STUDENT VOICE:
IT'S NOT ENOUGH!

Who is allowed to speak?
About what?
What are they hearing?
What action results?
Who controls them?
Where are the spaces for listening and negotiating?

In this issue
- School Students Fight Deportation
- Students Directing Their Community Curriculum
- Starting: A New Way of Teaching and Learning
- Informed Participatory Decision-Making Curriculum
- Banyule Youth Inquiry: DART
- Student Voice: A Report of an Online Conference
- NSW Charter for SRCs
- Resources: Participation in Practice; All aBoard; Consulting Pupils

& Incorporating the PASTA Newsletter #39
This Issue:

Here we are, on the ‘eve’ of 150 issues of Connect - that’s 25 years of continuous publication of inspiring stories about active student participation.

In the next issue we’ll try to look back over those 25 years in a more structured way, but I’d like to ‘prepare the ground’ with a few remarks about the motivation for beginning publication in 1979 and for continuing a low-cost and accessible magazine. I also want to present a challenge or invitation to you to join us in celebrating this ’milestone’. (Almost typewritten ‘milestone’ there - perhaps a telling slip?)

In 1979, Connect started modestly as a response to practical questions about various initiatives: how do you publish a student-run community newspaper? what does postal registration mean? what’s involved in a cross-age tutoring program? and so on. A limited print run (I think of about 50 copies) was mailed to a few interested people.

Gradually over the next few issues, the range of topics, the number of writers and the size of readership grew. First some teachers began to write about similar projects - and these were located all over Australia: then a few students described classes and projects where they were making important and substantial decisions about real matters in their educational lives: about alternative educational programs, about work creation, about negotiating their goals, assessment and implementation methods. About making differences to their lives and their communities. About transformation!

Looking back, Connect quickly became focused on three major intentions: to keep possibilities and practices of student participation prominent in education discussions; to support participants to be reflective and thoughtful about their own practices; to encourage the spread of positive practices through telling stories that illuminated successes and warned of dangers.

A couple of early workshops (not conferences, but events that brought students and teachers together to share experiences and to work together on planning directions) were held in 1980 and 1981 ... and these later re-surfaced as the ‘NASPAC Series’ starting in 1995.

So in issue 150, as Connect prepares to celebrate a quarter century of ‘more than survival’, I would like to extend two challenges or invitations to you to reflect and contribute:

a) Where have we come in the last 25 years? What’s the current state of student participatory practices - particularly as compared to where we were 25 years ago? I’d like to ask for some reflections from those who have considered themselves ‘old-timers’, with memories and dreams and continued commitment.

b) “We weren’t even born then!! ... but what’s the situation today? and what do the next 25 years hold?” A challenge to those who have been at the centre of these approaches in recent times - and a chance to establish the benchmarks that we can revisit in the year 2029 - at issue 300!

Because the school year finishes abruptly in December, I’ll definitely need your contributions in by the end of November. If I don’t hear from you, I’ll possibly chase you ... but please forestall that need! And surprise us all!!

Roger Holdsworth

NEXT ISSUE: #150! December 2004
Deadline for material: end of November, 2004
"Don’t Deport Nak!!"

Thornbury Darebin College students campaign to keep their friend here in Australia

Students at a northern suburban school in Melbourne - Thornbury Darebin College - have organised a campaign to save a fellow student from deportation.

Fifteen year old Nak Assavatheptavee and his father Charoon Assavatheptavee, could be forced to leave Australia after living in Melbourne for the last eight years! They could be deported any day. Nak’s brother and sister are eligible to stay here as they are older and their circumstances are different: Nat, his sister, has an Australian child and Nick, as an 18 year old, is eligible for a different visa application. Nak has been caught in a technicality as he is under his father’s visa requirements.

Nak is a member of Thornbury Darebin College’s Senior Concert and Stage Bands. His fellow musicians and teachers are campaigning hard to persuade the government to grant Nak and his father Australian Citizenship. Kim Nguyen, who is a year 12 student and school band member, has organised and driven the campaign. Kim has gained the support of local Greens candidate Alex Bhathal and the Darebin Mayor Rae Perry. He has also persuaded teachers to join in the fight and managed to get substantial media coverage including on the ABC, Channel 31, Sunday Herald/Sun and the Northcote/Preston Leader.

The students have set up an online petition at: www.PetitionOnline.com/savenak/petition.html which currently has in excess of 1,000 signatures due to the school students lobbying the community. There is also a print petition.

During the recent September holiday’s teachers and students gave up their time to come to school to play in the band in front of the ABC camera’s. Nak’s drum teacher Nick Deanwood sent out the SOS when the Stateline program expressed an interest in covering the story. The word has spread rapidly across the community because of the students’ commitment to the plight of their close friend. Nick Goodey, a fellow year 10 student, told Stateline that every class member accessed the petition immediately. Aneta Samardja, also in year 10, interviewed Nak for Visions, a Channel 31 show that airs at 6.30 pm on Fridays.

The passion and drive of Kim Nguyen to correct this injustice has impressed the whole school from the Principal down to his fellow students and we regret that it can’t be included as an assessment task as Kim and the students have gained some pretty useful life skills.

We would like students and teachers around Victoria to access the petition online asap.

Paul van-Eeden
Thornbury Darebin College
van-eeden.paul.p@edumail.vic.gov.au
Students Directing Their Community Curriculum

Nathalia TAFE Project

We're a group of teenagers from the Nathalia area. Some of us are from Nathalia Secondary College and some live in the wider community. There's about eight of us though there's usually someone who's away each week. We're doing a Certificate 1 in Transition Education called The Nathalia Project. It's held in the Youth Hall not far from the school.

The project of creating a Community Garden started in 2002, and we're the third part of the project. We've made a huge mosaic sign, a herb garden, a red gum table and totem poles to stand in the garden. Right now we're making hebe brick sculptures for the garden - hebe brick is aerated concrete. You can see what we're making in the photos.

This year, the VCAL group from the school built their own models of shade cloth shelters to go over the red gum table. They each gave a talk to us about their designs and we helped to choose which one would be erected. That's next. Then if we get more funding for next year, we want to bring the Primary School kids in to help with creating some pathways through the garden. We have artists and builders from the community help us with these projects.

Leah Williams, Daisy Ing and Colby Morphett

Our Projects: from LOOP (June 2004)

Different people from round the town come in and work with us, like builders, an artist and a gardening expert.

Some of us have been on the project since it started. We started this year with three girls and four boys from years 9 to 11 from Nathalia Secondary College and another boy who wasn't at school.

In 2002, we started a community garden on the Youth Club hall block in the town. The whole garden idea was Cheryl Parker's, the education officer at Nathalia Community House. Lots of people pitched in to help us finish. There were two vegetable beds made up. It had a sprinkler system, so everything lived until summer knocked it out.

In June, 2004, a group of young people from Nathalia in northern Victoria put together a special edition of LOOP, a four-page insert in the Riverine Herald. In this issue, they wrote about their studies and community work in the Nathalia TAFE Project.

In these extracts and in descriptions written specifically for Connect, they explain how they are deciding on and organising their own education that centres around real and purposeful work within their local community.

In 2003 we started on a herb garden. The first thing we had to do was draw a plan for the garden. Everyone drew one and the best one was picked. It was like one big competition for us to see which one would be best. Dean Valasinavikutis' design was picked as the best one and we started basically straight away. The Garden Club helped us out with plants.

Then we had to make a big mosaic sign so let everyone know what was happening. We had Glena Cornell, a local artist, come in and show us how to make it and Trevor, a local farmer and builder, came in and worked with us to put it up. It took a long time.

This year we're into the next stage; we've built a picnic table and now we're working on totem poles to stand in the garden. They're being made out of red gum sleepers, like the table was. We were donated the wood from Jerry Swan's sawmill at Barnham and Kevin Swan's sawmill at Picola. We went out to both the sawmills.

We do hospitality work in the town too. We're all dressed up in the right gear so that we look pretty professional.

We think about what work we might want to do; we've nearly all had work experience: the local supermarket, the dog kennels, the primary school and so on. To stay at school, or to leave it's always the question. Two of us were doing VCAL; now one's left and he's on a trainee-ship. He still comes back to the course.

We finish this part of the project this month. Last year we had a barbecue to thank all the people who helped us. There were 24 of us. It'll probably be another barbie this time too.

Daisy Ing

More information from Lyn Loger: logerl@telstra.com
Get a Life!

Getting out into the sunshine, and gardening for oldies? Mentoring 'at risk' primary aged kids while rock-climbing? Feeding the appetites of preschoolers and guinea pigs at the same time? Reliving beautiful memories with very experienced oldies? Spending the most precious thing we have - time - with young friends? Locating winter woollies to give to the homeless?

Sounds like a lot of fun doesn’t it?

Well, that is exactly what year 9 and 10 students at Gold Creek School in the ACT get up to in their elective Get A Life!

Community spirit and active student participation in self formed and directed programs are showing an authenticity that can’t happen in a regular classroom.

The benefits to all stakeholders has been an emotional roller coaster ride, one that everyone seems eager to jump into and enjoy the ride.

It became very apparent that teenagers need to and indeed want to be involved in projects that stimulate their planning and thinking skills, and that make a contribution back to the community in which they live.

With a little hesitation, but a lot of belief, I proposed this venture to my group of 31 very switched on students and they ran with it, far better than I could have imagined. With a few leaders taking the helm they formed into groups that they don’t necessarily hang out with. They created goals, timelines and made contacts. They came across various problems and obstacles, but the learning that happened was better than any lesson I could have conjured up. They self assessed the part they played in their team. They worked co-operatively and learnt so much about each other from listening to their perceptions and dreams.

To witness the synergy experienced by the groups was very satisfying and gave me extra insight into how generous of spirit these teenagers were. The enthusiasm was contagious and through eight weeks, all projects were completed and the satisfaction on all of our faces is a picture I will remember for many years to come.

These teenagers worked hard. They planned. They made phone calls. They surfed the web. They laughed. They created. They communicated. They formed fast friendships with the old and young. They talked parents into transporting each other, and pets of all shapes and sizes across the ACT so that they could actively give back something of themselves to a nominated group of people.

I would highly recommend actively teaching students the skills of leadership, teamwork and communication and more importantly, give them to time to create a situation to put all of those skills plus their own identified talents into action.

Make time to talk. Make time to plan. Make time to answer questions and be the ‘guide on the side’. Make sure you take your camera too and snap away. They make a wonderful contribution for all to keep and remember.

Serving and leading and giving back to the community is the best lesson a teenager can experience!

We’ve proved it!

Kate Smith
Gold Creek Senior School, Nicholls, ACT
Starting a New Way of Teaching and Learning

Roger Holdsworth and Warren Bardsley
(with discussion input from the 2004 EPSS applied seminar group, Faculty of Education, University of Melbourne)

Our class within this pre-service subject has been talking about a different way of teaching and learning. This approach has a focus on students learning in order to make a difference. Sometimes we call this a 'transformative' approach to teaching and learning: we want to transform not just the learner, but to support the learner in transforming the world.

We've been contrasting this approach with traditional transmissive approaches that focus on passing on content of knowledge and skills, and with student-centred approaches in which students construct meaning/knowledge/skills and that focus more on the process of learning. In a transformative approach we see the focus as including the use of the learning as well as the content and process: in such an approach there is a central interaction between the valued outcomes and the learning processes through their application. The active participation of the learner is central, but so is the recognition of the learner as a valued contributor to constructing the world in which they live.

We have then been grappling with how such approaches might be supported. Why would teachers, students and others want to change what they are doing? What are some possible starting points?

So we have come up with four possible models to describe ways in which schools, teachers and students (mainly) are beginning their work on pedagogy - the 'first steps' or 'starting points' for teachers (mainly) in schools. In practice, we suspect that teachers or schools or students use a mix of these, depending on their circumstances and needs.

The need for a new way of teaching

Why should teachers, students and others move from what they know well to a new approach in their schools? What's in it for them? And even if it could be argued that this move could better achieve their education goals, would it be worth the effort?

A broad range of research with key stakeholders in primary and secondary education supports the need for new practices and has identified several key areas for school focus.

First it can be recognised that existing forms of teaching and learning are simply not working for many students! Research (particularly in middle schooling) identifies issues of academic performance, motivation, connectedness and behaviour as being directly linked to the nature of the teaching and learning approaches.

Secondly, there has been a growing recognition that approaches in which students play an active role in constructing their learning around purposeful activities with meaning beyond the classroom do actually improve learning ... and they are seen as FUN (ie worthwhile, engaging etc) by participants.

In many pieces of research, students tell us that they learn better when the processes of learning are fun and contain both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Students report that learning happens when:
- the teacher knows what they are doing;
- the teacher has a life and a personality;
- students are treated with respect;
- students are listened to and understood;
- students are doing things that have a purpose and that are useful;
- students are working with their mates;
- students and teachers can have a laugh.

This research also tells us that students are bored when there are problems with teacher relationships, with teaching methods and with the way students are treated. In various studies, students are saying what is better for them:
- They want an active voice;
- They want to make a difference;
- They want to be prepared for 'life' outside school including the next step in their 'working life';
- They want to connect with others socially and in the community.

Similarly, teachers are telling us that we need to move from formal transmission of knowledge, through student-centred learning, to active and meaningful projects that provide students with experiences to learn and engage them outside school boundaries. This involves changing:
- the ways in which we teach;
- student expectations and empowerment;
- curriculum and assessment; and
- the type of professional development available.

Although enthusiasm and pragmatism varies from school to school, there is an emerging trend in the increasing number of schools implementing some form of 'transformative' curriculum and ways of teaching, especially in their middle school programs. Making this move requires vision, skill, energy and commitment, as well as the ability and resolve to build ongoing support through success.

But how do you start? How do you energise existing programs, or
build the momentum to overcome a culture of tacit resistance? How do you develop that vision of the possible?

Teachers have to develop a clear sense of purpose; this needs to be related to support from the school administration and be firmly embedded in the school’s vision. Access to grants, funding, resources and networks often provide the catalyst to get programs off the ground.

For example, the last issue of Connect outlined what can be seen as a multi-layered approach to developing student voice through school bodies, whole-school projects, subject-based projects and in the classroom. This map also defines, by implication, a possible set of starting points for transforming one’s approach to teaching and learning.

First Steps

Approach 1: A specific and focused initiative or program

Such a specific and focused initiative might be that of a dedicated program, or a specific approach that starts with a discussion on values, concerns etc. The start is then in a larger commitment to introduce such an initiative. For example, some schools have looked at programs like ruMAD? and have decided to formally introduce these within the school. Following the commitment to take up such a program, a specific workshop is run to introduce it (to staff and students) which includes consideration of questions like ‘what are our values?’ or ‘what are our concerns?’

Similar approaches have been outlined by Boomer (1978, 1982), by James Beane et al (1990, 1991, 1995) and by the Foxfire Project (1995) around negotiating the curriculum. Here this is a conscious decision to adopt a new approach to students’ construction of meaning, in which a class group looks at sharing their responses to questions: “What are our personal questions/concerns?” “What are our questions/concerns about the larger world?” “How and where do these questions/concerns intersect?”

While such approaches can generate curriculum from shared concerns, and focus on sharing powerful process questions of “What do we already know? What do we want to know? How will we find out?”, they can still fall short of being truly transformative. They can ‘simply’ lead to student-centred enquiry and study, rather than shared action to do or change something. However, such a starting point is relatively easy to find within a class or subject.

The critical or useful questions are ones that take us further: “What is fair/unfair?” “What is our mission?” “What do we want to change?” and these lead on to questions about “What will we do?” Foxfire in particular asks: “Is what we do chosen by and of value to students?” “Is what we choose to do of wider value to our community?” “Does what we choose to do meet/ exceed curriculum requirements?”

Other questions can be raised about such a starting point: These approaches require a specific commitment to change ways of learning, particularly so that students will produce something of value. Is such a commitment offered to or shared by students or is the process imposed on them? To think in this 'big' program way may also require extensive planning by teachers, and perhaps school reorganisation - and can also fall into a ‘trap’ of needing all aspects of the approach to be sorted out before starting (rather than adopting an ‘action-research’ approach to change).

In order to start here, it may be that teachers need specific ideas about and training in a process: what questions to ask; how to move from raising questions to conducting research to planning action etc. This includes all the practical questions of “How do I do this in my class?” and “Does it require someone from outside to come in and start the process?”

Approach 2: An external challenge or commission

This approach is perhaps more limited in scope and time commitment and can involve starting without knowing the final destination. It can begin with an arrangement with some agency (eg local government, an environmental group, a research team, or perhaps even something more distant and indirect like an Inquiry) to challenge a group of students to take on a specific project or approach. This group of students could be a class or be a specific group of students across classes or withdrawn from classes. The students are ‘commissioned’ to carry out some research or action.

The examples that we know of include Student Action Teams (where the ‘commission’ or challenge is more likely to be outside the school ie community based) as well as Students as Researchers approaches (most of which have operated within schools, with the school as the ‘commissioning agency’). The students construct definition, research and action phases that involve learning and doing and produce something for the agency.

The critical or useful questions within such approaches are: “As people who have some special expertise, will you take up this challenge?” “How will we solve the problem/answer the question?” “What do we think should happen?”

While the issues around which this learning, research and action take place are determined by others to a lesser or greater degree (not usually by or with the students), this is also a characteristic of dealing with ‘real world’ issues. Further, someone ‘external’ has a real interest in the outcome of the students’ work. Student motivation and assessment are driven by the need to produce something for a real audience – something that can or will make a desired change.

We can raise questions: To what extent are students ‘free’ to take up or decline the commission? What power do they have to define the issue and how they will approach it? To what extent are they ‘research assistants’ to someone else’s agenda, or even ‘decoration’ to make it appear as if an inclusive process has happened?

While such a starting point may be easier to identify within an individual classroom, teachers need models of it in operation, information on how to make and build community contacts, and also lots of practical ‘how to’ information. Some of this is
available in existing kits, such as the Student Action Team ‘How To’ Manual.

**Approach 3: ‘Speaking Out’ and formal ‘student voice’ initiatives**

In the third model, the first steps involve organising for formal student input to a school around issues that concern them or for student responses to issues raised by the school. This might be through an SRC or similar group, through a ‘youth summit’ type process (as has been conducted in several local government areas) or as in-school or inter-school student forums such as those organised through DART (see Connect 145-146, page 5). It involves some process of large numbers of students contributing ideas about what should happen within a school (or wider). Aspects of it are also called ‘consultation’. Perhaps, as in DART, there are spaces created to listen.

The UK Students as Researchers initiatives (Fielding and Bragg, 2003) as well as the Cambridge-based ‘Consulting Pupils’ project (Ruddock and Flutter, 2002, 2004 – see Connect 135-134) are other examples of work in this area.

Critical/useful questions that emerge in this work and that potentially transform the nature of the teaching and learning process are around: “What are our concerns?” “What do we think should happen?” “Who should do this?”

However, such approaches can also be seen as encouraging ‘speaking but not listening’. Fielding (2001) asks: “Is speaking out the end in itself?” “Who is listening?” “Where are the spaces for engaging in dialogue and change?” They also leave up in the air questions of how the deeper and continued ‘transformation’ of learning and teaching will take place. “What is the plan by which students can be a part of bringing about change?” “Do these approaches leave power relationships unaffected?”

There are several resources being developed both here in Australia and in the UK around consulting with young people. More stories of processes are needed, as is a strong need for details of a ‘beyond voice’ strategy.

**Approach 4: Transforming approaches within traditional curriculum**

The fourth approach is one that starts within a single classroom and perhaps within the existing requirements of a single subject. It starts with the formal and existing teaching situation and seeks to push this further or to transform it by asking questions around the purpose or use of the learning and outcomes, or around ‘authentic assessment’. So, for example, a teacher might start with a set curriculum (which is teacher or externally directed), develop student inquiry approaches as a way of learning, but then also ask the critical question: “What will we do with this learning?”

Some of the examples in various issues of Connect have detailed such approaches. Because these are responsive to particular situations, it may be difficult to provide overall examples or guidelines beyond the outline above. It is certainly not a ‘program’ to be adopted by teachers and schools, but an approach or orientation to teaching and learning that requires being innovative and flexible, and willing to think out possible ways of transforming everyday activities.

Such a beginning point requires an understanding and commitment from teachers, and some tentative vision at least of how this might happen – and the willingness to take risks and adopt some form of reflective or ‘action research’ approach to one’s own teaching. Once started, however, it probably becomes easier and part of the ‘normal’ way in which one behaves. But it also depends on building community resources and imagination and ideas for what the ‘useful’ outcomes of any learning might be. It would be valuable to share these ideas, not to serve as detailed plans to copied, but rather as a source of inspiration. Specifically this sharing could be in the form of case studies, as well as shared reflections on learnings through journals. The documentation asks: “What happened? What do we learn?”

**Where will you start?**

**References**

Beane, J. (1990) ‘Rethinking the Middle School Curriculum’ in Middle School Journal, May


Boomer, G. (1978) ‘Negotiating the Curriculum’ in English in Australia 44, June


**Resources**

**Consultation:**

http://www.consultingpupils.co.uk

ruMAD?:

http://www.rumad.org.au


http://www.rumad.org.au/resources.htm

**Student Action Teams**

‘How To Manual’


Online Conference: Student Voice

In September, I was fortunate to be given the contact details for an international on-line conference on Student Voice and I registered for this event. I sent the information to others and it was with great delight that I recognised lots of the participants from across the globe. The conference involved four countries: England, Australia, South Africa and Chile.

The major benefit of this Online Conference was that it provided a sustained opportunity to be intellectually interactive with colleagues and experts on issues around student voice.

**Keynote Topics**

The topics covered show the current and global issues facing us all. The keynote focus papers presented challenging and insightful propositions and reports:

- John MacBeath: *A Chain of Voices*
- Sharon Pekru: *Student Voice: The Voices of Today and Tomorrow*
- Jean Rudduck: *The Contribution of Student Consultation to School Improvement: Claims, Conditions and Cautions*
- Caroline Lodge: *Student Voice and School Improvement: What is the Connection?*
- Pat Thomson: *Unpopular Voices: Listening to Pupils 'At Risk'*
- Helen Lawson, Zhiyan Guo, Heather Piper, Professor Bridget Somekh and Jo Frankham: *Discussing 'Pupil Voice'*
- Dana Mitra with William Frick: *A Typology of Student Voice in School Reform: From Listening to Leadership*

**Papers Presented**

The range of the general papers and the presenters is listed below:

- Beth Asplin: *Just Listen and We'll Work it Out Together*
- Tobias Brown: *Student Voice: A Dynamic Response*
- Dan Buckley: *Student Leaders: Figureheads or Educational Partners?*
- Jeff Burgard and Jacquie Burgard: *Unlocking Enthusiasm: The Key to Student-Engaged Learning*
- Thom Burns: *Enhancing Student Motivation and Commitment at the Australian Science and Mathematics School*
- Dorothy M. Colclough: *What do Students Need to Feel Successful at School?*
- Jean Crane: *Hearing 'Student Voice' Depends on School Ethos*
- Karen Cromarty: *The Ferry-Health Confidential Student Centre*
- Annika Dutson-Steinfeld: *Student Voice: No Longer an Optional Novelty*
- Greg Elliott: *Student Voice as the Cornerstone for Strategic Planning*
- John Findlay, Dr Robert Fitzgerald and Russell Hobby: *Learners as Customers*
- Dianne Forbes: *Teacher Education Students Listening to Pupils Online*
- Ian Fraser: *Negotiating the Pedagogy at Nanango State High School*
- Alison Gable, Dr Suzanne Carrington and Christine Gruss: *The Sustainable Kids Program: A Leap of Faith*
- Alison Gaffney and Jennie Seddon: *What Can Student Focus Groups Tell Us?*
- Jenni Garrett: *Encouraging 'Student Voice' at Mt Dandenong Primary School*
- Alistair Gumley et al: *'Seen and Heard' - Student Voices in School Change*
- Chris Hummerstone and Sabine Stroud: *Genuine Partnership at The Arnewood School*
- Patsy Kane: *'Student Voice' and Building a Culture of Continuous School Improvement*
- Kathleen M. Kerrigan: *Educational Support: The Pupils' Perspective*
- Kevin Mackay: *Student Attitude and Building a Positive Learning Culture*
- Aine Maher: *Student Voices Driving Change in Education*
- Nick Martin, Non Worrall and Rajeeb Dey: *Student Voice: Philosopher's Stone or Pandora's Box?*
- Annetta Minard: *Using Student Voice to Restructure Student Support*
- Adrian Percival and Susan Tranter: *The Benefits of Student Interviews*
- Marcia Prieto: *Students as Agents of Democratic Renewal in Chile*
- Marcia Prieto: *De la Exclusion y Subordinacion de los Estudiantes a la Comun-Union de Comprensiones y Desafios con los Profesores*
- Kerry Robertson: *Developing Student Leaders: The Waverley Links Program*
- Peter Shaw: *Are 'Student Voices' More Powerful than 'Student Voice'? in Bringing About School Improvement?*
- Bernard Trafford: *Student Participation and School Improvement*
- Michael Walton et al: *'Seen and Heard' - Student Voices in School Change*
- David Warner: *Using Student Voice for School Transformation*
- Kristyn Wise: *Amplifying the Voices of Children in the Classroom: Common Barriers and Practical Solutions*
- Georgina Wootten: *'Student Voice' Bullying and Education*
- David Zygier: *What School Kids Want*: A Film about 'Student Voice'*

The next on-line Conference will be on leadership, from 6th-12th December, and I will be participating in that because I want to see how many student voice threads come up in sound leadership practice in schools.

For registration details, email Debra Brydon at: brydon@bigpond.net.au

Vivienne McQuade, Adelaide, SA
Charter for SRCS
Student Representative Councils

Charter 1
Involved students
Students should be active citizens of the school community and have their ideas and opinions routinely sought and respected.

Charter 2
Making real decisions
Students from Kindergarten to Year 12 are encouraged to contribute to and participate in decision-making in their school.

Charter 3
In many places
Representative students can inform decision making throughout the Department of Education and Training and in the wider community.

Charter 4
For everyone
Opportunities for participation and leadership must be inclusive of gender, special needs, cultural background, sexuality, socio-economic status and geographically remote circumstances.

Charter 5
Chosen fairly
The methods used to involve students in decisions affecting their lives should model Australian democratic and representative practices.

Charter 6
Well supported
Students will be prepared for and supported in their leadership and decision-making roles through all aspects of the curriculum, in classroom, whole school and out-of-school activities.

Charter 7
Appropriately recognised
The skills, values, knowledge and attitudes that students learn from participation in school life are vital to their future as citizens of a democratic society.


This document has been produced by the NSW Department of Education and Training and in consultation with the NSW Student Representative Council.
PASS THE PASTA

What a wonderful experience ISRC 2004 was! Although the numbers in the Australian delegation weren’t as big as anticipated, those who did attend had nothing but praise for the organisers. From the pre-conference tour to Jasper to the final farewells as we got on the bus to go to the airport, the delegates not only experienced Canadian hospitality at its best but also gained valuable insights into the problems that face students all over the world. The input from the students from both the Inuit and Onondaga nations was especially appreciated.

One of the major differences between ISRC 2000 (Sydney) and ISRC 2004 (Edmonton) was the development of action plans. Each day, small groups of delegates were asked to look at the theme for that day and come up with a plan that might address some of the problems posed by that theme. All plans were then entered into a central computer with the aim that a booklet containing all of the plans be published and sent to all delegates. As these plans had to be centred around activities that could be done at a local level, this booklet should prove to be an invaluable resource when it arrives.

For many of the delegates, their attendance at the American National Leadership Camp rivalled that of ISRC 2004. From the beauty of the site in the foothills of the Colorado Rockies to the activities conducted over the six days, all gained skills that will prove invaluable in their future lives both in and out of school.

Just prior to leaving for Canada I was able to attend (unfortunately only for a few hours due to our departure for ISRC 2004 the next day) the second Australian National Leadership Camp organised by Rising Generations. From all accounts this was once again deemed a great success by all who attended and was a credit to both Bec, Teens, and all involved.

Upon return from Canada, an invitation to Gold Creek High School allowed me to attend an inspiring day for the student leaders in Canberra. Put together by the school student leadership team, assisted by teacher Kate Smith, it loosely followed the format of the National Young Leaders Day. While a day like this needs a lot of commitment and organisation, the encouragement and motivation that those students who attended gained from the day made all the hard work worth it. Hopefully this will be the first of many in this area of the country.

Finally, delegates (both staff and students) wishing to attend the 2005 leadership experience are now being asked to send in their application. American teachers and schools are cooperating to offer us the ‘experience of a lifetime’ so let’s make the most of it.

Ken Page, President

Check out ‘How To Join’ page on our Website:
http://hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/
or contact the PASTA Secretary: esheerin@ozemail.com.au

October 2004
An Australian Perspective on ISRC O4
at Harry Ainlay School, Edmonton, Canada: August 3-7, 2004

We were very proud of our efforts in running the first International Student Representative Conference (ISRC) in Sydney in 2000. However the Harry Ainlay School organising committee carried on this tradition, and lifted it to new heights, in Edmonton in 2004.

From the moment we were greeted at Edmonton airport by the smiling Harry Ainlay crew on July 28, till they dropped us off there eight days later, we were amazed by their passion and commitment to making the whole experience meaningful for us and all the other participants.

However it wasn’t just the conference itself. We also had the good fortune to accompany the Canadians on their two-day pre-conference tour to the Jasper area. Again this was expertly organised by the Harry Ainlay team. Spending time in a place of such great natural beauty really set the scene and started to form the bonds which were further cemented by the conference itself. All the activities achieved their aims of bringing the two delegations together. This was capped off by Jerry and his team from Inroads Mountain Sports. They took us all through their Adventure Journey program. These team building activities provided lots of challenges, but the debriefing at the end, when it was all tied together, was a time of great humour and learning.

It was difficult to imagine the conference itself being better than this, but it was.

We arrived back in Edmonton the day before the conference started and we got to see why the Harry Ainlay team were so proud of their city. They showed us around and we even got to attend their impressive Heritage Days Festival. We also met the US delegation which was made to feel at home immediately.

The program for ISRC O4 was very well constructed. Each day had its own theme:

Tuesday: Celebrating Cultural Diversity
Wednesday: Global Awareness
Thursday: The Environment and You
Friday: Developing Our Community
Saturday: One World – One Dream
Sunday: Think Globally, Act Locally

The most impressive thing about the program was that everyone was encouraged to engage in discussions, which were often rigorous and challenging, but it was continually stressed that discussion by itself wasn’t enough; it needed to be followed by some action. In order to formalise this, each participant was asked to complete a plan of action on the set theme each day in their Mosaics Workbook. The mosaic groups met every day and were an ideal vehicle to develop and refine these action plans.

Many of these action plans are going to be published and distributed to all participants. This is further evidence that the organising team are serious about making our world a better place. Too often, the many good ideas that come out of youth forums are lost because they aren’t followed up. If this happens after ISRC O4, it won’t be the organisers’ fault.

All aspects of the conference were impressive. Nothing was left to chance. The keynote speakers were interesting and challenging. They all left the participants with something to think about and suggestions to follow. The workshops were well spaced throughout the program. They were all relevant and covered a wide variety of youth issues. Each of these focused on young people who were already acting to make a difference in their communities. As such they could be a source of inspiration to all participants.

There were also some well planned excursions away from the school. Again these were structured around building bonds within mosaic groups, showing off the natural beauty of Edmonton, as well as having a good time. Once again these were successful at all levels.

They included an afternoon of Community Service Projects with various Edmonton community organisations. Many of the students had never experienced anything like this before and new horizons were opened up for them. The group I was with at Meals on Wheels expressed interest in seeking out similar organisations in their own communities on their return home.

The food was healthy, varied and plentiful. The technical support crew was extremely professional and obliging. They ensured that the program hummed along.

The entire conference built towards ‘The Main Event’ which was held on the last evening. This was a very moving event when all the pieces of the mosaic were put into place: very appropriate imagery. Each group was able to show what skills they had learned over the five days.

The organising committee is to be commended in the highest possible terms for what they achieved at ISRC O4. Nothing was ever too much trouble. They worked brilliantly together for a number of months in planning the conference and continued that teamwork till the last participant left.

The teachers are to be congratulated for encouraging such a committed and enthusiastic group of young people. Gane Olsen, Pat Baker and Judith Boyle and no doubt others behind the scenes, deserve mention. So also do the committed, passionate band of students who made up the organising committee. I hope I don’t miss anyone in this:

The Co-Chairs: Maggie McCaw and Jenny Mak.

Executive Assistant: Karina Mistry.

Programs: Aaron Rankin, Carolyn Crotwell, Allie Slenon, Taylor Harrison and Kelsey McCreary.

Technical: Giovanna Balaz, Bob Liu, Swathi Damaraju, Jessica Parmur and Joey Mo.

Finance: Navi Chatha, Andie Bains, Isaiah Hui, Jennifer Fok, Nithya Ramachandran and Fanda Wu.

Communications: Dave Morley, James Goddard, Hana Gunn, Michelle Fu and Debbie Weng.

Public Relations: Justine Mebchuk, Chuckie Patel, Stephanie Chai, Clare Young, Deanna Rogowsky, Celina Wai and Niki West.

They showed once again just what is possible when a group of committed, enthusiastic dedicated individuals come together. They all deserve the highest possible praise for the magic they created at ISRC O4. Canada’s future is in good hands.

Tony Gleeson
Alstonville HS, NSW
on behalf of the Australian delegation
Hands to Help

Value: Cooperation
Concept: Many times we try to accomplish tasks by ourselves instead of working together. Most jobs would be completed faster, easier and with less effort if we cooperated with each other. There are times when we need to compete and times when we need to work together. Knowing when to compete and when to cooperate, will help each of us succeed in today’s society. Some people believe that asking for help is a sign of weakness. The truth is that asking for help when you need it and working together on a project is an example of working smarter, rather than harder.

Time Estimate:
15 minutes plus discussion time

Materials Needed:
- A jar of peanut butter
- A jar of margarine
- A table knife for each person
- Two pieces of bread per person

Activity:
Begin by giving each person one piece of bread and a table knife. Explain that their job is to make a peanut butter sandwich. There are two rules. First, they are to use only one slice of bread, so the sandwich is really only half a sandwich. The bread may not just be folded over to make the sandwich. The piece of bread must be cut in half to form the two sides of the sandwich. Second, they can use only one hand. The other hand must be kept behind their back at all times. Now have them make the sandwich.

When the sandwiches are completed you are ready for round two. Have everyone get a partner. The partners will now cooperate to make a sandwich. If you have uneven numbers one person can repeat the activity with a second partner. Give each pair a new piece of bread. The challenge is the same: create a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Once again, the piece of bread must be cut in half to form the sandwich and each person may only use one hand. Give the teams one minute to plan their strategy before starting. During the strategy planning session, they may not touch the sandwich making materials. At the completion of the activity, sit back and enjoy a snack of peanut butter sandwiches.

Discussion Ideas:

“What” Questions
- Which took longer: when you were working by yourself or with a partner?
- What problems did you have when working by yourself? With a partner?
- What strategies did you use in the second round to overcome problem of working by yourself?
- How did you feel during the first round? The second round?
- Which sandwich looked better: the first one or the second one?

“So What” Questions
- How did working together affect your efforts?
- What are some tasks where two or more people make the job go easier?
- Are there certain jobs that have to be done by someone working alone? Give examples.
- How does competition affect cooperation?
- Can we be both cooperative and competitive? Explain.
- What happens when people aren’t willing to cooperate with each other?
- Why would cooperation be important to students at school?
- Why would cooperation be important to people at work?
- Why would cooperation be important to our group?

“Now What” Questions
- How can cooperation help us in our daily lives?
- In what ways can we show cooperation in our group?

Copyright 1999 by Tom Jackson and Red Rock Publishing. This activity appears in the book, Activities That Teach Family Values. This book is available from CASAA (the Canadian Association of Student Activity Advisers).

The PASTA Newsletter is edited by Ken Page and distributed bi-monthly as a supplement to Connect magazine.
What does membership of PASTA offer you?

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Banyule Youth Inquiry

The second annual Banyule Youth Inquiry was held on September 10th at LaTrobe University and was once again a huge hit. Ten secondary schools in the Banyule area of Melbourne's north participated and lobbied their ideas and opinions to a range of invited guests from different organisations, including state parliament, the parents association and the Mayor of Banyule City Council.

The Youth Inquiry is a bit different to a lot of other conferences and it can take a moment for participants to realise how it works. The Banyule Youth Inquiry is designed to be the representative voice of young people in Banyule City Council putting forward young peoples' opinions and ideas on a range of issues. The Inquiry is different because it really is representative. During the year leading up to the Inquiry, SRCs in the participating schools have been holding youth forums that involve every student in their schools. The information gathered from these forums is then represented by a smaller number of students at the Inquiry itself. Students from across the ten schools met and shared notes discussing how best to interpret and represent these opinions to the Committees of Inquiry.

The Committee of Inquiry is modelled on the Australian Senate process where Senators don't give speeches, but ask questions. The Banyule Youth Inquiry is the same: the invited guests form the Committee of Inquiry and may only speak if there is a question mark at the end of it. Other than that their job is to listen and think about what they might incorporate the representations of students into their own work as decision makers.

Special guests included: Cr Jenny Mulholland, Mayor of Banyule; Steve Herbert, State Member of Parliament for Eltham and Chair of the Education and Training Parliamentary Committee; Teigan Leonard, Victorian Student Representative Council; Rod Land, Vice-President of the Victorian Institute of SRCs and Teacher Advisers; James Tidson, Victorian Council of Churches; Jenny Salamon, Manager of Community Services, Banyule City Council; Gail McHardy, Parents Victoria; David Fiore, Chaplain at St Helena Secondary College; Jenny Petridis, teacher at Bundoora Secondary College; Flora Moraitis, teacher at Montmorency Secondary College; and Sgt Peter Turnbull, Youth Policy Unit, Victoria Police - all of them decision-makers affecting young peoples' lives.

The topics the students discussed were very broad in scope, coming under three key headings: Health and Wellness; Education and Pedagogy; Social Opportunities.

The results of these discussions have been very powerful. Unfortunately, the outcomes are difficult to separate from the context of the Committee of Inquiry and there isn't enough room to print the transcripts here. As an example, in the Education and Pedagogy Inquiry, the committee asked how students felt about the idea of giving a report card on teachers' performance and style:

Committee: Should students give a report card on teachers?

Student: It was kind of split; some students thought that teachers would not be interested in the feedback because it came from students, but some thought that the teachers would be more open to it. Then there is the issue that teachers are seen as the authority figures and so you don’t feel inclined to approach them or criticise them - it’s kind of a psychological barrier.

Student: Our group was a bit more reversed; they felt the kids wouldn’t be serious about it and therefore the teachers wouldn’t take it seriously so it wouldn’t work. There were some who thought it was a good idea, then again, at Banksia, a lot of students are just comfortable approaching teachers anyway.

The Health and Wellness inquiry raised the question of how young people were stereotyped and then treated differently in places like shopping centres. The students agreed saying that young people were very misrepresented especially when having fun in groups. Frequently they would be asked to leave with no reason other than other patrons were feeling uncomfortable with their presence. The students came up with the idea of the traders from one of the local shopping centres getting together to meet with groups of young people and develop a bit of a dialogue, at least to recognise who were the young people they could / should trust, possibly to come to a common understanding of each others needs.

This Inquiry was run by the members of the DART Board, the student representative body in Banyule supported by the Banyule City Council Youth Service and the Victorian Student Representative Council (VisRC).

For further information on this process or the outcomes, call David Mould on (03) 9457 9938 or 0412 743 951.
Student role in the learning process:
Informed participatory decision-making:
a problem-solving curriculum

'We had the experience but missed the meaning' (T.S. Eliot)

A democratic classroom is consistent with Whitehead's famous dictum that 'Education is the acquisition of the art of the utilisation of knowledge' (Whitehead, 1932: 6). From this perspective, the present subject-based school curriculum is not taught as an end in itself, but rather as an attempt to suggest how problem-based skills can merge with existing curriculum subjects.

What this means is adopting a strategy for showing the student how the subject that is being learned can be applied to the solving of specific problems. Rather than reducing the importance of the curriculum now organised as discrete subjects, a problem-solving education elevates their importance by transforming them. A problem-solving education provides a teacher with a sensible answer to the oft-asked class question: "Please Sir/Ms, why do I have to learn that?" Instead of a weak: "You will need it when you grow up", the teacher can show how the learning is related to the problem the student wants to solve. The student role in the learning process in emphasised.

Such an approach to general schooling is organised developmentally in ways that are consistent with our understanding of cognitive growth.

The proposal set out in this paper has emerged from a host of projects conducted in schools, prison settings and communities on two continents in which I have been involved with my colleague Art Pearl (Pearl and Knight, 1999). It is posited on the key assumption that democracy has to be constantly reinvented and reinvigorated. Education has a central role in this process — but the nature of that education needs to be theorised carefully. (Details of a general theory can be found in Note 1). Within the general theory there are six curriculum strands; one strand only will be examined in this paper; participation in decisions that affect one's life: problem-solving curriculum.

Importance of theory: student and teacher as researcher

Before detailing proposals for this strand, I need to make three explanatory remarks. First, these strands are framing ideas, not prescriptive rules. My approach here is based on the conviction that democratic education will share some critically important values, principles and cultural perspectives. Second, these are ideas for whole school communities, not just some subjects. For democracy to be reinvented and reinvigorated, people must grasp some of the thinking and history that developed those values.

A single subject in government or civics is insufficient. Courses in civics and history are important elements, but preparation of informed citizens will only be achieved when such preparation is included in every course, and in the practices and organisation of the school. Third, these principles and organisers are tentative: they are not delivered as tablets of stone. They need to be refined on the basis of democratic research in the classroom by students and teachers, and through a process of ongoing discussion and debate. Democratic education advances when adults (teachers) propose and defend, and invite students to propose defensible proposals.

Keeping these remarks in mind, I turn to a fuller examination of a curriculum organiser, and the importance of how it interconnects within the general theory.

The curriculum organiser: 'informed participation in decisions that affect one's life: problem solving curriculum' is presented in this paper. This includes a range and diversity of programs that were developed by youth people and schools, with a central theme of student problem-solving. Within this strand students learn citizenship by practising citizenship; and students learn democracy by experiencing democracy.

Youth participation should not be viewed as an end in itself. Student opinion needs to be given serious consideration; that is, student desires for a better world — a fulfilling culture, an opportunity to engage in rewarding work, to live generously and harmoniously with self and neighbours, to preserve the environment — are all matters that can be addressed in the curriculum, through participation programs.

Research method applied

The methodology pivotal to this paper is drawn from the terms and concepts of qualitative research and 'grounded theory', influenced by the early work of Glaser and Strauss (1967). Emerging from a developing process, particularly through the use of action-research, theory was generated from data emerging from actual community and school-based programs over a period of several decades. As Holloway (1997) points out:

The main aim of grounded theory is the generation of theory from the data... It emphasises the development of ideas from the data like other qualitative methods but goes further than these. Grounded theory researchers start with an area of interest, collect the data and allow the relevant ideas to develop. (p 81)
Characteristic of the program work presented in this paper has been the application of democratic principles to action research. ‘Subjects’ have been involved in designing programs and evaluating results. The distinction between subject and researcher has been deliberately blurred.

Student problem solving

Absent from newer middle school policy are the themes of student ownership and connectedness. It is proposed here that, in an optimum learning environment, students are encouraged to contribute to their own intellectual development. They do things for themselves and their community, not for established authority. As part of this process, students are encouraged to question in whose interest is their learning. Strong evidence supports the extent to which students are motivated to invest in education when they ‘own’ their schoolwork.

In the classroom setting, students are encouraged to learn to solve important social and personal problems; these skills and values are developed through daily practice with responsible and effective decision-making, leading to the deliberate construction of knowledge. Here, education is understood as the construction of meaning, rather than merely the transmission of knowledge. It is proposed that curriculum is organised to encourage all students to become effective problem solvers. General schooling can provide a base for developing the learning values of imagination, invention and the deliberate construction of knowledge to address this question.

A recurring ‘sirens call’

Years 9-10 is the stress point in Victorian schools. It is caught between an economy that finds difficulty hiring its young, changing credentialing demands, and diverse youth cultures offering a recurring ‘sirens call’ to an alternative sense of belonging. In general, and particularly as reflected within the present middle school curriculum, all movements appear as formless in content and direction. Year 10 for example, is being increasingly treated as a pre-VCE year; that is, the language of the work assignment and assessment ritual is being adopted.

For example, where there have been attempts in the recent past to construct a middle school curriculum policy, they fell in the main between a pastorally oriented program, and a mix of subjects from the old technical (vocational) and high school curriculum (Power, 1996).

Encouragement to risk

Presently there is considerable comment regarding ‘students at risk’. This brief Commentary is offered as an alternative perspective to the negativity associated with so called ‘at risk’ students.

While the requirement ‘to risk’ usually has a primary place in the proposal for optimum conditions, here it forms a principle important to this general argument.

Risk-taking is to be encouraged during schooling; the teacher must achieve a balance between challenge and support.

In existing classrooms inequality is not based on encouragement to risk, but rather on active and persistent discouragement to risk. Very early in school life many students learn that they should not risk because the costs of risking far outweigh any benefits. Unwillingness to risk distinguishes the achiever from the non-achiever.

The contention here is that the unwillingness to risk is less a personality attribute than it is part of the social environment. Teachers communicate clearly who will be punished for risking and who will not. Students who have been fearful, insecure and school failures can blossom when encouraged (Hollins, 1991; Meier, 1995; Pearl and Knight, 1999: ch 8). It is not difficult to determine in a classroom who is afraid to risk and who is not. Observing a classroom provides ample information. In every class there are some students whose hands are always up (some even before a question is asked), while some students try to disappear into the woodwork.

More important than the seating arrangement is the nature of the teacher student relationship. The work of Good and Brophy (1991: 124-125) is a critical insight into the relationship between teacher and student. They review the literature and summarise the differences between students who are expected to be capable, and those who are not. Depending on how students are perceived, there are wide differences in opportunity to perform, time to think, encouragement, autonomy, honest feedback and (a key factor in willingness to risk): “respect for the learners with unique interests and needs” (p 125).

Student role in the learning process

What follows are programs adapted from a number of sources that have been exemplary practices in developing an incremental approach to student learning. They draw upon learning theory that views development as a two-way process of both acting on the environment and being acted on by it. (Pearl, 1986: 462; Pearl and Knight, 1999; Connect, 2002; Knight, 2001; ‘Idiom’, 2004 – see Note 2.)

The central premise to this proposal is that all students are to be taught that they are responsible for solving both their own and wider social problems, in consultation with others. The school’s responsibility is to provide the opportunity to develop knowledge for solving important issues. Drawing on a wider perspective, the failure of students to learn this lesson means some unspecified ‘others’ are left to resolve issues on their behalf (Pearl and Knight, 1999; Bornstein and Bruner, 1989; Price-Heath, 1993).

Real world problem solving: connecting to the local

A key aspect of such a curriculum is the connection with the local. Students can and do identify personal and community issues they classify as important. This can be done, for example, by allotting four hours per week for students to identify issues, research, and develop potential solutions. Students can engage in a wide range of activities, from peer tutoring in local schools, management, local homelessness, drug use and abuse, native plant restoration, re-cycling, designing solar energy schemes, assisting in museums, libraries and other local agencies, issues of local environment, and issues of rights and associated responsibilities in their own school.
Local issues are a starting point, and ought to lead onto broader themes to be debated and researched. Examples would include: an ecologically sustainable society; work creation projects; non-violent approaches to conflict resolutions; just and humane societies; planning cities of hope; moving from monocultural non-democratic cultures to multicultural democratic cultures. Students faced with finding solutions to a particular problem can then use those school subjects that assist in research and offer insight to gather data and information, to enable vigorous discussion.

The following activities and variations have been drawn from a range of programs experienced in a number of Victorian, Australian and international schools. The following areas are cited as potential areas for teacher and student choice and involvement.

Diploma of Education students (student teachers) make excellent mentors to run these programs, and they can gain credit for successful course work (eg this relationship presently works excellently in the Diploma of Education ‘Partnership’ link at Victoria University.) Data indicate schools have extra hands to help in school activities and student teachers contribute with enthusiasm in their day-to-day working with students. Along the way they gain experience, insight into a school culture, and enjoyment. The following are examples of successfully run student-school programs.

### WORK EXPERIENCE
- clerical aides-teachers, administration; VET programs (eg see the VET program: Ntocat Northland Secondary College)

### CLASSROOM AIDES
- tutoring other students, language aides
- coaching activities

### SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES
- study centre
- recreation centre
- cross-age tutoring (see previous issues of Connect)
- student/school/community research projects

### ECOLOGY AND COMMUNITY GARDENS/FARM
- ‘Core’ (in Brunswick)
- the kitchen school garden project at Collingwood College
- designing school solar and energy conservation

### AN APPRENTICESHIP IN DEMOCRACY
- Rights and Responsibilities Code of Behaviour. (Knight, 2001; Knight, 1985; Gill, 1998)
- See also Holdsworth (Connect, 2004) for documented work with many effective examples of active student involvement in schools for making student government more robust and more meaningful

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### Starting – one step at a time

In this paper I have suggested the contribution made by one particular curriculum strand toward the student learning process. Teachers trying to develop democratic curriculum practice organised around the six curriculum strands at once may find the task overwhelming. But teachers can start where they are and ask students how to put to use what they are learning: by establishing rights and responsibilities in the classroom, bringing students into the decision-making process and providing equal encouragement in the classroom (Knight, 2004).

The interconnectedness of different democratic requirements is what makes a general theory.

An important part of this theory is that democracy is not discovered as a natural occurrence within a society. It is always in a state of becoming and what more important activity can we involve our students in, in the classroom, than inventing our democratic futures.

### Notes

(1) Proposed is a general theory, and how daily classroom practice can be linked with community needs; and how practice can be interconnected with school/classroom projects. This general theory includes two principles and four curriculum organisers. They are as follows:

#### The Principles

A) defining the nature of authority: persuasion and negotiation

B) inclusion

#### The Requirements

1) defining important knowledge: democratic culture

2) informed participation in decisions that effect ones life: problem solving

3) equal encouragement: an optimum learning environment

4) defining available rights and responsibilities.

(2) An excellent review of community-based learning (‘Community literacies’) is found in Illom: Journal of the Victorian Association for the Teaching of English. Vol.40, No.1, 2004. Articles by Pru Gill, Scott Rankin, Pam Creed, Liz Skelton, Jan Osmotherly, Jon Staley, Llana Snyder, Paul van Eeden, Christopher Bailey, Terry Hayes; teachers encouraged students as participants, as imaginative risk takers and problem-solvers. All the cited classroom projects give considerable connection to the individual and community.

Tony Knight  
Victoria University
References


Hollins, C. E. (1991) It was fun from the beginning, New York: Carlton Press.


The Forum for Youth Investment Releases New Publications on Youth Action

Young people are increasingly becoming leaders who possess the knowledge and skill to evoke positive changes for themselves, their families and their communities. Much of this can be attributed to the youth-organising efforts of dozens of grassroots organisations that respond to young people’s individual development needs and inspire them with a sense of social and civic responsibility.

In Forum Focus: Youth Act: Community Impact, we share the story of the progress made toward helping one organisation: Community IMPACT! Nashville, live up to its name. In research update, we provide a summary of exciting new research on engaging young people in civic activism as a powerful tool for youth development and community change. In on the ground, John Hilley, executive director of CI! Nashville, gives an account of how one young person made a difference to his community, and how his efforts demonstrate the changes made in the organisation during the last few years. And in voices from the fields, we interview two of the young people from CI! Nashville to get their take on the importance of youth action opportunities.

Forum Focus is a regular publication circulated five times a year as a four-page newsletter insert in Youth Today. You can read Forum Focus: Youth Act: Community Impact on line at:

http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/focus/ focusy2i2may04.pdf

The Forum for Youth Investment is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organisation dedicated to helping communities make sure all young people are ‘Ready by 21’ - ready for work, college and life. This goal requires that young people have the supports, opportunities and services needed to prosper and contribute where they live, learn, work, play and make a difference. The Forum provides information, technical assistance, training, network support and partnership opportunities needed to increase the quality and quantity of youth investment and youth involvement.

Kalisha Davis
kalisha@forumforyouthinvestment.org
The Participation in Practice project aims to provide organisations working with young people, and young people themselves, with practical tools to assist them in developing effective models of youth participation.

A partnership between the Victorian Government's Office for Youth and the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) has developed three publications on different aspects of youth participation. The publications consider the issues of:

- What is consultation with young people?
- Why consult with young people?
- How are objectives set and the consultation planned?
- What methods can be used?
- How can the consultation be evaluated?

Consulting Young People about their ideas and opinions

This handbook provides resources to assist in planning, undertaking and evaluating consultation with young people. Drawing from practices around Victoria, the handbook provides practical advice to key questions including:

Creating Change in Your Community

This handbook provides practical advice and resources you can use in planning, creating and reflecting on creating change in your community.

Practical advice, activity sheets and tools are included to address the following key issues:

- Part 1: Change in communities
- Part 2: Reasons for action
- Part 3: Working together
- Part 4: Planning it
- Part 5: Doing it
- Part 6: Has it worked?

Availability

Copies of these three handbooks are available from Information Victoria on 1800 366 356 or can be downloaded from the website: www.youth.vic.gov.au/participation/participation.htm

If you experience difficulty in downloading the documents please email Georgina Snaddon at georgia.snaddon@dvc.vic.gov.au

or committee is inclusive and that young people's participation is purposefully engaging and empowering.
A new and practical resource to help you involve young people on boards and committees is now available.

All aBoard! looks at issues, information and ideas that organisations will find useful to develop and support young people’s participation so that everyone benefits.

All aBoard! has information to help you get started, covering things like promoting the opportunity to young people, recruiting, defining roles and responsibilities and running an induction day. It also has information about what roles young people are legally allowed to hold in NSW.

The guide also focuses on how to keep things going once the committee is set up. You’ll find ideas about supporting young people, making meetings fun and interesting, helping young people develop new skills and reviewing how things are working.

All aBoard! is the latest addition to the NSW Commission for Children and Young People’s TAKING PARTICIPATION seriously kit. TAKING PARTICIPATION seriously is made up of lots of different modules and is packed with information, tips and ideas to help you involve children and young people in different activities or areas of work.

You can download All aBoard!, as well as all the other parts of the TAKING PARTICIPATION seriously kit, free from the Commission’s website at:


Consulting Pupils: What’s in it for schools?

Consulting Pupils, by Julia Flutter and Jean Ruddock, considers the potential benefits and implications of talking to pupils about teaching and learning in school, exploring its impact at different levels. Key issues included are:

• The importance of engaging young learners in a focused dialogue about learning;
• The role of pupil consultation in helping schools to develop new directions for improvement;
• The wider implications of pupil consultation and participation in teaching the principles of citizenship and democracy.

Through examples of pupil consultation in UK primary and secondary schools, the authors demonstrate how an agenda for change based on pupils’ perspectives on teaching and learning can be used to improve classroom practice.

As well as a grounding in sound theory and recent research evidence, this book contains 15 detailed ‘profiles’ of good practice.

This will be a valuable resource for practitioners, students and researchers interested in exploring pupils’ perspectives on teaching and learning.

News and Reviews

Student Participation in School Planning and Design: A Query

We have just finished our ESRC Network Project - the subject of our books on Consulting Pupils - and all the newsletters are available on the Net for downloading, if you or any of your schools would like copies. The website can be found at:

http://www.consultingpupils.co.uk

We would be happy to send any other materials that might be of interest and will let you know when things come out.

At the moment Jean and I are working on a project looking at student participation in planning and designing the school environment. I wondered if you might know of any Australian schools which have been designed with student consultation/participation? We would be very interested in hearing about any examples you know of.

Julia Flutter
jaed100@cam.ac.uk

Education and Social Action Conference 2004

How should educators respond to the issue of terrorism?
Teaching and learning about terrorism as a means of undermining or underpinning democracy

Sydney: 4 - 8 December, 2004

- Research and evaluation agenda setting sessions: shared 70 to 90-minute sessions bringing together similar research/evaluation interests;
- Workshops: 90-minute sessions involving active teaching, problem posing and tasks for participants;
- Refereed papers: 30-minute individual paper sessions.

Conference strands include:
- Education, Activism and Organising for Robust Democracy
- Schooling and Lifelong Learning for Democracy and Community Building
- Community Action and Democracy-Building for Health
- Families, Learning and the Seeds of Democracy

Centre for Popular Education, UTS
PO Box 123, Broadway NSW 2007
e-mail: cpe@uts.edu.au

Learning choices

A free on-line tool to assist secondary school students to participate in understanding, initiating or revising school policies.

Written and produced by trainee teachers, University of Melbourne, 2004
in collaboration with the Victorian Student Representative Council (VicsRC).

available at:
http://www.policyatschool.org

Details of the Learning Choices Expo, hosted and supported by the Dusseldorp Skills Forum in Sydney earlier this year, are available at their website:

The site contains details of the addresses and papers at the Expo, plus highly valuable lists, descriptions and information about programs throughout Australia plus reference to extensive resources.

There are current discussion about 'where to now?' and about ways to ensure that 'alternative programs' are seen as part of inclusive and diverse education rather than as marginalised add-ons.
Local and Overseas Publications Received

Connect receives many publications directly or indirectly relevant to youth and student participation. We can’t lend or sell these, but if you want to look at or use them, contact us on: (03) 9489 9052 or (03) 8344 9637

**Australian:**

**AEU News** (Abbotsford, Vic) Vol 10, No 7; October 2004

**Annual Report** (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Melbourne) 2003-04

**Education Views** (Queensland Department of Education, Qld) Vol 13 Nos 11-15; June-August 2004

**Crayv: Creating Real Actions with Youth Visions** (East Gippsland, Vic) *Handbook*; 2004

**Fringe Benefits? Young people on the edge of policy and place** (YACVic, Vic) *State Conference*; 2004

**Network News** (Network of Community Activities, Surry Hills, NSW) September 2004

**Promoting Young People’s Mental Health and Wellbeing through Participation in Economic Activities: Key Learnings and Promising Practices** (VicHealth, Vic) 2004

**Taking Young People Seriously:**
- ‘Consulting Young People about their Ideas and Opinions’;
- ‘Young People on Boards and Committees’; and
- ‘Creating Change in Your Community’ (Victorian Office for Youth and Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Vic) - *handbooks*

**Translating Caring Into Action** (Helen Cahill, Gary Shaw, Johanna Wyn and Graeme Smith, Australian Youth Research Centre, University of Melbourne, Vic) *Research Report* 26

**Yikes!** (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic) Vol 3 Edition 4; September 2004

**Young People and Public Transport in the Inner City** (YACVic, Vic) April 2004

**Youth of the Nation: Moreland Youth Summit 04** (Moreland City Council, Vic) April 2004: *Report and Recommendations*

**Youth Studies Australia** (ACYS, Hobart, Tas) Vol 23, No 3; September 2004

**International:**

**Consulting Pupils** (Julia Flutter and Jean Ruddock) Routledge Falmer, London; 2004

**Consulting Pupils: a Toolkit for Teachers** (John MacBeath, Helen Demetriou, Jean Ruddock and Kate Myers) - *book and CD-ROM*; Pearson Publishing; 2003

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**Documents**

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

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

**Code**  **Description/Pages/Cost**

553 **Education for sustainability is at the heart of geography education** (Dr Douglas Bardsley, University of Melbourne, Vic) (7 pp; $1.10)

554 **Some General Guidelines for Deep (vs Shallow) Research/First Thoughts Towards a Research Plan** (Professor Stuart Hill, UWS, NSW) (3 pp; $0.70)

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**AUSTRALIAN STUDENT PARTICIPATION SUPPORT MATERIALS AVAILABLE**

See the back page of this issue of Connect for listings and order form

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**Back issues of Connect** ($4 single; $6 double issue). Circle issue/s required: $ .............
- Cross-referenced index to contents of Connect back issues ($3) $ .............

**Miscellaneous Resources:**
- Students and Work - 1985 Connect reprint booklet #5 ($5) $ .............
- Democracy Starts Here! Junior School Councils at Work (1996) Case studies of Primary School SRCS ($7 or $12 for two copies) $ .............

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

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- Photocopies of the following documents: $ .............
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