where students from the whole sub-school, irrespective of age or Special Interest come together. Often the activities are based around sport, a movie or a guest speaker (chosen by the students' Guest Speaker Committee).

**Personal Project**:

This is an elective type activity where, instead of students having to choose from a limited number of options proposed by teachers, students are asked to fill out a proposal form telling of what they would like to do (including activity, form of assessment etc). It is then up to the teachers to organise resources to meet as many of these requests as possible.

The other subjects listed form what would normally be considered the 'core' subjects in most Technical School curricula. In many ways, the aims of the SCLP version of these subjects doesn't differ from the traditional courses, nor does the content differ all that much. It is the methods of teaching/learning that differ quite considerably. The methods developed will be reported in a subsequent issue of CONNECT.

**Some Outcomes**

To avoid the problem of presenting an overly long article in this issue, some of the outcomes of the program are reported here. They will be reported in greater detail along with various methodologies developed to bring about these outcomes in future editions of CONNECT.
1. Teacher-Student-Parent Communication: A lot of myths have been exposed regarding the reluctance of these three groups to work together. Sub-school meetings are attended by over 100 parents and students. When the three of these groups work together, the total school and educational experience of the student is enhanced remarkably. It is true that if students see it as being important, they will encourage parents and teachers to get together and discuss with them the aspects of school that could be improved.

2. Student Identification with SCLP: If students value what they do at school, they will identify heavily with it. Many illustrations can be cited to amplify on this. One such example relates to the swimming sports. This was a time when the whole SCLP student body got behind its swimmers. This was done by the SCLP band turning out in full force, the Graphics classes making hats and banners and the sports students acting as officials. Having only fifty students and other subschools being four to five times its size, SCLP had no chance of winning, but this didn't seem to matter.

3. Cross-Curriculum Potential: For some years, it has been thought that General Studies programs based on Themes are the best way of integrating the subject matter in 'core' subjects. The SCLP experience is that there is probably more potential for cross-curriculum study where the catalyst is a subject in which the students have an almost all-absorbing interest.

Some examples of this:

- **Sport Studies**
  - Science
    - Anatomy, Physiology, Diet, Human behaviour.
  - Humanities
    - Filming techniques, improvement.
  - Maths
    - Percentage improvement, Statistics.
  - Trades
    - Making equipment, Designing fitness track.
  - Graphics
    - Charting progress, Designing making belts.

- **Music**
  - Science
    - Sound, Sound recording, Recording equipment.
  - Humanities
    - History of music, Theology, Writing about their interest.
  - Trade
    - Making music stands, Making accessories.
  - Graphics
    - Design of advertising posters.

- **Community Projects Studies**
  - Science
    - Reafforestation, Environmental Science.
  - Humanities
    - Surveys, History, Interviewing.
  - Trades
    - Toy making, Making equipment for the community.
  - Maths
    - Statistics for surveys.
  - Graphics
    - Designing questionnaires and reports, Design of equipment for the community.

These are but a few examples.
Concluding Comments

This article was written for two purposes:

1. To describe a process where the learnings of an 'add on' project in a school can be applied to curriculum development;

2. To provide the background for future articles by students, teachers and parents on the type of curriculum practices that can be developed in a democratic, collaborative environment.

Ken Thompson, St Albans Technical School, James Street, St Albans 3021

YOUR COMMENTS

(On being sent a notice saying: "We’ve sent you free issues and now we’re about to prune the mailing list. Unless we receive a subscription from you - you’re to go. Sorry about that."):

I have no desire to be 'pruned'. Being a keen gardener, I know that judicious pruning can lead to more fruitful growth in the following season. However, my fertile imagination runs riot with frightening images of lost appendages that fail to sprout anew when the sap begins to rise in Spring.

I cannot recall how I came to be on your mailing list. A well-meaning colleague perhaps? However, I have appreciated and enjoyed the copies of CONNECT I have received. Please find enclosed a donation ... to help defray future publishing costs.

R. Beissbarth,
Echuca 3625.

I would like to notify you of my change of address ... You can see that your excellent publication continues to attract overseas subscriptions! Keep up the good work.

Joan Thomas,
Burnie, Tas. 7320

Everyone was very pleased with the Radio Skid Row article.

Jinny Coyle,
Leichhardt 2040
You remember EMPLOY, the organisation that brought you Melbourne Update 1983? As a spin-off from this venture, EMPLOY has been granted wages from the Employment Initiatives Program to produce a community newspaper. We hope to create on-going jobs through this paper which, at present, does not have a name. We do, however, envisage a 4-fold format with at least 16 pages for the first edition, probably with a print run of 5000 copies. We hope to cover employment related issues on a monthly basis.

Apart from articles and reports tackling specific areas, we hope to carry items of general interest such as reviews of theatre, music and film. Likewise, relevant cartoons, poetry and other novelty items are also sought. Naturally we are seeking contributors in all areas mentioned.

We would very much appreciate it if your organisation could publish this information in your forthcoming newsletter and make our request known throughout ... any other avenues you see fit.

We can be contacted by phoning (03) 520.7633 or visit us at Flat 15a, Ardoch Village, 226 Dandenong Rd., East St Kilda, during working hours.

Florenz Ronn,
EMPLOY News Group.

Boy, do we feel stupid. No CONNECT? Perish the thought, the Secretary just ain't what s/he used to be!

Peter Sheargold,
Student Government,
West Wyalong High School,
Dumaresq Street,
West Wyalong 2671

Thank you for your patience. It's like this ...

Now I am back! Hurray! As one of my great interests in the School Improvement Plan is increasing students' participation in their own schooling (rather than merely suffering it) I really must have CONNECT. I shall be watching out for contributors to CONNECT.

Re student contributors to CONNECT:
At the recent Community Education Conference at Lorne, there were three girls from Chandler High School's TEAC program. I don't have their names but they gave brilliant tutorials on their involvement and their parents' also, in planning and carrying through their alternative program. They ran rings around most of the audience in my opinion. They are now doing STC and could well write down some of what they said.

Even a hardened old war horse like me shed tears of joy at some of what they said eg "Most secondary schools drive parents and their kids apart. Our TEAC course has brought the families all closer together."

Ruth Hoadley,
East Doncaster 3109

I would like to obtain a list of student produced magazines and newspapers. I hope you can assist.

Anne Scherer,
Class teacher Yrs 6 & 7,
Sadadeen Primary School,
PO Box 2707,
Alice Springs NT 5750

Enclosed is $5 for a subscription to your publication for this office. We are concerned to learn of facilities and programs in the western suburbs which may be of help to our mildly handicapped adult (ie over 16) clients ....

Helen Hewison,
Adult Services Team,
Western Regional Office,
Health Commission of Vic.,
PO Box 224,
Footscray 3011
How goes it? I always look forward to my issue of CONNECT when it arrives - I sometimes feel disheartened about the way things move up here, but then I realise it's no good changing things drastically if people aren't ready for it - just have to keep watering the seed!

I'm trying to get an SRC newsletter going among the schools up here - and I'm advertising for you, telling them how good CONNECT is! I'm trying to spread the word for you! I hope to get the SRCs to share material about their successes and failures etc ... it will probably take a while to get a response, but I'll keep trying.

Sue Bailey,
Newmarket State High School,
PO Box 188,
Alderley 4051

Much appreciation for your letter ... I was hoping that you and I would be able to swap publications of Newsletters/Bulletins for our mutual benefit. I fully understand your request for subscriptions but as we do not have a formal budget, I trust my proposal to share publications is acceptable to you.

What I wish to do is recommend your publication and resources to relevant divisions of our Department. Once our International Youth Year State Planning Committee is operational, your material will provide valuable background information on youth participation and we look forward to sharing initiatives with you.

I'm sure you are already familiar with the theme "Participation, Development, Peace" guidelines and goals for International Youth Year ...

Denise Reghenszani,
State Coordinator,
International Youth Year
Secretariat,
PO Box 33,
North Quay 4000

I am embarking on both being teacher advisor to the Student Representative Council and the teaching of "Social Living" to year 11 transition students for the first time this year.

As very little information, including work programs, strategies etc, exists in either area and I am also new to the school this year, I would be most grateful for any help you would be able to give (programs, student projects, worksheets, strategies, suggestions etc).

Ros Natrass,
Home Economics Department,
Toowong State High School,
Bywong Street,
Toowong 4066

My name is Franca Tosto and I am a year 11 student from Thomastown High School.

If you may remember, last year CONNECT requested an article on student organisations running within our school. I was given the opportunity to write the article.

As far as I can understand, CONNECT is interested in hearing what students are doing at school. Well, as you will discover from reading my article, Thomastown High School has formed a year 11 Forum and I truly believe that what it is aiming to achieve will be a success. We have already raised funds for fire victims and that is only the start. Year 11 Forum hopes to achieve many other things. We believe that our experience at Thomastown High School is valid and that it should be put to good use.

My reasons for writing the article are quite simply that I want everyone to know what an excellent idea student organisations are and how much can be gained and achieved from them, as we have already proven....

Franca Tosto,
Thomastown High School,
Main Street,
Thomastown 3074
This brief article draws on the notes taken at one of the workshop groups involved in the recent VISE Conference on Language, Learning and Negotiating the Curriculum. The discussion focused upon the use of small groups for teaching/learning and on the process of negotiating curriculum tasks with students.

It appears to be generally true that schools, as a matter of policy and practice, rarely value small-group work. This tendency to ignore small-group work as a structure for learning is somewhat puzzling when it is widely acknowledged that the following advantages can accrue from such a practice:

* It can develop social skills through social interaction, eg communicating, listening, resolving differences, giving/receiving support, compromising etc;
* It can increase self-awareness as individuals are encouraged to express opinions and relate their own ideas, preferences and experiences and receive feedback or get reactions from others;
* It can be very supportive and encouraging for individuals to feel accepted by other group members;
* It can increase self-confidence to hear other people have similar concerns and anxieties;
* It can "harness" peer learning;
* It can give individuals a chance to experiment with a range of behaviours eg adapting, deviating, challenging or rejecting;
* It can produce increased trust levels which can improve staff-student and also student-student relationships;
* It can identify students who may need particular, individual help with specific issues;
* It can introduce a range of teaching resources, because each group member is potentially a source of information and perception, and consequently the focus of learning is not simply the person labelled 'the teacher';
* The use of small groups can convey that each student has something to teach, and also that each can direct her/his own learning by formulating ideas and by analysing, accepting or rejecting the views expressed.

However, there are also substantial barriers to successfully implementing group work, as such an approach is somewhat alien to teachers and students alike and both may find the adjustment difficult.

If the processes of group work are not actively taught, there is a danger of students and teachers simply 'flirting' with this approach, using it perhaps as an occasional activity lightly undertaken in relation to trivial purposes. If this occurs, then the aforementioned benefits are not likely to be reaped. Indeed, such an approach would merely act to reinforce scepticism about small group work.

Teachers may need to monitor the effects of small group work on students and consider the manner in which they introduce students who may be unaccustomed to small group work to this way of learning. Because the choice of learning processes is rarely shared with students, and students typically expect individualised instruction, any move to adopt group work should be explained with students and students should feel they have a role to play in determining the processes.

Students should have some say in the how of learning as also with the what.

This partnership between teacher and students can be achieved through negotiation both between students in their groups and with the teacher who has the various roles of manager/facilitator/stimulus person/knowledge accessor. Any negotiation over what is to be learned, needs to be carried out within a given framework and the parameters should be spelled out early on, so that 'the rules of the game' are known by students who can then participate with confidence.

This negotiation can also be expanded to include the process by which the learning will take place as well as the content to be learned and the assessment procedures to be used.
The adoption of small groups as the focus for learning can make evaluation/assessment more difficult as individuals in the group may do different work or contribute differently. It is also possible that although this practice might reduce individual competitiveness and increase collaboration, it may sometimes promote undesirable inter-group rivalry. So teachers need to be aware of the dynamics of the process. In particular, they need to provide for the students who state a preference to work on an individual basis, the student whom no group wishes to incorporate and the tendency at some age levels for girls and boys to separate, ethnic groups to stick together etc. In all these matters, it seems better for the teacher to establish a ground-rule that groups are formed on a mix of criteria and that groups not remain static over time but be reconstituted at agreed points.

The preparation of students so that they develop group work and negotiation skills is a critical strategy in moving students away from individualistic and independent learning roles. As was briefly suggested earlier, students need to prepare for effective group-work. It cannot be assumed that students naturally operate well in group situations. For example, some students in groups think that they simply have to write down the right answer to the assignment or whatever. They ignore the potential of the group as a learning forum and work individualistically within the group setting. This situation is unusual, however, as there is a range of negotiating and cooperating skills which most students have acquired outside a classroom/school environment so that most of them are quite capable of regulating their group interactions.

If students lack confidence or commitment to small group work, it is often because they find the negotiation involved unusual and hence threatening. Negotiation should be phased in progressively to include the how, the what and the assessment of the learning. If tasks and assessment are clearly negotiated, students gain in confidence and commitment and actively seek out the relevant people with whom to work. It should be pointed out that students often manage their own affairs pretty extensively out of school, so it is reasonable to expect that they can also do this in a school situation.

Finally, to assist students and teachers gain in confidence and commitment to what for them may be a new and challenging way of learning, it may be useful for the school community to develop a policy which generally endorses the use of small group processes. This will mean that, although there must be some allowance for variation in individual teaching styles, teachers will be encouraged to use small-group work in the school. As this happens, students will view the practice as being 'normal' and should quickly develop a confidence in and a commitment to working in small groups and this is necessary if they are to gain maximum benefit from this way of working.

Chris Reynolds, Victorian Institute of Secondary Education, 582 St Kilda Road, Melbourne 3004

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**YOUTH TUTORING YOUTH: MARIAN COLLEGE**

A cross-age tutoring program has been operating at Marian College, West Sunshine, for several years. The following account outlines the operation of the program: "Youth Tutoring Youth", in term 1, 1983. The program is offered as an elective within the "Further Educational Experiences Program (FEEP)" and occupied one period per rotation (6 days) for the ten rotations of the term.

Originally, Sr Chanel contacted the Principal of St James the Apostle School, Hoppers Crossing, (Sr Marlene) and asked if there was any possibility of a tutoring program and, if so, for what purpose. The reply was that Ms Helen Beatie would be interested in having year 9 or year 10 girls to tutor the year 6 students as a means of preparing them for the transition from primary to secondary school. Since there was an abundance of students at Marian College interested in tutoring, it was decided to plan a program for this. From those girls who chose this option from the FEEP electives, twenty-five were selected. Because of the large number of students involved, a second teacher from Marian College (Ms Ros Byrne) was appointed to help run the program.
The next stage was a meeting between Sr Marlene, Ms Beatie, Ms Byrne and Sr Chanel, to look at the possible purposes, format and implementation of the program. After discussion about possible options, it was decided that the aims of the exercise were:

a) to give year 6 students a positive experience of a secondary school and the opportunity to explore and express their ideas and feelings about certain factors;

b) to give the year 9 and 10 girls the opportunity to provide these experiences for the year 6 students.

The ideas for format were gleaned from "My Everyday Choices" in Deciding for Myself - a Values Clarification Series (Winston Press, Minneapolis, 1974).

The third introductory stage was an effort by the teachers to match up suitable tutor-tutee pairs so that every effort was made to make the program a success. Then the decision was made to have about three or four interaction sessions and these would be prepared for and reviewed in the in-between sessions.

SESSION 1: 9th February, 1983

This was an introduction to the tutors about how the program might run and the sort of things that might be expected of them. Then some historical background of St James school and its clientele was given and the tutors were given names of their tutees. It was decided to provide tutors with a Manila folder to keep worksheets, notes etc in.

Then the proposed outline of the first interaction session was presented (now available on photocopy from CONNECT: article 153). Students were asked to consider how they personally would approach the session so that at our next preparation session they could role play. Finally, the girls were asked to start to draft a letter of invitation to their tutees.

SESSION 2: 17th February, 1983

Girls wrote the letter of invitation to their tutees and these were then completed by the tutors at home. A 1982 class photo was shown to the tutors. The rest of the session was spent in going through the interaction lesson outline and then girls preparing their personal approach.

SESSION 3: 25th February, 1983

Invitations were collected and then delivered via Sr Chanel to Sr Marlene and then to the tutees. Manila folders were given to tutors and then different tutors role-played what they thought they'd do. They were also told to have review comments etc written up after Session 4 so that there could be discussion, evaluation and planning in preparation for the following session.

SESSION 4: 7th March 1983: FIRST INTERACTION SESSION: "IMPORTANT PEOPLE"

All tutors and tutees were present and worked either in the classroom or outside in the landscaped area. Teachers wandered around making sure everyone was
managing the task. At the end of the session, the host group – Marian College – saw the guests off at the squash court car park where their bus was.

SESSION 4(a): 9th March, 1983

This was an extra session provided by a change in timetable. One "house" was at athletics practice and the rest of the group came to FEEP. Students and teachers sat in a circle in the classroom and did an oral report-back commenting on how the first interaction session went and what they would see as a useful thing to do next time. Tutors were reminded to have their written reports done before the next session.

SESSION 5: 17th March, 1983

Girls who were absent at the last session, were asked to give an oral report. Then several girls read their written report. Some had not done the written report and they were reminded to have it done. We then discussed the topic for the next interaction session on "Important Possessions and Places". The aim was to have tutees identify important possessions and places in their lives and why these are important. Possible ways of presenting the topic were discussed eg: Possessions: * Fire breaks out in your house and all the people are safe. If you could save five things, what would they be? Put them in preferential order;
* List some things you have made/done that you are proud of;
* If you had a piece of string and an old broom handle, what would you make out of it?
* If you had $100 to spend on anything you liked, what would you buy?

eg: Places: * If you won a trip to any place you liked, where would you go?
* Where do you like to go when – you feel sad? you feel happy? you want to be alone? it's dark? it's hot?

Some tutors decided to do something about Easter as well since the next session would be the last time they would see their tutees before Easter. Tutors were again reminded to write up comments and evaluation on their session.

SESSION 6: 25th March, 1983: SECOND INTERACTION SESSION: "IMPORTANT POSSESSIONS AND PLACES"

Tutors and tutees met at the landscaped area as usual and then went to various places around the school. Teachers walked around to see how they had settled down. We noted a few tutors playing "the teacher with hard work" and decided we needed to be more directive in the next planning session.

SESSION 7: 7th April, 1983

The aim of this session was to give students a chance to think and talk about their feelings about the judgement of others. This included discussion about the good/bad things we do and people who praise/judge us for them. This was followed by discussion on how we view the judgements of others and what they reveal to us about ourselves.

At the end of this session we (the two supervisory teachers) decided we'd take half the group each and concentrate on those for reporting/evaluating purposes. At the end of today's session, all tutors were asked to hand their folder to us to check over so that we could make comments and suggestions for improvement before evaluation and reporting time.

SESSION 8: 15th April, 1983: THIRD INTERACTION SESSION: "HOW PEOPLE JUDGE"

One tutor was absent so her tutee joined with a friend of hers. Tutors and tutees met at the landscaped area as usual and then found places to work. It was a bit too cold for working outside so some students went to the library or the corridor in the main building.

SESSION 9: 27th April, 1983: FOURTH INTERACTION SESSION: "MONEY-LEISURE-CAREERS"

Since there had been no evaluation/preparation session since the last interaction, a suggested lesson plan outline and some worksheets were given to tutees prior to today's session. Once again, one tutor was absent, so her tutee joined with a friend. The groups met as usual and then set off to find a suitable workplace.
29th April, 1983

All tutors were asked to have their folders up-to-date and hand them up today. For one reason or another, none were submitted till some days and several reminders later. It was quite difficult to find time to talk with the girls about such things.

The last session was planned to be a special occasion. The tutors were to go to Hoppers Crossing for lunch on the last day of school. However, the Administration Team at Marian College decided that it was necessary to have an in-service day on that day. That left us with the choice of cancelling the last session, or of the students involved coming to school specially for the event and the teachers missing that part of the in-service. The second alternative was voted for unanimously, despite the fact that two of the girls would be away on holidays by then. By the last day of school, the number had grown to four. That meant that only eighteen of the twenty-two tutors would be present.

SESSION 10: 5th May, 1983

When the actual time for departure came, we had only thirteen of the eighteen tutors. It was a bit embarrassing and quite disappointing that five tutors just didn't turn up - no message - no explanation.

The time-table was as follows:

11.15 Leave Marian College
11.45 Arrive at Hoppers Crossing; guided tour of the administration section of St James
12.10 A slide/poem presentation of the development of St James School presented by the tutees
12.30 Lunch with staff, tutors and tutees provided by St James
12.45 Guided tour of the classrooms; then playground experience with all the St James students
1.30 Leave Hoppers Crossing
2.00 Arrive at Marian College

The community (staff, students and parents) at St James had gone to great lengths to make our visit a memorable occasion and it was truly so. When we were leaving, each tutee presented his/her tutor with a thank-you card. We kept wishing we had thought to bring a camera to catch some of the great spirit of the experience in visual form, because it is almost impossible to do so in words.

To sum up, the whole FEET-YTY was a great venture from all points of view.

Sr Chanel Williams and Ms Ros Byrne, Marian College,
Glengala Rd., West Sunshine 3020

STUDENT GOVERNANCE REVISITED:

1. MARIAN COLLEGE

CONNECT recently spoke with Claudette, a year 9 student from Marian College (Glengala Rd., West Sunshine 3020) about the system of year 9 class and level Councils that operate at that school. We started by asking her to describe how the system worked:

Well, we've got girls from every class who work to improve things that need to be done in the year level. Any ideas that come forward from the individual students are put to the committees, and if something can be done for that idea then we do as much as we can, and go as far as is possible for students.

How are those committees organised?

Our class committee was organised through an election where the students at first got to know different girls in the class. After that time, sheets were handed out and we were nominated and asked if we wanted to be on the Committee. We had the choice of either saying yes or no, so that was pretty good. From there it went to working as a Committee, as a team, as a group for the class.

That's in one class. How many students are on that class committee?
At the moment, the Class Committee has five or six representatives, and of those we have two who go to an over-all year 9 Committee meeting that occurs every rotation. In each rotation there are six days - that's a change from having five days a week.

What sorts of issues have the committees looked at so far?

We've looked at getting our camps organised. We've looked at making sure that things like roll-call in the morning, cleaning duties, outings ... anything that is a major decision in the classroom, so that the class will run smoothly ... anything big like that, we've tried to organise as best as we can. We've tried to get the teachers' cooperation, so that everything will work well. In all those decisions, we've put a final decision after we've got the class approval. We always make sure that we work with the class because we are working for them ... we're just representatives of them.

What sorts of reactions have you had from teachers?

There's been a lot of different reactions. Some teachers believe in what we're doing - they believe that we should be given the opportunity to express ourselves. But we've also had teachers who believe that because we are students, we aren't able to cope with such responsibilities. But because we've worked pretty well together and we cooperate with each other, I think we've proven most of them wrong. We are able to cope with certain pressures.

You were involved with organising an excursion. Can you tell us about the sorts of things there as an example of what you do?

For that, Sister Chanel put forward the idea of going out somewhere for our science and from there we took it and everyone suggested we go to the Planetarium. Everything was put forward to us, and we were allowed to take it any way that we wanted. So we decided that we would take public transport and we worked out the timings, the date, we worked out the cost - 'cos we phoned up a lot of different places and tried to get group bookings, and found the cheapest we could, and found out the best timings for the students so a lot of the students could attend. We worked out everything from there. We got final decisions and put it forward to the students, and once we'd got all the notes and all the money organised, we just went to the excursion.

You obviously believe in this way of working very much. Why is it important to students to have that sort of say in what happens?

Because we've found that students don't seem to have the opportunity to let people know how they feel. They get put down. They feel very low. They don't feel as though they have human rights in a way. They feel as though: I'm here, and I've always got to wait until I grow up, and then when I grow up, this is going to happen. We don't feel that we should wait. We've got feelings now - why can't we express them now?

It was only recently that it was put forward to me that it was unusual to find girls having their say as much as we do. As soon as I found that out, I think it boosted my confidence more. It gave me a reason for wanting to go on, because if we've got the chance, why not use it? If you haven't got the chance, and you're being put down constantly, you just don't worry about it. But if you've got the chance, and you know that people are behind you backing all the way, you feel that you want to go on. You feel a lot more confident in what you're doing because there are people there who won't put you down, or if you are doing something wrong, they'll help you correct it. So having the teachers with us and believing in what we're doing, really does help.

How many students are really involved? Is it just a small number of you actively involved?

I really believe that it's not just a few students involved. I represent the great majority who are involved because anything I do or say is based on what the whole majority of people do because at the meetings I go to, I don't speak for myself, I speak for my class or for a majority of people in my class who believe in what I am saying for them. It's pretty impossible to run a meeting with 350 or 600 people there - it'd be complete chaos - so that's why the Council is there: to get the majority to work out things like that and to put it forward from the class.
"Forum" at Thomastown High School, as I discussed in CONNECT's December 1982 issue, is an excellent student organisation, which meets the needs of every student and gives them the opportunity to form a mutual understanding of responsibility between the whole of a group.

Much to our own benefit, a year 11 Forum was organised at Thomastown High School around every unit. Although no teacher was very pleased, no-one can deny the fact that Red Unit's first Forum meeting took off on a rather shaky start. Yet that problem was soon overcome and now there has been an overwhelming stream of success coming from these Forum meetings which are held weekly for all year 11 students.

At the start, the year 11 Forum was not met with approval by the students because they did not understand the opportunities and prospects it could offer. After a few sessions of Forum meetings, the majority of students realised the aim of the whole program and they began to show progress by participating in discussions (trying, I believe, to improve their personal skills, which can only be achieved by self-motivation which happens through student organisations where students feel free to voice their opinions and know that their suggestions will be taken into great consideration by the staff and other students).

I cannot guarantee that year 11 Forum will be successful throughout the whole year, but I can say that students are showing great enthusiasm and are using Forum as a time for discussing any issues be they major or trivial ones. For example, a disco was held during late February by year 11 students, and all funds went to a particular group of fire victims. Students plan to hold other fund-raising activities in order to raise money for these people and for a camp. With some hope, we may even organise a cross-age program for a term where year 11 students will tutor younger students etc.

There are millions of possibilities which are open to us. Only by having a year 11 Forum is it possible for the older students to put their experiences, personal resources and skills into practice and utilise them through the unit and the school.

Franca Tosto, Year 11, Red Unit, Thomastown High School, Main Street, Thomastown

3. SUNSHINE TECHNICAL

The Student Representative Council (SRC) is a council formed by students to try and get the students and teachers on an equal basis in decision-making and rule-making. It is there to help and try to solve some of the problems existing in the school. Our main aim is to try and encourage student participation in the way the school is run and the making of the curriculum.

For too long students have been dominated and made to sit down and do the set work given to them by the teachers who don't even know themselves why they are teaching it. Students are told to do the work and are not allowed to ask why they are being taught it.

I feel that teachers can negotiate with students on ideas and actively ask them what they want to learn. Then the students can ask themselves: how is this subject going to affect me in the future when I leave school and find a job? Am I really going to find this information useful? Do I really need it?

If the person knows what they want to learn, they should be able to learn it, because it's their own goals that they have set for themselves, and that is what they want to do which is the most important factor of the whole learning process.

Roselin Steker, Student, SRC, Sunshine Technical School, Derby Road, Sunshine
STC: WORK EXPERIENCE AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES SEMINAR

The STC Course is accredited as an Approved Study Structure within the Victorian HSC system. It began operating as an accredited course in 1981, and will come up for re-accreditation for 1986. As part of a review towards that time, various issues of the Course will be examined. The first of these issues was that of "Work experience and out-of-school activities". A seminar on March 23rd, 1983 reviewed this aspect of the Course and the following documents were produced from that seminar. The originals are available from CONNECT's photocopy service - Article 154.

The seminar starts with a background statement from Dahle Suggett, VISE Liaison Officer. Professor Ken Polk then provides an address on the topic of "Hope". Examples of programs, outlined by practising teachers, and the summary of the seminar from Jill Anwyll of Coburg High School, will be included in the next issue.

More details of the STC Course and the operations of the Group may be obtained from: The STC Group, C/o VSTA, 35 Elizabeth St., North Richmond 3121.

Background

There are many important issues to raise in a review of STC principles, to do with the nature of self-assessment, the concept of satisfactory completion and so on. However, the course review committee saw that the issue of work experience and related out-of-school activities could provide a useful beginning to a review of the principles. The shape of the work experience and related activities course components could indicate to some degree the extent of schools' understandings of the nature of work for young people now and in the future, the role to be played by young people in the culture, and demonstrate schools' capacity for action that enhances the role of young people in the culture. So, an examination of STC work experience and related out-of-school activities programs may in fact provide an entry point to the wider examination of how STC principles as a whole stand in relation to the needs of young people in a changing technological society.

When STC first formulated its principles, work experience as a component of year 12 courses was an innovation, especially when students were asked to devise a program of tertiary visits or job experience themselves. It was hoped that these experiences could provide a perspective from which course negotiation could occur. There was encouragement for individuals/groups to develop related research projects that may integrate previously separate subject areas.

From details supplied by STC schools, it would seem that the majority of current programs have approximately the following shape:

1. Work experience is compulsory and is a set block of time for a large group of (if not all) students;
2. The careers teacher plays a significant part assisting students with placements;
3. The program is founded on a vocational sampling orientation; ie a familiar outcome is for students to develop an opinion of a particular job and so determine if it would be preferred;
4. Work experience activities are constructed for individuals rather than groups;
5. Many programs are well liked by teachers and students because students get chances to be adult, and because students often get good references which assist in getting permanent jobs;
6. Where programs are not liked, it is often because the 'work' in the programs was boring (ie menial) or because the students 'did' work experience in years 10 and 11.

While most schools have their own variation of this pattern, a few STC schools run programs that suggest greater possibilities for work or community experience programs. So programs labelled as integrated studies, community studies, extension studies, youth participation programs or job creation projects are presented as worthwhile alternatives or supplements to work experience programs as we know them.

Dahle Suggett, Liaison Officer, Curriculum and Assessment Branch, VISE, 582 St Kilda Road, Melbourne 3004
I have chosen "hope" as the theme for my discussion today. On first hearing, this might not sound like what we could be talking about in education. Let me give you a bit of my background so you know why I am concerned with this. Much of the work that I have done in the past is concerned with youngsters that in the States might be called "trouble makers". Here we might call them "no-hopers". In working with this type of young person, being in schools and talking with them, the thing that I have learned is that they incorporate in their view of themselves a view of "no hope". If you talk with them, you realise that they see themselves as academically incompetent and worthless as far as who they think they are in the world. They see themselves as not fitting into the school. One of the most important things is that they feel absolutely powerless to deal with the school and with their position in the school.

A funny thing happens when people think they are powerless. They stop acting. If you believe that what you do doesn't make any difference, there is no sense in doing it. One of the most tragic things that happens to a lot of students is that they get the message, correctly or incorrectly, that there is no hope. If there is no hope, there is no reason, and if there is no reason, there is no action. They become consequently apathetic, unmotivated, with apparently low educational aptitudes. The intriguing thing is that this is what we teach kids. The way you can demonstrate this is to reverse the process and allow young people to participate. In some of these programs that we might call youth development or youth participation projects, you see students change almost overnight and become very active, hopeful and confident young people.

A starting point for solutions is to look at the problem both short-run and long-run. I am going to talk a little about short-run solutions and then build up from there. In the short-run, one thing we can do is to involve young people in a wide variety of problem-solving groups and service-providing groups.

Two or three kinds of illustrations can be offered. One of the things that was tried in one town was to create a series of drug education teams. Teenagers in grades 11 and 12 were formed into teams and travelled to all 6th grade classes in the district with a student-based drug education presentation. We didn't assume that kids had the technical competence to know what the particular dangers of one drug or another are. Kids may not know that heroin is derived from opium or that cocaine is not. They can't be expected to know the technical details of biology and physiology. They will however know the language of young people and how and where to best communicate about such problems.

A similar problem-solving group in which the issue of young people's language became obvious, was a group concerned with sex education.

There are also service kinds of activities that young people can do. Young people are very good at giving many kinds of human services. They often like working with old people. Many like working with young children. A common illustration of these programs is cross-age tutoring. Tutoring is often a good starting point because it is an activity we know something about; it is a form of teaching. Tutoring can very quickly give those doing the tutoring a sense of competence and confidence. Youngsters come to realise that they know something more than the kids know that they are tutoring. They gain confidence from being a teacher. They also begin to sense that they belong in schools; that they are a part of the teaching enterprise.

Youngsters begin to feel that because they are doing something important that they are worthwhile human beings.
What I am suggesting is that when we think about work experience and work oriented programs, if we think in terms of youth involvement or youth participation along the lines of problem solving and service, we can begin to give young people a real sense that they have something to contribute. By doing it right we can give the kids a sense of hope about themselves.

Now, in terms of check points about these sorts of programs, I will offer the following points:

1. **Develop small group structures**: Organise around small groups. It is very important that kids work together in groups so that they can support each other in the activity they are doing. By working in groups, they begin to develop skills for working in coalitions. Small teams are very important and by small I mean that the group should be no more than 7 or 8 people. You want a size of group where the kids can relate together and be in touch with each other, give support and hold each other accountable and know what is going on.

2. **Organise around competence**: Believe in the competence of the kids you are working with and organise around competence. Avoid organising around some problem. Don't focus on such categories as delinquent kids, truant kids, slow kids or emotionally disturbed kids, because the category adds more to the problem than the problem itself. Instead assume as your focus the things that define peoples' competence.

3. **Ensure mixed ability groups**: A rule that is built into the youth participation program is the idea of mixing to involve a range of levels of ability. Try to mix in older folks too. It is very easy to work with a parent or two or an adult from the community. It is a way of breaking down the age segregation that is characteristic of this society.

4. **Pay the participants**: If possible, see if you can get pay for the young people. There are lots of reasons for this. An important one is motivation for the young people. Pay provides an initial reason for their participation. However, the most significant reason is that we need to develop models of responsible employment activities for kids. The pay issue forces the participating institutions to think differently about young people. Youth affairs, youth service agencies should consider having a very significant part of their budget for the employment of young people so that their employment policy can be a model for the rest of the community. The community needs to know how to involve young people and employ them.

5. **Credentiate the program**: If you can, find ways to improve the educational credentials of the students. In one of our tutoring programs, a third of the students' day was taken up with seminars. These seminars were organised so that they could contain such subjects as Psychology, English, Sociology, Child Development. We were able to give the kids high grades in these courses. We lifted them out of the non-College track and put them in a higher strand. By doing this, they were on the University bound track and getting As.

6. **Participants to volunteer**: A program should always be voluntary. You go out and ask people who are interested. In one case, we were paying kids in twelve positions we had available in one junior high school and we had over 150 applicants. What we did was to have what they call a stratified form of sampling.
We made sure that a good percentage of our students were drawn from the lower strand and a higher proportion of people in the program were drawn also from the lower strand.

What we were able to do was to have lots of other activities happening at the same time so a good percentage of the people not picked for the first activity were able to do something else.

One problem is the double failure problem when picking randomly. What we were trying to do with this program was to draw from the low strand rather than the high strand in the educational system. However, then you have the problem that the lower strand youngsters won't apply unless you go and ask them to. They have such a lot of experience with failure that they don't volunteer to experience it again.

7. Have a political approach: Another rule I would have is to approach the program politically. All change is political. Working in a school and trying to do something different involves bringing about change. Avoid what are called zero-sum games. Try to avoid having wins that are someone else's losses. Try to make your wins the wins of other people.

If you take money and resources away from an established power group in the school, they will remember. Avoid arguments with people on the same side as you. You need as many friends and as few enemies as possible. Don't fight dumb battles. You also will want to go to the media. You need the community newspapers, the television stations, to obtain the widest distribution of the good things you are doing. If you have a good youth participation program, advertise it.

8. Ensure adult involvement: Get adults involved in your programs. They can serve as a constituency group for your program. They can put pressures on schools. For example, in a drug rehabilitation program, we involved nurses and physicians and a couple of policemen. You will have to organise the program so that the main service providers are young people and that the adults are there to provide a resource for the group. I would suggest that at least three quarters of the group are young people. When adults are included, make very clear what their role is. Prepare the adults so that they do not patronise the kids.

9. Evaluate: The final rule is evaluate. You will want to be able to tell the story, what you accomplished. You need to give some kind of evidence that you had some effect on the young people involved.

We have been talking about short-run things, things that you can do in the short run, programs that give kids an idea of where they can go and a sense that they are partners in some sort of enterprise. However, let's not underestimate the importance of the long-run programs. Long-run activities have to do with full employment economies, a completely changed nature of the world of work, transition programs and so on.

The activities discussed today are short-run ways of involving young people in useful kinds of activities. They begin to provide the community with important examples or models of how young people might usefully participate. The programs are a way of widening the community awareness of what young people can do and how work might be organised for young people. These are a vital base to build from.

Our society doesn't know or believe that young people can be competent, that young people have something to contribute, that they can really be a part of education, recreation, welfare, housing, ecology or environmental discussions and programs. They can be partners.

Professor Ken Polk,
University of Oregon.
(Currently at VISE)
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