"Look here James, you HAVE to make it to Adelaide this year for the Second National Workshop!"

This newsletter is produced in the first week of every second month.

Registered for posting as a Publication Category B.       ISSN 0158-4995
This issue:

After the massive effort of getting Number 6/7 out, this issue is a bit of a breathing space. It's a grab-bag of articles and resources which, I guess, illustrate the diverse nature of youth participation projects around Australia.

With this issue, we also continue the references to other printed material available. CONNECT receives single copies of many short articles, often not in a form that enables easy publication. We're making these available on a photocopy service, charging 6c per page plus postage. I'll put a full list in the next issue. There are also a number of reports listed and these can be obtained directly from the publishers.

MONEY continues to be a problem. Only the assistance of the Advisory Services and Guidance Branch of VISE in funding issues 5 and 6/7 has enabled us to inch ahead financially - this issue should set us back in the red! We've had one submission to Innovations knocked back, but are trying elsewhere. In the meantime, donations are most welcome. We need about $1000 in donations per year to keep the subscription rate at $5.

Similarly, we're still $650 DOWN on the Workshop. That's come out of my pocket and while I'm not yet broke, if I can repay myself the money could be used better on other projects. Donations to this end should be clearly marked as for the Workshop.

Finally, returning to issue 6/7, I'd like to thank Rebecca Spalding, Vanna Menegon, Phillip Vila and Karen Charman, who walked round and round my living room table for most of the weekend helping to collate 500 copies of a 46-page issue and then helped ready it for mailing. It would not have got to you otherwise.

Roger Holdsworth

Contents

3 WORKSHOP 1981; "GETTING STARTED"; Maryborough Work Co-op.
4-5 AS WE SEE IT
6 PROJECTS: Yankailla Community Annexe Greg Skehan/Chris Stokes
7 Collingwood Alternative School
9 Ascolta Radio Group Karen Charman
10 School Media Access Project 3CR Rita Chiado
11 Adventure Playground Curriculum Project
12 Thallon Times
13 YOUR COMMENTS: Oakes/Wilson/Whyte/Kingston/Vozzo/McDonald
15 "Special Relationship" Times Educational Supplement
16 RESOURCES: Library Periodicals; Local Youth Policy Development; Ballarat Youth Action Program Report
18 SUBSCRIPTION FORM

CONNECT is edited by Roger Holdsworth, 12 Brooke Street, Northcote. 3070. Published by High Pollution Publishers, 232 Albert St., Brunswick. 3056.
GETTING STARTED

How did you get started?
That's the most common question we get asked. So it might be a good idea to run a few issues where people relate the hassles and the successes in getting projects started. Here are some possible questions:

Where did the initial idea come from?
What was the 'status' of the person proposing the idea?
What was the climate of the school like?
What research or argument did you have to go through to get it started?
Was funding needed? Where did it come from?
What obstacles did you meet? How did you overcome them?
What would you do different if you started over again?

If articles come in together, we'll run a whole issue devoted to hints on GETTING STARTED. If they come in a steady dribble, well a regular column in CONNECT will suffice.

But from the comments and questions we've received, that is the one common area that everyone wants to know about.

Over to you.

Roger Holdsworth


Rob Alliston has sent us a paper on the history and experience of Work Co-operatives in Maryborough, Victoria. We don't have time to reprint it this issue, as we'd hoped, but will try to do so in the future. In the meantime, if you wish to have a copy of this paper (7 pages), we can send you one for $1 (inc. postage).
The book, AS WE SEE IT, is a collection of student writing from the secondary schools in the Brunswick area of Melbourne. It contains 80 pages of poems, stories, comments, essays, photographs and drawings by students, and is mainly aimed at students in the more senior secondary level.

AS WE SEE IT could be used in a variety of ways - as an individual reader to know how students see their world, what students think of themselves and their society - as a class text to stimulate discussion and debate both over the issues raised and also over the nature of the literature included - as an example and a stimulus for students to write their own book and come to their own conclusions about what defines "good writing" - as a collection of short pieces for senior students learning the English language.

We've been working on the book for almost 18 months I guess, though a lot of that time has been spent talking and hoping. Time was the big problem. But eventually Marietta Elliott, on leave for a year, collected and edited some material, and Meredith Freeman from Sydney Road Community School, added and edited some more, and suddenly we had a book on our hands.

We set some deadlines for December 1980 and met them (barely). We then spent January driving the copy to typesetters and printers, finding out what book bounty meant, discovering a lot of new words like imposition and portrait versus landscape format and so on. Finally, the big decisions were made on typesetter, style, layout format and printer.

Somehow layout was much more 'permanent' than for a newspaper, and we sat over the cut-up copy for ages not daring to paste it down. Courage was summoned and a long weekend vanished into carefully lining up columns, marking up photos for reduction and so on.

The blueprint from the printers was exciting enough, and we didn't know whether to be thankful it looked great or picky over headings that we thought weren't quite straight enough. But that was nothing to the excitement of receiving the nine cartons with over 1000 copies.

Now, all we've got to do is sell them to get our money back!

The book was financed and published by High Pollution Publishers - that's a group of 7 of us who work round the Brunswick area. We aim to publish works by and for students in the Brunswick area, but this is our first 'real' job. So far we have existed on pamphlets and leaflets. If we can sell the 1000 (apart from then considering a further publication run) we not only get our money back but make a small amount that we can put into the next books. And there are at least three more being planned.

But I guess for all the people involved, the message of the book must be: you can do it too.

For students, you can decide what is good literature, and you can write good literature about you, your suburb, your experiences.

For students and teachers, you can write for some purpose - you can publish and distribute.

We're anxious to sell copies of AS WE SEE IT, either singly or as class sets. Orders should be sent directly to us:

High Pollution Publishers,
232 Albert Street, Brunswick 3056.

and enquiries made to Roger Holdsworth  BH: 380.9837  AH: 489.9052.

Copies are $2.95 plus postage.

Roger Holdsworth
AS WE SEE IT
Edited by Marietta Elliott and Meredith Freeman

A COLLECTION OF STUDENT WRITING
HIGH POLLUTION PUBLISHERS
Melbourne 1981

ISBN 0 9594117 0 4

232 Albert St Brunswick 3056 Ph (03) 380-4937
PROJECTS:

YANKALILLA COMMUNITY ANNEXE

Yankalilla Community Annexe is now in its fifth year. It gives the people of its community a choice of education. At the Annexe we have a happy and relaxed learning environment for children aged 5 to approximately 15 years. Children come to the Annexe because they want to. Their parents choose to after talking with the two teachers in the Annexe. This is different to many "alternative annexes" in this state that are established to cater for so-called special groups - e.g. disenchanted, slow learners etc.

At the Annexe, we actively encourage students and parents to participate in making decisions that affect us all. Parents are also encouraged and are very welcome to spend any part of any day working with their children or with other groups of students.

The first part of the day (approx 2 hours) is structured so that each student is exposed to a variety of basic skills that we believe are essential in their development. These include maths, written and spoken language and social skills (e.g. listening, cooperation). The younger children work in learning centres also. The next part of the day, until lunch, is mainly spent pursuing individual interests or projects, reading and playing, or attending some lessons in the main part of the area school. This latter section is mainly for the secondary students who want to study subjects that we in the Annexe cannot offer.

The afternoon session is mainly occupied with art groups, sport, story reading, drama, agriculture, and whole group activities.

There are two full-time teachers in the Annexe, one primary and one secondary trained. Specialist teachers in the Area School help provide expertise in such fields as Drama, Art, Technical Studies, Music, English and Agricultural Science.

The 24 students that are currently in the Annexe (and incidentally, they come from as far afield as Willunga) work together well and a lot of their time is spent in sharing thoughts, ideas and experiences in small groups. The older students help the younger ones by encouraging them, listening to them and helping to explain things.

We in the Annexe - students, parents and teachers and friends - believe that we have created a happy and relaxed learning situation which helps to motivate the students. They learn at their own rate and are not expected to achieve a certain level just because they are a particular age. We believe each child is an individual and that they act, respond and learn in an individual way. This individuality is respected and gives each child an opportunity to develop their uniqueness, their strengths, weaknesses etc.

The purpose of this article (originally for the Victor Times - the local newspaper) has been to make you, the public, more aware of what happens here at the Annexe. We realise and accept the fact that our views will not be shared by all people, but hope that we have stimulated some interest among people in our community. If you are interested in finding out more details about the Annexe, or in paying a visit, please contact:

Greg Skehan or Chris Stokes,
Yankalilla Community Annexe.
Phone: (085) 582.074

CONNECT also has a further more detailed article on Yankalilla Community Annexe. This is three pages long - cost: 20c plus postage: 50c total.
Collingwood Alternative School

Where is it?

Collingwood Alternative School is a small Education Department school situated in the old Singleton Health Centre building at 162 Wellington St., Collingwood, Victoria. It is not a school in its own right, but forms one section of the Collingwood Education Centre, a large educational complex, the main body of which is in a modern building in Vere St., Collingwood.

The Education Centre comprises four sections - a high school, a primary school, an after-hours and adult community education section, and the Alternative School. Each of the sections has a person in charge, a Principal in the case of the high school and primary school and coordinators for community education and the Alternative school.

History

The history of the school is long and complex. However, a brief summary is necessary, especially for those who may have known the school at other times, and/or under a different name.

The fore-runner of the present school was formed by Mike Fewster in 1972 as an annexe to Collingwood High School. It was known as Collingwood Community School. The school continued under this name until the end of 1978 when it was officially closed by the Education Department. Shortly afterwards, a new school was opened - the Collingwood Alternative School. The remaining students and staff of the Community School formed the core of the new school.

Over the next few months - Jan-March 1979 - the new school underwent great upheavals. A succession of coordinators was appointed. The school had no building. It was not until June 1979 that the present staff settled into the 'new' building and began to work out the program that currently exists.

During the first year, the Education Department renovated and repaired the building. This expensive and necessary work caused a great deal of disruption and it was not until the third term of 1980 that the school could begin to look forward to a somewhat undisturbed future.

Staff, Students and Enrolment

Student population is approximately 30, building towards 40-45.

Student ages range from 12 to 17 and although at the moment the school is restricted to secondary students, discussions will take place this year hopefully enabling us to take primary students, when enrolments may well rise to over 40.

Potentially the school is open to any student, male or female, who wishes to come. The school has no zoning policy and would refuse entry only to those who were being pressured into enrolling but who would really prefer some other situation. Other grounds for refusal may be a history of violence but over the last 2 years no student has been refused. The final decision for enrolment rests with the Superintendent of the Education Centre but staff recommendations are usually accepted.

The school attracts a wide range of students. Generally they find out about the program from friends or are referred by teachers, principals, social workers, parents, probation officers and welfare workers. Students come to us for a variety of reasons. Some have found that large schools were unable to meet their needs and have reacted to this in a number of ways: withdrawal, unacceptable behaviour, playing truant. Others have had good large school experiences but prefer the type of program we have to offer.

Initially we prefer students (accompanied by a parent if that is possible) to visit the school, then spend a few days here before they are enrolled. It is necessary that both students and parents understand the type of program that is being offered.
The school has a staff of six (an establishment of 5 and 1 staff member in excess - 1980).

IN WHAT WAY ALTERNATIVE?

The school offers a number of alternatives to the mainstream of high school and technical school education:

1. It is a very small and intimate school, resulting in much closer staff-student relationships and permitting an atmosphere often more akin to a large family than an institution.

2. It has a high staff-student ratio, such that individual attention is often possible and small group learning is the norm.

3. It is flexible. Timetables are arranged one week in advance and are subject to change - if necessary on a daily basis.

4. An experience based approach provides the core to the curriculum. Maths and English are compulsory small group activities. Most other sessions are chosen on the basis of staff/student involvement.

5. No form levels mean a constant mix of people of different ages.

6. While some special units are organised on a planned long-term basis, most units have a 'natural life' determined by interest.

7. The school attempts to reduce the pressure on students by catering to special needs rather than forcing students into an existing structure. Degrees of freedom are possible that could not be accommodated in an ordinary secondary school.

TIMETABLE

The timetable is worked out at a weekly meeting of staff and students. The content changes frequently but the basic format has remained the same for some time. Each day is divided into three sessions:

a) an art/craft session or special units;

b) a maths and English session;

c) an afternoon activities session.

In all three sessions, students are given a degree of choice, but apart from lunch and recess there is no 'free time'. A student must choose to do something in every session.

A number of activities regularly appear on the timetable, particularly painting, drawing, printmaking, woodwork, photography, pottery, video, cooking, guitar, swimming, squash, tennis, roller skating, bowling.

Besides regular activities, a number of special units, excursions and 'events' take turns to complete the timetable. So far special units have included an ongoing health and human relations session, a legal studies unit, a vocational orientation/work experience program and an aboriginal and migrant studies unit.

Special events either take advantage of community happenings or occur on the initiative of staff and students eg a photography competition, guitar concert, puppet theatre, visits to restaurants, special exhibitions, theatre (youth theatre, pram factory and special shows) plus costume, make-up and cooking days.

Numerous excursions take place to a variety of places of interest including historical, cultural and sporting venues. The school has a small mini bus which so far has been in constant use.

CAMPS

Camps are considered a very important part of the school program and are arranged as frequently as possible. So far inexpensive 4-5 day camps have been to Hattah Lakes (Mildura), the Grampians, Bright, Walhalla, Blackwood, Emu (near St Arnaud) and Inglewood. Further camps are planned to Buchan Caves, Tower Hill and Warrnambool.

The school is slowly building up its camping equipment and these excursions provide the opportunity for students to visit places they may otherwise never get to. For many, their first camp is often their first experience of an extended stay outside Melbourne, and provides valuable lessons in organisation, cooking and getting along with others. Some of the camps are small with only 4-5 students and occasionally the whole school will go.
FIFTH AND SIXTH YEAR

There are no normal 5th and 6th year courses at the school - it is simply too small to cope with the number of subjects that would be required. Students with sound academic skills who wish to continue school are counselled as to courses available in high schools, colleges of technology, apprenticeship courses etc and helped to enter these when ready.

At 15, all of the students undertake to do a work orientation/work experience program, and those who wish to find a full-time job are given individual assistance and support. Most students stay until they are about 16 when the majority leave in order to work.

CONCLUSION

Collingwood Alternative is obviously not an ordinary school. It is difficult to get lost or to go un-noticed in a small school that places great value and emphasis on the personal approach to learning. It is a place where students can take time to learn how to make decisions for themselves, while being supported and directed by a group of adults that they can get to know on a more equal footing. It is a school that caters for special needs but is not only a place for problem kids. Nor is it a drop-in centre or a place for kids to come and do what they like; a certain amount of commitment is necessary.

We welcome your interest.

Collingwood Alternative School,
162 Wellington Street,
Collingwood 3066
Ph: (03) 419.3816

ASCOLTA
RADIO GROUP

One Tuesday recently, students at Lynall Hall Community School took part in some workshops. The options included working on the CERES site, looking at music and film or radio. I did radio. It was fantastic. I'd done radio programs before but this was different because this time we got to learn and have a go at working the panel. At first I took one look at it and almost freaked. There were a lot of switches and I was terrified that I'd muck it up. Luckily we were only practising and it wasn't going on air, or else 3CR would have lost a lot of listeners. I've got the general idea now of how to operate the panel but I don't know if I'd trust myself to put one over the radio unless Rebecca worked them.

The radio programs that I've done with Phillip have been mainly general music programs with a couple of exceptions. Last year when two teachers were named in 'excess' we put a radio program together about Lynall Hall staff. Just recently, we did one on Kensington Community School because it was in threat of being closed down.

So I hope some more people will listen in.

The ASCOLTA radio program is on at 6 o'clock Saturday night on 3CR, and another new program has now started at 2 o'clock on Monday afternoon. Each goes for half an hour and they're well worth listening to.

3CR is at 837 on the dial in Melbourne.

Karen Charman,
Lynall Hall Community School,
Lawrence Street, Brunswick 3056
Ph: (03) 380.9837
SCHOOL MEDIA ACCESS PROJECT

3CR COMMUNITY RADIO MELBOURNE has played a major role in giving access to the media to those denied access in the mainstream media. The station's basic policy of broadcasting non-sexist, non-racist and working class material is inherent in 3CR programs, although being a community-based station, differing viewpoints do come across.

One of the most unserviced groups in the community, particularly in terms of media representation, is of course school students. One rarely gets to hear how students feel about the issues that affect them, particularly in the electronic media. However, as you may have read in the last issue of CONNECT, 3CR has recently received a $10500 grant from the Schools Commission to facilitate students from both primary and secondary level with the preparation and presentation of their own radio programs for broadcast on 3CR. This follows the success of the "Education Inside Out" series previously broadcast on 3CR.

This project is a unique way for students to gain a basic knowledge of how media works in our lives, given the influential effect it has on most of us. It also provides a great opportunity for students to put their points of view across and to put classroom theories into practice (particularly media studies). This should, in turn, enable students to feel less alienated from the media and appreciate the importance of radio as a means of communication for all people.

Besides acquiring some basic skills with broadcasting equipment, the project will involve the students in the decision-making process in terms of program format and content (a role I find many schools deny their students). Self confidence in speaking publicly and in sharing ideas should also increase as students will be writing and speaking for radio. But most importantly, the project will be providing a forum dismally lacking for school students to express ideas, raise questions on issues that concern them and enable students to develop a more critical and evaluative approach to the mass media.

To finish off, I'd be only too happy to provide readers with further information and I would love to hear from any student or teacher interested in participating in the project. I'm also aware of various related projects underway in other states and would similarly love to hear from the people involved. We may be able to make arrangements for some sort of tape exchange if interested.

Overall, I hope to be able to report on the progress of the project throughout the year but in the meantime please feel free to contact me if you are interested or would like further details.

Hoping to hear from you soon.

Rita Chiodo,
Coordinator.

3CR Community Radio Federation,
20 Cromwell St., Collingwood 3066.
Ph: (03) 419.8377
St Mary’s Primary School, Swanson Street, Erskineville, New South Wales 2043
Telephone (02) 51 2212 (Convent of Mercy, Erskineville)

Situation

St Mary’s is typical of a large number of disadvantaged inner city schools. A high proportion of children are from non-English speaking backgrounds and educational facilities are poor. Before this project the only playground for the 140 children at the school was a 10 x 45 metre bitumen yard.

Objectives

To integrate the primary school curriculum into the building of a play area; to provide a pleasant recreation area as well as making the environment more effective, relevant and enjoyable for the children.

Details

Architecture students from Sydney University cooperated with children and teachers to transform the school’s sterile asphalt yard into a playground incorporating a garden, a theatre which doubles as an open air classroom, and an area reserved for climbing and expressive play activities. An adjacent shelter shed has been enclosed to make an arts and crafts workshop.

At the start of the project children were divided into family groups of nine or ten with a Year 6 pupil in charge. This encouraged a sense of responsibility and cooperation throughout the project. Children were asked to develop their own ideas and make models of what they envisaged in the playground. Then the architecture students were introduced to the program. After briefing by the staff they submitted designs and a final model was produced by amalgamating the best features of each scheme. Students worked voluntarily through the August vacation, building the playground and organising the children to assist them on a daily roster.

Emphasis has been on integrating the primary school curriculum with the building of the playground. Science, social science, maths, language and arts lessons were all combined with the project. Through the development of the garden, children learned about ecology, the growth of plants, the effects of pollution and the weather. In maths the children measured the perimeter and area of the site using a variety of methods, including simple instruments which they made themselves. Then they made scale models of the yard, and proposed changes prior to the students’ designs. In art classes children painted murals and bright patterns on the play structures.

The aim of the project was to stimulate the children by direct experiential education and at the same time to work on problems such as the language difficulties of those from non-English speaking backgrounds. By integrating as much of the curriculum as possible into the project it was hoped to encourage curiosity about learning. Literacy and creative writing were fostered by having each child keep a complete record of his or her daily contributions to the playground project.

Participants’ Comments

“The project has been of great benefit by introducing children to adults from different professions and walks of life. The interest and dedication shown by the students also made a deep impression on the teachers and community. I never believed university students could be so committed.”

For further information contact Sister Lorna Woodross, Principal, St Mary’s Primary School, or Mr Monroe Shaw, Architect, Sydney University, Telephone (02) 860 0375.
Thallon State School, Henry Street, Thallon, Queensland 4323
Telephone Thallon 29

Situation
Thallon State School, a three-teacher school, has an enrolment of 58. It is a local point in a very small township in south-west Queensland and serves a wide community.

Objectives
To provide an effective and highly personal medium for communication and dissemination of news items which are of interest to the school and local community; to encourage language development and develop pride and confidence in students' written performance; to build up community participation in school and local affairs through articles in the paper.

Details
The paper began with a small grant in 1977 relying on the printing and typing skills available in the school. Contributions from children, staff and community were prolific, interest grew and Thallon Times became an established feature of life in the town. Further funding from the Disadvantaged Schools Program enabled the acquisition of more sophisticated equipment, including an electronic stencil cutter, ink duplicator and electric typewriter with different type faces. The paper's size was changed from quarto to folio and the new production techniques improved the appearance.

Thallon Times is now a well accepted and respected monthly newspaper with a wide circulation. It provides a strong link between the community and the school and its continued success depends heavily on the contributions from readers.

Participants' Comments
"The paper has generated very considerable interest and now covers Thallon, Daymar, Nindigully, Weengallon and Mungindi - all the places of importance... The general opinion is that our little paper is more newy and enjoyable than the commercially produced paper..."

"Thallon Times gives me regular news of the Progress Association, the Tennis and Cricket Clubs, the Country Women's Association, the local playgroup and toy library as well as letting me know what the children are doing in school. I can have my say if I want to and it's printed! Altogether the paper is a great success."

For further information contact Mr Ray Bloomfield, Principal, Thallon State School.

The articles on the Thallon Times and on the Adventure Playground Curriculum Project are re-printed from the Australian Schools Commission document: "Doing Something About It" Volume 2 - the Disadvantaged Schools Program.
YOUR COMMENTS

9/10/11 is still in existence at Sunshine High School and battling on with restricted staff and units, but with continuing enthusiasm and optimism. We will certainly contribute some articles this year to CONNECT as I believe it is an important publication even if we procrastinate a little on contributions.

As Art Pearl says: "If it hasn't been written, it has happened."

James Oakes,
Congress, 9/10/11 Vertical,
Sunshine High School,
460 Ballarat Rd., Sunshine 3020

I have just received CONNECT 6/7 and have read with great interest all the reports from last year's workshop. It would appear the underlying concern was for greater youth participation in these conferences and talks aimed at their level of understanding and interest. Perhaps it should be stressed that these 'workshops' are not just teacher conferences.

I would very much like to attend the next Adelaide workshop but I am heavily committed into research studies at Monash University. Please list the Ballam Park Technical School Teacher Aide Program as "alive and well" and I hope to make a contribution on the progress of our program in the near future.

Vic Wilson,
Ballam Park Technical School,
Frankston 3199

Excuse the scrawl that will follow but it's better than no communication at all! Sorry about the delay in writing back, but as usual things and time just romp away from me.

This year the Youth Participation Programs are in full swing.

Both intra- and inter-school cross-age tutoring is in operation. We also accept work-experience students and one morning per week some fourth form students participate in a creche scheme (just another form of work experience). These girls are in charge of a group of pre-schoolers while their mothers participate in our Community Program — eg exercise class, pottery, listening to guest speakers etc.

I nearly forgot to mention the fact that we have also got a cross-age Phys Ed. program operating. Grade 6 children who have come through the tutoring system as firstly tutees then tutors now graduate to Phys Ed cross-age and the supervision of four prep children instead of the usual 1:1 situation.

Let me know if you are interested in me writing an article about one particular aspect of our cross-age/work-experience program (or briefly about all of them) and I'll try and get myself into gear...

All the best for the forthcoming issues of CONNECT.

PS: I found Tony Knight's speech transcript extremely good, not to mention the comments on the conference!

Gemma Whyte,
Lalor Park Primary School,
Linoak Ave., Lalor 3075.

Gemma is still working on putting together a guide to Cross-Age Tutoring Programs — a sort of manual. If you are running such a program, could you write to her URGENTLY at the above address, describe what you're doing and let her know what sorts of things would be useful to you in such a manual.
We received a copy of the latest CONNECT last week. Congratulations, it looks very good. Much surprised to find all the references to West Wyalong High School Student Government in it. Hope we can live up to the reputation you are building for us. We are including a few more recent clippings and the outline of a seminar held recently between us and the Youth Forum of the Youth Affairs Council of NSW.

As mentioned previously, we have received a grant from the Schools Commission Innovations Program to attempt to establish a regional association of student governments in the Western Region of NSW. The first part of this will be a newsletter to all government high and central schools in the region. This will include a survey designed to determine how active and interested schools are in this project. Since our future newsletters will include listings of upcoming events of significance for youth, we would be grateful for any specific dates and details of events you might wished publicised in our region. If you're interested in publishing these or part of these in CONNECT just let me know. We don't plan to make them too long (about 4 to 6 pages each time) unless we get lots of material from other schools in the region. Will include herein a copy of the draft survey in case we're a little late in publishing.

The Youth Affairs Council of NSW is a very useful contact. Among other projects, they are soon to embark on a survey of the state of student councils and general student representation in the schools in NSW. Through our project, we will be dealing with the western region only. Together, by August/September we should have compiled some interesting and useful information for this state.

Also of interest is the upcoming Youth Forum '81 at Mitchell CAE in Bathurst in July (12th-15th). This is sponsored by the Law Foundation and the CBC Bank and involves over 60 student/youth presentations. This year they will be workshopping on the second day on the following themes: Student Rights in Education; Discrimination (age, sex, race, disabilities); The Law and under-18s (child abuse, punishment and rehabilitation and family law); youth and/in the community. - how can young people become involved in their community.

Any useful information on these themes or on workshops in general would be most appreciated by us, especially since the students themselves will be running the workshops with no adults allowed. We are on the adult advisory group to help train them in how to get the best results from the Workshops. Two or three of the West Wyalong students will be amongst the twenty or so student leaders of these workshops.

Charles Kingston, Les Vozzo,
West Wyalong High School
Student Government,
Dumaresq Street,
West Wyalong NSW 2671
Ph: (069.7212) 700

The following additional material is available:

Student government seminar agenda: 2 pages 12¢ + postage
West Wyalong HS student government organisation 1991: 4 pages 24¢ plus postage
Publicity committee projects and responsibilities:
Community involvement committee:
Social committee:
Cultural committee:
School improvement committee:
Student service committee:
Extracts from local paper on student government election/projects: 4 pages 24¢ +
Survey of regional schools: 6 pages 36¢ + postage.

REQUEST

We are in the final stages of producing two books about newspapers as part of a language scheme for upper primary school children. One title is Stop Press, about newspapers, and the second is called The Reporter and is designed to help children produce their own newspapers.
I found a brief reference to CONNECT in Media Information Australia. I would like to know more about CONNECT as we are currently compiling our resource and reference sections of the Teacher's Manual. Could you also send a couple of samples of work by young people - telling how they ran their own papers?

Jackie McDonald,
Assistant to Production Coordinator,
Mt Gravatt Research and Learning Centre,
Mt Gravatt College of Advanced Education,
PO Box 82,
Mt Gravatt QLD 4122.

We sent Jackie some material on CONNECT and on ASCOLTA. If anyone else would like to send examples of papers, magazines etc to Jackie, I'm sure she would be very grateful for examples of work.

Slow learners can be an irritation to their teachers and themselves. But they can still have a rewarding role to play within the system. Julia Hagedorn describes an enterprising Welsh attempt to extract the best from two worlds.

**Special relationship**

Collaboration at Plasmarl

A GROUP of fourth-year boys in a large Welsh comprehensive sit struggling over their science exam. One has given up all pretence and sleeps with his head cradled in his arms; another whistles as he tries to answer the questions. Perhaps this is a scene that sounds familiar to readers up and down the country at this time of the year.

But there is something different about this particular group. For a start, the questions have to be read out to them and some of the words explained before they can begin to answer. For the average reading age of these fourteen-year-olds is eight and a half years.

An hour later (having gone without a lunch break because of the science exam) the same boys were teaching a special class of seven to eleven-year-olds in a local junior school. The one who had been whistling in the exam now drew diligently on a piece of paper to explain the meaning of “warp.” Another grumbled with mock severity. “Yes, I do mean it. You are going to have a test when you’ve read those words.”

In 1978, the newly-appointed Head of Compensatory Studies at the newly-opened comprehensive in Swansea, Penrethfa, faced with 30 fifth formers who had been “bequeathed” to the comprehensive by the surrounding schools. In those days compensatory studies meant a watered-down version of CSE and these teenagers had already been branded as academic and social failures. Mike Ratti not only had 30 of them; he also had them for 15 periods out of their 40 a week.

He cast around desperately for a way of filling these periods with something that would be both relevant and functional to a class that saw school as totally meaningless and looked forward only to leaving at Easter.

It suddenly struck Mike Ratti that the problem should be looked at from a completely different angle. Why not make these boys the teachers? Instead of putting them in a position where they inevitably felt inferior, why not create a situation where they were respected for once?

The idea of welcoming thirty slow-learning teenagers into their classes did not appeal to the local primary schools. They excused themselves politely, claiming that they did not have any remedial children needing reading help. But one head was prepared to give it a try. Mr Bennett of Piasmarl Junior School agreed to let the comprehensive kids help the children in his special class on Tuesday afternoons.

It’s all calmed down a bit since that first hectic year when Mike Ratti had to take fifteen boys one week and fifteen the next. Reorganisation at the comprehensive has meant that he now only has ten boys in his slow learning group — for five lessons of maths a week and five lessons of English. But
They are still trivialized off from the bottom twenty of the year’s intake and they are still pupils who are incapable of reaching the academic level equivalent to their chronological age.

He now starts his fourth year on the scheme after Easter, when the fifth year have left school. He spends three or four out of the five English periods on activities to do with the visits, preparing material such as simple phonetic crosswords, flash cards or spelling games. He also makes sure his pupils have understood the work they are going to do with their students.

The special class at Plasmar in three unknown from three primaries: the condition for inclusion being an IQ of 85 or above. Mike Ratti matches his pupils carefully with the junior children to make sure that there is a reading age difference of at least two years between teacher and child. The classes are also closely supervised by both Mike and the special class teacher, Betty Griffiths. They keep a constant watch to see that the teenagers do not pick up wrong spellings or reading faults.

The advantages to the primary children are self-evident. They have an hour or two undivided attention weekly on a one-to-one basis. They lose their fears of the big boy at the comprehensive which makes it easier for them when the time comes to transfer. They are more ready to accept criticism and help from those who come from the same neighbourhood and speak the same language.

For the Pembroke pupils, the social spin-offs are even greater. Their self-image blossoms; their primary school charges do not see them as academic failures but as teachers to respect and obey. The teenagers obviously enjoy having the upper hand for perhaps the first time in their lives.

They give spelling tests with glee and take great delight in correcting the written exercises. After all, they may only have just mastered some of those very words themselves during their preparation for the class.

It would make a happy ending to this article to say that the older children have formed special relationships with the younger ones, that their academic performances have improved beyond all recognition. But that would be to misrepresent both the success of the scheme and the problems facing these teenagers. For these are children who sum up their dislike of school by saying “it’s the teachers, they push us around”, who speak much of their time truanting; who lack all motivation.

It says enough for the scheme that on a day when they knew there was a science exam scheduled, eight out of the group of ten turned up. Through helping others, they have learned to honour a regular commitment. They have learned about loyalty (to Mike Ratti) and they have seen that some school work can be relevant.

They now hold their own in the classes where they join the bottom half, they no longer have to listen to taunts about their academic failure. They are in a special position. They are teachers.

Their reading has also shown a spectacular improvement, although it is difficult to prove that this is a direct result of the scheme. In the term that these pupils have been visiting Plasmar, their reading ages have jumped from a range of 6.9—7.2 to 7.2—10.5. The accepted level of literacy (enough to read the Daily Mirror) is to have a reading age of 9.4. The sort of improvement usually expected is an increase of six months in reading age over the year.

Mike Ratti would like to see other comprehensives adopting the scheme, not only as a way of improving the status of slow learners but also to solve the problem of large primary classes where children are not getting the individual help they need.

Other schools in the area would now like visits from his pupils. But Mike Ratti is staying with Plasmar, even though the school is two miles away. It was, after all, Plasmar who gave him the chance to test out his theories in the first place.

This article appeared in the Times Educational Supplement in 1980 and was sent to us by Bob Riddiford, Principal of Brunswick East High School.

Resources:

Library Periodicals

This select annotated list is compiled by the Library Association of Australia, School Libraries Section, NSW Group. It is available from the Association at the following address: Science Centre, 35 Clarence Street, Sydney 2000 NSW

ASCOLTA has been listed and other magazines or papers that want circulation in NSW in particular could send copies to the above address (Sheena Coupe). If you want to receive the list, subscriptions are $10 for non-members and $6 for members again from the above address.

Local Youth Policy Development

The Youth Council of Victoria has published a Project Report entitled "Youth 2009... Local Youth Policy Development Process". The Preface says:

This is a report, in two parts, on a project carried out during 1979 on behalf of the Youth Council of Victoria and the State Youth Council. The project carried the title of "Youth 2009 Local Youth Policy Development Process" and was the final project in the Youth 2000 Series. It was funded by the Department of Youth Sport and Recreation.

Part 1 of the Project Report is a statement of the principles on which the Project Design was based, the common threads emerging from the diverse experiences in the local communities which participated in the Project, and the implications of the whole process for the continuing evolution of youth policy in Victoria.
Part 2 is a further exploration of the dimensions of youth policy, extrapolated from this Project in the general context of youth affairs. It enlarges upon observations made in Part 1 on a number of policy areas such as Employment and Unemployment, Education, Welfare and Community Development.

The Project Team and Management Committee present this Report in the hope that policy makers and concerned people in the community will recognise the need for imaginative responses to the problems facing young people in Australian society today.

Enquiries about the availability of copies should be made to:

Youth Council of Victoria,
511 Little Collins Street,
Melbourne 3000. Ph: (03) 62.2312.

The cost of the report is $5.

Ballarat Youth Action Program Report

A comprehensive report has been prepared by Graeme Kent, Project Officer with the Youth Action Projects in Ballarat, Victoria. Graeme writes:

"The manual will be produced as a separate item for groups to utilise as a guide to getting started and will be available shortly. We are still working on presentation and costing and will inform you of this as soon as possible. We will be happy to supply anyone with the report and manual who is interested."

The report begins:

It is with the points made on the following page in mind that this report is presented as a resume of research conducted in the Ballarat region throughout a three month period from September to November 1980.

The report is by no means conclusive or complete but gives an indication that some effective youth action programs are operative and no doubt will 'blossom' given further stimulation and encouragement.

The advent of Youth Action Programs will mean a re-think by traditional decision makers as to the role young people will play in the 80s. The involvement of young people in decision making processes, the recognition of their worth as contributors to societal change and the understanding that they have something of value to offer, means that young people will be seen and heard.

The negativistic tag that has been placed on young people is all too common and therefore they accept that that is the expected attitude. But if society regularly acknowledges the abilities and worth of young people, pride, self-esteem and motivation will be heightened. In turn, the young people will adopt a positive attitude and behaviour.

If schools, youth organisations and other community agencies are to seriously consider and accept the concept of youth action, then they must be prepared to end the era of palliatives and 'tongue-in-cheek' adages.

Youth Action provides the opportunity for the terms - commitment, responsibility, accountability and credibility - to meaningfully apply to young people.

The report then goes on to look at projects in the Ballarat region, both in school and in the community. Some are mentioned briefly, but others including the Ballarat CYSS group, the Ballarat EPPUY scheme, the Canteen Work Experience Program at Mt Clear Technical High School and the Wendouree High Technical School Resource Assistance Group, are analysed at greater length. Appendices include a Youth Action Manual and game, and submissions for funding.

If you would like a copy of the report and manual, contact:

Graeme Kent,
Project Officer - Youth Action Projects,
Ballarat Region Transition Education Advisory Committee,
Regional Education Office,
P.O. Box 135E,
Ballarat East 3350 Ph: (053) 31.1755
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,

MATERIALS AVAILABLE:

I enclose $... for the following (postage included in all items):

- ASCOLTA US TRIP REPORT $1.00
- THE GOLDEN SHAFT $7.50
- CONNECT 1 $1.00
- CONNECT 2 $1.50
- CONNECT 3 $2.00
- ASCOLTA Vol. 7 Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 5A, 6 $1.00 each
- ASCOLTA Vol. 8 Number 1
- CONNECT 4 $2.00
- CONNECT 5 $2.00
- CONNECT 6/7 $3.00

NAME: ...........................................................................................................

ADDRESS: ........................................................................................................

....................................................... POSTCODE: ...........................

PROJECT: ...........................................................................................................

- I enclose $5 for a 1 year subscription to CONNECT.
- I enclose a donation of $ .........
- There's an article enclosed/following.
- List the project as "alive and well" in CONNECT.
- Send copies of CONNECT to the following people/projects:

...........................................................................................................

- Take me off the CONNECT mailing list.

18