Challenging Student Councils to Take the Next Step

We ask the questions:
- What's wrong with SRCs and JSCs?
- Why aren't they more effective?

In this issue:
- NSW SRC 2004 Report
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& Incorporating the PASTA Newsletter #36

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This Issue:

Usually at the start of each year, the first issue of Connect is focused on supporting the operation of Student Councils (SRCs, JSCs etc). We provide stories about what student groups are doing, plus training and resource materials. This year, we decided to go one step further and challenge the operation of Student Councils, saying: "You can do better! You can take the next step!"

Too often these bodies are token and limited efforts aimed at making the school look good and providing prominence for a few already capable and active young people. No wonder they struggle to be credible in the eyes of other students.

And if they do have things to say, proposals to advance and important decisions to be made, where are the school forums in which listening takes place, in which debates and discussions are held, and in which democratic partnerships in school governance occur?

In raising these issues, I experience a dilemma. When I look at suggestions and stories of practice, I am torn between being encouraging ("Hey, that's really great!") and being critical of shortcomings and shortness of vision ("Yeah, but that's really pretty tokenistic!"). So it's useful to invent the Scrouch here - part of my critical support (and in all of us, I suspect) that can be blunt, honest, in-your-face, and say some of the provocative things we've always wanted to say.

(Scrouch: "What do you mean - invented ... part of you? I'm real and I've got an independent voice!! I just think some of the practices you print in Connect are pretty woeful!! Maybe even counter-productive: are you putting those forward as examples of good practice? Shesh!!") See what I mean?

The issues we raise here, and the suggested strategies are just a start. We don't think we know the answers. But we'd like to know what you think, and what you are doing.

Be warned: We're the enemy of snug self satisfaction here. Beware of the Scrouch emerging to challenge you to do better and to be more critical of what you're doing!

Looking Forward: to our 150th!

Whither Connect? Even, heaven help us: Wither Connect? At the end of 2004, Connect turns 25 (that's 150 issues). At that stage I'm also retiring from my salaried work at the Australian Youth Research Centre. I've had a hope that there would be a 'generational change' about now and that I would pass Connect on to someone in the near future. Or maybe it should just stop at some point? Any thoughts? Anyone want to enter into negotiation on this? Anyone with a burning passion, commitment, and ability and time to produce Connect regularly?

Roger Holdsworth

NEXT ISSUE: #147: June 2004
Deadline for material: end of May, 2004
SRCs and JSCs
Ready to Take the Next Step?
What’s wrong with SRCs and JSCs?

Let’s recognise that at least some of these important criticisms of Student Councils can be true:

- they’re elitist: involving only a small number of the already successful students;
- they’re trivial: dealing with relatively unimportant issues in the school, not consulted on important issues and stuck in charity fund-raising;
- they’re unconnected: to students generally, and to the important decisions and decision-making structures of schools;
- they’re non-curricular: not recognised as part of the school’s teaching and learning;
- they’re ineffective: having little real impact, and leaving school structures, approaches and relationships unchanged.

We need to hear stories about SRCs and JSCs that:

- overcome elitism: actively involving the whole student body, particularly the full range of students who are not otherwise involved or experiencing success;
- reject trivia: challenging restricted agendas; examining the most important issues facing the school; working on models of ‘change not charity’;
- are connected: recognised and integrally part of the decision-making structures of the school;
- are part of the curriculum: concerned with learning; recognised as part of an educational program; going beyond ‘voice’ and ‘representation’ to support broader student participation and action on important matters;
- are effective: in reviewing, challenging and changing the ways that schools operate, and in the creation and development of local and school communities.

We’re committed to developing and supporting effective SRCs and JSCs!
We’re committed to sharing practical examples of approaches that go beyond these limitations and criticisms!

Do one or more of the above criticisms describe your SRC or JSC?
Are you unhappy with an ineffective SRC/JSC?
Does it have to be that way?

What are you doing about it?
So … are you ready to take the next step?

February-April 2004
Facing the Challenge: Restructuring the SRC to Avoid Elitism

The Challenge: ...unrepresentative ...elitist ...the same old students

The Scrunch says: "Relatively few students get to be representatives. Who gets chosen depends on how representatives are selected eg it can easily be a 'popularity contest' with those elected having few ideas and little commitment. Or, if an emphasis is placed on competitive elections (speeches, campaigns etc), those elected will be the already able, articulate, empowered students - and unconfident, different, marginalised, inarticulate students will not be elected. The same few students continue to get opportunities and to be called upon to 'represent' all. We also know that girls are more likely to be elected than boys, but that boys disproportionately take higher profile, higher power positions."

Involving Younger Students

At our school, we have a very successful SRC. They successfully organise school fundraisers, discos and special events.

School Captains are elected by the whole school student body at the beginning of the school year.

We think that SRCs need more communication with the younger students in the meetings. They tend not to speak out in meetings because they are intimidated by the older students. We think the School Captains should have a special meeting with the junior primary representatives. That will give the younger students' perspective of what they want in our school. It will also give them confidence to speak out in front of groups because they feel comfortable with people their own age.

SRC, Millicent North Primary School  
Second Street, Millicent SA 5280

Being Inclusive

There is a huge cross-section in our SRC, ranging from Year 12 to Year 7, special education students and, at the moment, we're organising a way to include Koori students. Our executive members are not always the popular people of the school.

In all of the activities that we organise, we include everyone. We have had a lot of positive feedback from people who are involved with us about these things.

A group of 7-8 SRC representatives regularly go to our biggest feeder school and give talks about the SRC and what it's all about. We also talk about the responsibilities that are associated with being on the SRC and we talk to their sporting and school captains about their responsibilities. We are doing this because we are trying to keep up the numbers of students to come to our school, because over the last 2-3 years, we have had competition from other (private) schools starting up around our area. This is one of the biggest problems facing our school.

Freya Hunter  
Publicity Officer, James Fallon High School SRC  
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Possible Strategy 1:
Limit the terms of Student Council members - eg change every 6 months - to enable more or even all students to be representatives at some stage; the consequence is, however, that students do not develop in-depth skills.

Possible Strategy 2:
Make a conscious effort to involve students - as individuals and groups - who don't usually get represented on the Student Council. This might be on the basis of ability, or background, or age. See the articles (page 6-7 of this issue) from South Australia's Open Access School and (here) from the SRCs at Millicent North PS (SA) and James Fallon HS (NSW) for three examples of such approaches.

Possible Strategy 3:
Increase the role and importance of democratic classroom or home group meetings. Encourage all classes at all levels to hold these regularly. See the large article on Classroom Meetings in Connect 142 (August 2003) for lots of ideas on how to do it.

Possible Strategy 4:
Develop whole school student discussions and forums which define the important issues, support student discussion around these, and result in the formation of action committees of interested and involved students to follow them up. See the article on DART (opposite page).
Facing the Challenge: Involving ALL Students

DART = Discussion Action Representation Thought

Being elected democratically to the SRC does not automatically mean you are a representative of the student body. It means you have been asked to be a representative - which is different. In order to actually be a representative you need to be able to:

1) collect opinions from all the people you claim to represent; and

2) report back to these same people on what you are doing about their concerns.

Schools seem to have no end to the methods a student can use to communicate their progress back to the students, especially for a creative SRC member, and yet there is little avenue for listening to the students. SRCs must create a culture of listening, and not just telling.

Believing that, because the representative is also a student, they will therefore 'know' or have a better feel for what the student body is thinking, defeats the point of representation. We would be terrified if an Australian politician openly announced that he or she was an adult human and therefore could adequately represent the rest of the population because of that. That's not how democracy works, and it is essential that students make the same demands of their Student Councils or run the risk of trivialising them.

Gathering opinions from students can and should be done in a number of ways, from simply talking to people to running surveys. Six schools in Banyule went further.

The DART Forums, a project created by Banyule City Council Youth Service, are about SRCs talking to all the students in the school and determining their agenda for the year based on the student feedback. DART stands for Discussion, Action, Representation and Thought - the essential components of a functioning SRC. This was created out of a frustration at state and national forums that claimed to genuinely represent all young people - and yet again only two students out of all of Banyule's ten thousand attend.

A DART Forum typically takes two periods to run and takes the place of normal classes at that time. Beginning in a hall or auditorium where the SRC will explain the concept of the forums, the students are then separated into groups of about ten and taken to different rooms right across the school. The Student Council members, with a few specially selected assistants, facilitate the discussions of each group for the next hour or so, unaided by staff except upon request. The facilitators receive several sessions of training prior to the forum to do this job - without doubt the toughest part of the day, and the most rewarding.

The traditional reporting back session concludes the forum, at the end of which the SRC members find their arms overflowing with recording sheets and butcher's paper filled with opinions, ideas, suggestions and sometimes some pretty cool drawings. It can take a while to sort through all this information but, at the end of it, the SRC have a very clear picture of what the rest of the school is thinking. This is what a 'grass roots connection' actually means!

Following a DART forum is the opportunity for schools to join forces and have their collective views - of all students, not just some token representatives - presented to the Local Government and a range of other relevant groups.

These forums are challenging in many ways but are basically easily organised, especially when the school grows into this process and really values this communication. SRCs can use such a forum as a sounding board for their ideas, canvassing students on issues around the school, determining whether to spend their energies on fixing facilities or changing school policy: what interests students most? This is also a fantastic publicity tool, showing the SRC really listening and genuinely responding, rather than making the classic mistake: "Of course I know what students want - I am one."

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Meet the Scrouch!

The Scrouch is the Student Council Grouch who questions, challenges, worries, criticises... but who still supports your intentions - a 'critical friend'. It's a very useful role - an irritant, a reminder, a challenge to do better and go further.

It's important to have a Scrouch on your Student Council. In fact, if the person doesn't exist, it might be necessary to invent one. Or to have a Review Group of students who ask the difficult questions and say: "We can do better than that!"

For more information on how to run a DART forum, contact Peter Sartori at Banyule City Council on 03 9457 9938 or Peter.Sartori@banyule.vic.gov.au

February-April 2004
Melaleuca Park Schools is situated in Mt Gambier and was formerly known as Mt Gambier East Schools. Mt Gambier is a regional centre with a population of about 26,000 and is located in South Australia about 400 km south east of Adelaide.

The school has a student population of about 270, many of whom come from low socio-economic backgrounds. About 70% of students receive school card assistance.

**Background: Values Education**

In 2001/2002, the school focused on developing a set of school values. Staff, students and the school community developed a statement of these values. Students then discussed the values and described what each value would look like in practice. These descriptions are now on display in all teaching areas.

In early 2003, the values became part of a two week Values Education program that also included intensive work in Brain Theory, Program Achieve, Quality Classrooms and Student/Community (this is based on a similar program run at Warmambool East PS in Victoria). All classes were involved in the program for the first two weeks of the school year. The aim of the program was to build cohesive classrooms, to encourage responsibility and a sense of community, and to establish a positive ethos for the year ahead. The Values Education program has now become an annual program for which the first eight days of the school year are set aside.

Staff found that, in order to meet the learning needs of all students, to ensure their success, and to avoid behaviour management issues, students needed a program with a real purpose and where they could be involved in gaining skills and knowledge beyond the classroom.

**Community Groups Program**

In 2003, Melaleuca Park Schools developed and implemented a Community Groups Program that builds on the learning of the Values Education program. The aims of the Community Groups Program are to increase student self esteem, develop a sense of community pride, provide a forum for student voice and decision-making and to develop a deeper understanding of the Key Competencies.

Community Groups are made up of between six and sixteen students that work on real decision-making tasks around the school. Some are just Junior Primary, some are just Primary, but there are some that are R to 7. At the beginning of the year, a list of Community Groups is compiled (this year, students suggested some of them) and students elect four Community Groups that they would like to be part of. They are then put into one of these.

The types of Community Groups include Front Office Helpers, Tuckshop, Fundraising, Environment, Boandik Lodge, Kindy Support, Grounds, Radio Melaleuca, Melaleuca Maintenance, Newsbreakers, Promoting our School, ICT, Art Displays and so on. There are 20 groups in all. All teaching and leadership staff and some SSOs facilitate a Community Group.

In addition, there is now a Student Executive (see below) with a representative on each Community Group. The Student Executive member runs a half hour discussion/decision making/planning meeting and then the group does an hour of ‘hands on’ work.

The Community Groups Program provides all students with experiences that reflect the school values, develop social skills and develop literacy and numeracy skills.

How did it develop?

In 2003, the school won a grant from the SA Civics and Citizenship Whole School Professional Development Project. The aim of our project was to review and refine the Community Groups Program to better meet the needs of all students. Staff members made observation visits to schools in Adelaide that were recognised to have good practice in Civics and Citizenship Education and that ran established programs that were similar to our Community Groups Program. Following the visits, the staff involved reported in detail on their observations of each school’s program.

At the end of Term 2, with this new knowledge and understanding and with the experience of having run Community Groups for half of the year, the whole staff undertook a review of Community Groups and the SRC and the two were then modified to make them more effective and to improve learning outcomes for students.

Community Groups are now run for one and a half hours a fortnight.
as staff felt that half an hour a week was insufficient to actually get much done. Some Community Groups are created that are Junior Primary only so that the younger students' involvement in the program was more than just token, as staff felt it had been.

SRC was abandoned in its previous form. Staff and students had much discussion about the usefulness of the SRC now that Community Groups were running. The SRC lacked direction and was floundering. In the past the SRC had been little more than a token effort with very little true decision-making power. It was responsible for some fundraising and organising events like Bad Hair Days and discos. It involved very few students and Junior Primary students had next to no input.

Instead, a Student Executive was formed. Year 6 and 7 students represent each Community Group on the Executive. These students apply for and win their positions. The Student Executive meets for one and a half hours on the alternate fortnight to Community Groups. There are leadership roles within the Executive – Chairperson (held by School Captains), Secretary, Reporter and Timekeeper. The Executive discusses whole school issues, reports on the progress of their Community Group and plans and organises events. When making decisions or being part of a discussion, each student’s role is to represent their Community Group.

Following the meetings, the Student Executive members report back to their Community Group. The first half hour of Community Groups is a meeting time run by the Student Executive member for the purpose of information giving and discussion. The other members of the Community Group have an opportunity to voice their opinions and bring new information or issues to the Student Executive. The Student Executive can also bring issues for discussion to Staff and Governing Council.

The Community Groups program has developed in students a sense of ownership and pride in the school and a feeling that their input is valuable. Students are keen to offer suggestions and continue the work of their Community Group outside the allocated time slot. For students at risk, it gives them a sense of achievement that they may not get in the regular classroom. Behaviour Management issues during Community Groups time are virtually non-existent. From this we assume that students are participating fully and that it is meeting some of the needs of the most disinclined learners.

For some staff, letting go of the power continues to be a challenge but they are keen to continue to improve student voice and student decision making in the school.

The Community Groups Program and the formation of Student Executive are vast improvements on what was in place but there remains much scope for further developing opportunities for student empowerment at Melaleuca Park Schools.

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SRC at Asquith Girls High School, NSW

What is the SRC?/Who is in the SRC?

SRC is one of the many leadership teams in the Asquith Girls High School community. Each year every year group votes on representatives who they want to represent them in the following year.

There are: three representatives in Year 7, three representatives in Year 8, three representatives in Year 9, four representatives in Year 10, two representatives in Year 11 and four Executives in Year 11.

What does the SRC do?

Each Wednesday the SRC President hosts a meeting in which representatives from each Year group come together to discuss issues that need to be considered within the school as well as upcoming events. Many issues involve activities that are taking place within the school community eg fundraising events, which involve raising money for various charities or to purchase new equipment to improve the school and make it a better environment for the students.

What happens next?

After these issues are discussed, the Year 11 executive team then passes it on to the Principal and the prefects at a morning tea meeting every Monday morning. This way everyone is informed of what is happening in the various leadership teams within the school.

How are meetings prepared?

Each Tuesday morning, the SRC Executive meets with the SRC Co-ordinator and discusses an agenda which is prepared by the SRC secretary for the next meeting.

Are there any special roles?

Yes there are. Each representative is assigned a special role for which they are responsible during the year. For example there are Year representatives for each Year group. These representatives are in charge of asking their Year group about their concerns and things they would like to see happen and improved around the school.

Special Roles Include:

Year Representatives, Canteen Liaison, Microwave Monitor, Sponsor Child - (World Vision), Soap Dispenser Monitors, Notice Board Monitors, Notice Board, Suggestion Box.

Are the SRC representatives involved in other events?

Each month there are district meetings in which four SRC students from each school within the district meet in order to discuss issues that have been bought up in their individual schools. They share each others' ideas and students are more familiar with what is happening in schools in the district.

The SRC is also often invited to community forums and other events that deal with leadership and issues in society.

All in all, the SRC is a vital part of the student leadership team at Asquith Girls High School. Without their commitment and continued efforts, many improvements, activities and events would be very hard to achieve.

Rana Saleh
Year 11 SRC member
Asquith Girls High School
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February-April 2004
The Challenge: ...trivial ...unimportant ...just raising money for charity

The Scrunch says: "The issues that Student Councils deal with are the most trivial ones in the school. They don't address the important aspects of teaching and learning or decisions about school policies, structures and organisation. Instead, Student Councils get bogged down in fundraising for school or community. Yet we need to recognise that the development of the organisational skills involved in fund-raising can be an important bridge to enabling Student Councils to tackle larger issues. How do we go beyond these limitations and walk across that bridge?"

Possible Strategy 1:
Develop a clear mission statement for the Student Council that defines its involvement in the full range of important issues discussed and decided in a school. Each year, review how much time the Student Council has spent on various sorts of activities. See the suggested activity: How Do We Know What We Have Achieved? in Connect 116 (April 1999).

Possible Strategy 2:
Just say NO! Simply refuse to do any fund-raising at all. Send the letters back saying: "Not relevant to this group."

Possible Strategy 3:
Set up a Fund-Raising Subcommittee of the Student Council and restrict financial activities to this group. They are then only one report amongst many at full Student Council meetings. Other subcommittees and the whole Student Council can get on with other important things!

Possible Strategy 4:
Develop a Student Foundation around the idea of 'change not charity' and use the Student Council's fund-raising power to drive changes in the school and its community ... and follow them up! See the article on Student Foundations here.

'Change, not Charity'
Creating a Student Foundation

The idea of a Student Foundation has been developed by the r.u.MAD? (Are You Making a Difference?) Program (see references below). It turns fundraising on its head by seeing that raising and distributing funds can be a student action for 'change not charity'. Students are supported to make a difference in areas of concern to them, not just through money, but also through 'time and talents'. This approach builds on the belief that students are capable contributors to society, who have valuable ideas and who can take on responsibility with energy and skill.

Student Foundations follow the principles of the r.u.MAD? program by addressing the causes of problems, rather than the problem itself. A Student Foundation may decide to fund school or wider community projects if they 'make a difference' and meet the Foundation's criteria.

Spensley Street PS Junior School Council
Educational Focus
A Foundation combines the action of community change and service with research and reflection. The Foundation:
- helps students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organised experiences that meet actual community needs and are coordinated in collaboration with the school and community;
- is integrated into the students' academic curriculum or provides a structured time for students to think, talk, or write about what they did and saw during the activity;
- provides students with the opportunity to use newly acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations in their own communities; and
- enhances what is taught in school by extending student learning beyond the classroom and into the community, and helps foster a sense of caring for others.

Establishing a Student Foundation
The r.u.MAD? Program suggests a series of three workshops to investigate and design a Foundation. Details are provided in the MAD Foundation's Resource Guide at: http://www.rumad.org.au/resources.htm

Workshop 1 examines 'What is a Foundation?'; it includes a hypothetical, and culminates in a decision to set up a Foundation. Workshop 2 is critical: it identifies values and areas of interest, and develops a Mission Statement for the Foundation. At this point, students make decisions about what changes they wish to bring about in their school or community, and about any criteria or guidelines they wish to set eg things they won't fund, or physical location of projects (eg in the local community).

"We are the Grange College Student Action Team. We are concerned about youth issues, particularly in the area of education and human rights. Through supporting the values of everyone's right to a good education, freedom, respect and equality, we hope to assist community projects and organisations by the donation of our Time, Talent and Treasure."

The Grange College Student Foundation Mission Statement, 2002

Workshop 3 is more practical: appointing teams of students such as directors, research, publicity and funding, and deciding on their tasks. Directors provide the overall coordination; the Research Team investigates and advertises for community applicants for funding from the Foundation - and then recommends on what grants to make; the Publicity Team promotes fundraising and (later) the funded projects; and the Funding Team budgets and manages funds and coordinates the actual fundraising. The students may also appoint an advisory group of non-students to support them in legal, accounting, publicity areas and so on.

The Foundation advertises that it has funds available and then looks at applications for its grants. It matches these against its Mission Statement. How will funding these requests make the changes that the students desire? Once grants are made, the Foundation is also able to follow up the progress of its funding and see how the funds are being used, and what outcomes there are.

Examples
Student Foundations have been set up in both primary and secondary schools. Some have been established as part of, or by the Student Council; others run in parallel, as separate organisations, but keep the Student Council informed. There have been previous articles in Connect about Student Foundations at:

- Melbourne Girls College (see Connect 135-136, June-August 2002);
- The Grange P-12 College (see Connect 133-134, February-April 2002);
- Spensley Street Primary School (see Connect 138, December 2002).

The r.u.MAD? website also contains several other examples of Student Foundations, as well as providing an extremely detailed Resource Guide, with information, forms, advice and contacts. This Guide can be downloaded from the website. Check:

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

r.u.MAD? is a program of the Education Foundation, 4/252 Collins Street, Melbourne 3000. It is supported by the Stegley Foundation with several philanthropic foundations, including the Myer Foundation, William Buckland Foundation, Paul Edward Dehnert Trust and individual donors.

For more information contact Julia Kubincan or Adrian Bertolini (r.u.MAD? Schools Coordinator) at the Education Foundation on (03) 9650 4277.
The Challenge:

...not recognised as learning
...the curriculum is the same old same old...

The Scrouch says: "The Student Council is 'co-curricular' or, even worse, 'extra-curricular'. Though individual and group skills are being developed, they are not recognised as 'learning'. Or we just expect students to be able to work on such bodies without building in skill development.

"And ... by concentrating on Student Councils, we forget about active student participation in all other areas of the curriculum, so the same teacher-directed or manufactured student-inquiry approaches remain unchallenged. Students ask: 'what's the point of learning this?' to be told 'one day ... one day...'. We ignore opportunities to change the ways in which students learn - to recognise them as valued citizens who can work on and achieve immediately useful outcomes within their communities as they learn!"

Researching School Support for Papua New Guinea: A Student Action Team Approach

A group of eight Grade 5/6 students formed a Student Action Team (SAT) in term 4, 2003 to investigate how best to assist a school for disabled students in Papua New Guinea (PNG). The members researched the country, its government, its people and resources, in order to have a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. They communicated with the school in PNG and then linked with our local Manningham Council and our school and local community, in order to educate all of us about the school and PNG.

They approached local businesses to donate educational supplies for the students (the priest in charge of the school advised the SAT of suggestions about what their needs were). The local paper did an article on the Student Action Team. From donated moneys, they shopped for resources and organised for the shipping of these to the school.

The story goes on in 2004 and an article in a future Connect will explain more.

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Student Action Teams

Student Action Teams have been developed in primary and secondary schools in Victoria for several years. At a state level, two program rounds provided support to schools for the formation of Student Action Teams on community safety between 1999 and 2002.

These Student Action Teams were supported by the Victorian Department of Education, with funding provided by the Victorian Department of Justice through its Crime Prevention Strategy and Safer Cities and Shires Program, and by VicHealth. Teams of students discussed and decided on priority issues about community safety (what it meant, how it affected their communities, what students thought about it), carried out community-based research, and then developed action plans to address these issues. Previous issues of Connect have reported on these teams and their work: Connect 124-125, August-October 2000; Connect 128, April 2001.

Two evaluation reports have been produced by the Australian Youth Research Centre (The University of Melbourne) and these document program implementation and outcomes for students. (Contact the Centre on 03 8344 9633 to buy copies of these.)

In addition, a Student Action Teams ‘How To Do It’ Manual has been produced and is freely available on the web (recently republished):


Student Action Team Principles

Student Action Teams are characterised by:

• student engagement with a project focus or topic: either student choice of this, or substantial student decision-making on how to approach it;
• student engagement with project decision-making and implementation;
• a focus within the community - preferably beyond the school;
• identification and formation of a student team or teams;
• processes of research and action by students that intend to make a difference around the chosen focus/topic within the community.

Local Student Action Teams

Other similar approaches have subsequently been developed in various areas, using the same principles. Hume City Council provided support to secondary schools in its area for the development of local Student Action Teams around safety issues; Werribee Youth Law supported a Student Action Team approach to local legal issues; Adelaide City Council commissioned North Adelaide Primary School to research young people’s use of Rundle Mall, and of play spaces within the city (see Connect 141, June 2003); a group of primary and secondary schools in the City of Darebin developed a Student Action Team approach to investigating and acting on local traffic safety in 2003 (see Connect 140, April 2003 and Connect 143-144, October-December 2003).

Student Action Teams and Student Councils

Student Action Teams have sometimes been set up by Student Councils as an arm of their work. For example, the Student Leadership Council at Karingal Park Secondary College initially discussed issues of concern to students in their school and community at their annual orientation and training camp. They highlighted some community safety concerns in the area, and got support from the overall Program to set up a Student Action Team to lead the research and action around these concerns. The SAT then reported to the SLC.

In other cases, the SAT has operated in parallel with the Student Council, enabling the active participation of other students. In some cases, Student Action Teams have deliberately and spectacularly involved marginalised students who had little contact with (or respect for) the Student Council, and enabled them to become active participants in important school decision-making.

In other cases, Student Action Teams provide bridges between student decision-making (Student Councils and so on) and the formal curriculum: the Teams are set up within class-time, or whole classes take Student Action Team approaches. In one instance, a Year 9 Health class decided to form several Student Action Teams to investigate and act on bullying within the school (and community) as part of their Health curriculum.

You’ll find similar approaches also documented within the u.m.A.D? Program and elsewhere under the heading of ‘Students as Researchers’.

Roger Holdsworth
**The Challenge:**

...unconnected to the real decision-making in the school

The Scrauch says: "Student Councils seem to exist within a vacuum. They make decisions, but have no power to enact them; they present student voices, but no-one is listening. There's not even a forum for the voices to engage and discuss issues seriously.

"Sometimes a couple of students are on School Council; even more rarely, they are elected there by students (once upon a time that was required in Victoria!). Even then, their voices are isolated and ignored. Occasionally someone turns to the students and asks: "What do you think?" But in the absence of background information, support and a chance to consult with other students, the representative is mute or can present only a personal view. The discussion moves on.

"No training exists for student representatives on School Councils (though there once was)."

**Possible Strategy 1:**

Research decision-making structures in the school. This can be a Student Council training exercise, or a Student Action Team project (eg in Social Science or Politics classes). See details of a proposed training exercise on this page: Mapping the School.

**Possible Strategy 2:**

Request Student Council representation on all school committees. There should be at least two student representatives on each group.

**Possible Strategy 3:**

Organise Training Days for School Council student representatives. A group of nearby schools could run an annual cluster day where all students on School Councils get background information on their roles, assertiveness training and so on. Ask the Department of Education to support this.

**Mapping the School**

This is an exercise that can be run with primary or secondary school students - the level of complexity can be adapted to the age range. It is an in-school research task. It requires at least an hour; better to run it in two half-hour sessions a week apart.

Start by asking the students what they already know about who makes decisions in the school: Which individuals? What groups exist? What decisions do they make?

As students contribute information, map it onto a whiteboard, checking about the details: "Who is on this committee?" "What do they look at?" "How often do they meet?" "Who do they report to?"

This builds up a first map of what is known. More importantly, it starts to define what is not known. It suggests questions like: "Who would know what this group or person does?" "Who do we need to ask about this?" Write these up on the map as research tasks.

Set up research teams: a group of three students might elect to interview the Principal about specific questions; another group might volunteer to attend a meeting of a canteen committee and find out who is there and what they do. (If I'm doing this as an 'outsider', I prepare for the training by arranging for key people to be available at that time, and the student research teams go off and interview them and bring the information straight back. If I'm in the school, I'd do this over a longer time period (eg a week) and suggest that the information be brought back and shared.)

On reconvening, the research teams report and correct, clarify or add to the map until all are reasonably happy that it represents how decisions are made in the school. Looking at the map directly raises further questions of: "Where are students already represented?" "Where should they be?" as well as targeting student input around issues of interest: "Who do we go and see about this issue?" The completed map can also be drawn up neatly and put on a student noticeboard or published in the student diary.

Roger Holdsworth
Possible Strategy 4:
Develop strategies for inclusive meeting procedures. These will benefit all members of meetings, not just students. Ideas for 'Inclusive Committee Procedures' are included in an article on Page 34 of this issue.

Possible Strategy 5:
Keep other groups particularly parent organisations, P&C etc fully informed. Visit parent and community representatives on School Council prior to meetings and ask for their support - even ask them to lead on some matters. This is called lobbying and is quite legitimate.

Keeping All Informed
The SRC at James Fallon High School (Albury, NSW) always attends School Council meetings, so that we can advise them, the P&C and other groups with the decision-making power in the school. We give them regular reports and represent the student body to the fullest of our ability.

We regularly talk to our Year advisers about issues that affect every Year group. We also have a very good rapport/relationship with our Principal and we always talk to him and bring up issues about the students and the school, and work through many projects.

Freya Hunter
Publicity Officer, James Fallon HS SRC, Albury NSW
The Challenge:

... irrelevant ... ineffective

The Scrouch says: “The sorts of discussions and decisions made by Student Councils are peripheral to real decision-making in the school. Sometimes the Student Council appears to make some decisions - but they have been allowed to make these because they really change little at all - only the details. When important decisions are to be made, the Student Council is absent or not consulted or ignored. Therefore students regard the Student Council as irrelevant to their needs. When students do raise issues through the Council that they regard as really important, either members of the Council 'censor' these: "Oh, that wouldn't be achievable" or, if they take them up for action, they're usually or always knocked back by school decision-makers, sometimes with no explanation.”

James Fallon High School, NSW

The James Fallon High School SRC is an effective body. We get guest speakers to come and speak to the students; we organise for 'Motivational Media' to be viewed by all Year groups each year.

We have done many things that change and review how the school operates, and been involved in the creation and development of local and school communities. These are just some of them:

- We raised the issue to revamp the senior girls' dress. We came up with new designs and one was picked and now the dress is more attractive and practical.
- We organised the new bell times, deciding whether we have two recesses or a long lunch etc. Now the bell times are more appropriate to how the school operates.
- We got more healthy things available in our school canteen.
- We also got EFTPOS at the front office so paying fees, excursions etc is easier.
- We made a very professional school promotional video. Due to difficulties with the media profile legislation, it was hard to show it to the public, but anyone who did see it said it was funny and very professional, but at the same time promoted the school very well.
- We always helped and discussed many working bees, putting the student body's opinions forward in advising the organisers of the project.
- We also attended a seminar with four other schools to promote and make students aware of the facilities that our local health centre provides. We attended numerous meetings over a six-month period - all in our own time. This was a very big development for us.

I hope we have shown you how we have been and still are 'stepping beyond'.

Freya Hunter
Publicity Officer
James Fallon HS SRC
Albury, NSW
Annual General Meeting 2004
The PASTA AGM is held at the end of February. An update on all matters will be available on our Website by the end of Term 1. Go to the ‘What’s New?’ page for our new 2004 Officers and Committee members, proposed constitutional changes re standing and ad hoc committees and categories of members, a summary of the President’s Report etc. On behalf of all members and associates, I warmly thank anyone departing the PASTA Committee for their voluntary efforts during the year, and welcome any new members.

NSW DET Restructuring Points to a ‘Fresh Start’ for SRCs
Our informative and friendly meetings with officers of the Pupil Well-being Unit of the NSW DET continued in January. We thank our long-term contact, Helen Kerr-Roubicek, now retired, for her sustained cooperative efforts over the past several years. We applaud the DET initiative in ensuring that these talks take place regularly, thereby forming a basis for creating and continuing mutually supported projects.

We welcome the new Manager: Pupil Well-being, George Mackay. We also congratulate Stuart Hearne on his appointment to the newly created role of ‘Leader, Values and Student Leadership’, a PEO position. His previous SEO2 job as ‘Coordinator, Student Leadership and SRCs’ will still operate, but with a new person implementing those details.

Schematic charts of all restructuring changes now in process are on the NSW DET Website. It is clear there is to be a renewed emphasis on SRCs as values-based programs. Their present and potential roles as catalysts and activists for other targeted pupil well-being areas are also noteworthy. Student health and well-being, anti-bullying and child protection, drug education, disability programs, driver education and road safety issues are all important school and community issues to which SRCs can make valuable school-wise contributions and from which they can raise their own profile and personal learning curricula.

Substantive linkages with indigenous and ethnic constituencies, civics and citizenship curriculum, community involvement, publications, public relations as well as the many daily and yearly management matters that keep a school ticking over, are clearly well within the scope of well-supported, professionally recognised SRCs and student leadership teams. The NSW DET restructure makes those connections more obvious, on paper at least, at regional and head office levels. If read that way and, more critically, acted upon by those involved in such areas at the grass-root school levels as well, then real progress can be achieved.

Fresh Start 2004
One of our most important joint projects is Fresh Start 2004, an annual professional development day for new and renewing advisers, consultants, pupil welfare officers and the like. See details for this and other significant PD possibilities and perspectives further on in this Newsletter or contact the Secretary.

ISRC 2004 and the 7th Annual Overseas SRC Leadership Tour
PASTA is pleased to be working with Victorian and South Australian SRC Teacher/Advisers in creating a properly representative, well-prepared national delegation for this second ISRC (Edmonton, 3-7 August). An updated program and a synopsis of the Tour Itinerary are on other pages. As the Conference is not until August, there may still be time to apply. But do so ASAP!

As one of the key support organisations for the inaugural ISRC in Sydney in 2000, it seems clear that the NSW DET and its respective schools will at least look favourably on being represented - by advisers as well as student leaders - in Canada. After all, it is Australians who were responsible for beginning something that is so potentially significant for secondary schools throughout the world.

The extent to which the federal and state governments throughout the country, their respective Education Departments, the non-government school sector, Principals’ Associations, Parent and Education Union bodies and universities follow their lead is still to be made apparent.

Ken Page
PASTA President 2003-4

http://www.hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/

March 2004
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EQUALS: 
PROFILE, PEOPLE, PROMOTION

WORKING CONDITIONS / RAISING THE PROFILE OF SRC TEACHER ADVISERS

Our efforts to make a case for better conditions for SRC Advisers often meet favourable agreement in principle but little in the way of direct action. Many (in all Australian states we presume?) agree that student groups cannot be sustained over time without a real adviser presence to pursue the necessary skills training, sustain the motivation when times are tough and keep such structures going with such frequent student turnover. However, most advisers who understand the scope and potential of SRCs sadly find themselves without adequate time, resources and, most of all, recognition from students and their own colleagues that this is a job which is the equal of more traditionally accepted adviser jobs.

One practical measure, for secondary schools at least, would be to ensure that SRC Advisers be accorded the same status and conditions as Year Advisers. Lobbying for practical steps like time allocations, remuneration, career recognition to make that real is a long-term process.

Approaches by PASTA, VISTA and other organisations and individuals who read this publication will have to be seriously undertaken over an extended period. It must target teacher unions, parent organisations, other professional associations and the media as well as appropriate government bodies and independent schools. PASTA intends to address this aspect in NSW again this year as well as clarify with organisations like VISTA and the new South Australian Adviser organisation what lobbying efforts are being made in their states. We openly welcome your input and assistance with this process. Tell us who you know who can move mountains. Even small boulders will do!

As New Year’s Resolutions, here are a couple. Such could easily be transformed into similar strong intent by and with your organisations. Contact us so we may move positively together.

DRAFT RESOLUTION #1:
“That the organisations represented (on this Committee and/or this document) take mutually agreed upon positive actions in 2004 to mount an awareness campaign amongst all schools, professional associations, related student bodies and the media. The aims of these endeavours - to be implemented both together and separately as appropriate to varied briefs, audiences and resources available to each - are to:

1. improve the positive profile, acceptance, representative status, decision-making opportunities, efficiency and broad range of school and community activities of SRCs and other student leadership groups in all schools;
2. increase the general recognition of and appreciation for what Advisers to these groups do now to sustain them over time;
3. effectively use already available resources to provide and enhance systemic, school, collegial, student and community support for SRCs, SRC Advisers and others working in the same area;
4. promote and provide appropriate and readily available new resources, training and networking opportunities for student representative groups so that these can potentially do further things better for the benefit of the whole school community.

We value your input on this and all relevant issues.
Write c/o The Secretary, PASTA:
esheerin@ozemail.com.au or phone: (02) 4396 6485

DRAFT RESOLUTION #2:
“That we (on this Committee and/or represented in this document) recognise and understand the following as the current viewpoint and consequent additional active role being pursued by PASTA, the Professional Association of SRC Teacher/Advisers:

1. SRC Advisers should have the same degree of administrative, collegial and school community recognition, departmental status, internal school communications, and, especially, time and supplementary monetary allowances to do the job expected of and deserved by them, as now exists for Year Advisers in secondary school situations;
2. As a logical step towards achieving the above, PASTA will be working with other similar organisations and interested individuals to lobby appropriate bodies for such recognition or other such improved working conditions for SRC Advisers as may be deemed appropriate and feasible over time;
3. That amongst these efforts similar positive outcomes which suit the circumstances of primary and middle school advisers must also be created and implemented at the earliest opportunity.

“Working Guidelines for Raising the Profile of SRC Teacher/Advisers”
See sub-file for whole document on ‘Issues For Advisers’ page on PASTA Website

The PASTA Newsletter is edited by Ken Page and distributed bi-monthly as a supplement to Connect magazine.
Guest Member Column
(this issue’s contribution is from Charles Kingston, Member - Bathurst, NSW & VP):

“LET’S GET CRITICAL”
SRCs are NOT worth the 3 letters they represent
Or are they?

Whether student, SRC Adviser, Principal, Minister for Education, Prime Minister - and parent - consider this. Is your own school SRC - are SRCs generally valued and supported enough to be and do S & R & C effectively?

In spite of all the fine words and occasional feverish activities, the sad real-life, down-in-the-trenches, grassroots experience is more often than not the opposite. Or a mere, gradually fading imitation of the initial promise.

Let’s try, shall we? We believe it works in all other subject areas. Or should. Why not here too? ... Professionally! Whatever your strengths (your 'label' should be irrelevant), work to create the climate so that the nation has SRCs made of:

- S = Students ... sensing/seeing/(en)suring/sympathising/supporting/studying/saying/simplifying/systematising/stimulating/stirring/selling/as seriously RECOGNISED
- R = Representatives ... representing/recogising/researching/reporting/recollecting/retracting/refresing/reverberating/rising/resonating/realising/relevant/relishing/reminding/recruiting/redistributing/reforming/restructuring/ rejuvenating/really VALUED
- C = Councillors ... counselling/caring/commenting/collaborating/compromising/creating consensus/consenting/condoning/cooperating/contributing/co-opting/creating conducive conditions/constituting/codifying/crediting/credentialing/commanding RESPECT

AND being able to criticise.

Where ‘critical’ means - as it’s supposed to mean - looking closely at, thinking about and considering fairly before commenting, suggesting and acting

ON THE GOOD AS WELL AS THE NOT SO GOOD.

Fresh Start 2004

Fresh Start is an annual professional development day run in conjunction with the NSW DET Pupil Well-being Unit. Target audiences are student leadership advisers, consultants or Pupil Welfare Officers. The interactive process is designed so that all participants may discover ways of effectively guiding their overworked selves and their SRCs. It is for those new to the job. Or 'old hands' simply in need of some personal or SRC rejuvenation.

Fresh Start 2004 will be held in Term 2, most likely in late May or early June. PASTA Members will be notified personally. Non-members are also very welcome. If you are not a member, but wish to attend, contact the Secretary. Or, in mid-April, go to the updated What’s New? page of the PASTA Website for further details.

CONTACT US RE OTHER PD OPPORTUNITIES IN 2004/05

ISSUES FOR ADVISERS

The PASTA Website page titled Issues For Advisers contains information and links to varied professional development resources, including an Advisers e-group, Websites, PD offerings in Australia. And overseas: ISRC and our annual SRC Leadership Tours are for advisers as much as for student self and leadership skills development.

It starts with some important issues we believe all advisers - and their schools and systems - need to consider:

- What it means to be an SRC Adviser: “If it’s ‘important’, then how come it’s not accredited?”
- Training and Representation for students and teachers: “When is it timetabled?”
- Academics and Activities = Achievements: “Are these reported? ... Oh, really? Show us!”
- School and teamwork advising: “Why then is it referred to as being ‘that teacher’s thing’?”
- Dialogue with and support from parents, the local community, the media: “What? Publicity?”
- Collegial support: “But what do they do? Except discos and ‘things’. I mean, it’s not like a Year Adviser at all!”
- SRCs are curriculum: “Aren’t we teachers, more than just ‘minders’ of ‘extra’ activities?”

AND, crucially for the future, Working Conditions and Rewards: So where is the career path for SRC Advisers?

The document Working Guidelines to Raise The Status of Student Representative Council Teacher Advisers has now been available to relevant organisations and on this website for more than a year. On the opposite page are two specific catalysts for real action to make what is real for some ‘advisers’ also the reality for SRC Advisers.

Help us to do that. Write, E-mail, phone, fax, visit, lobby - and, hopefully, travel with us to make this happen.
QUALITY STANDARDS FOR AN SRC PROJECT

[adapted from "The Hitch-Hiker's Guide To Student Government", Chapter 9
L. Vozzo, C. Kingston and West Wyalong High School, 1982]

EVERY JOB or PROJECT (or part thereof) SHOULD:

- achieve Council and Committee purposes (for that year and/or over several years);
- be relevant and important to all or a part of the students not represented on Council;
- be within the ability and comprehension of the group to achieve;
- be a job seen as needed by and for a student member, not imposed by 'the school';
- encourage initiative and originality alongside appreciation for what already works well;
- promote worthy and active school and community citizenship on matters of substance;
- develop responsibility, punctuality, courtesy and cooperative attitudes;
- contribute to the growth of skills and knowledge;
- enlarge students and adult horizons and lead to further learning;
- promote mutual respect and understanding among administration, faculty and students and with other students; no age or subgroup should take advantage of or demean the other;
- be directed at as many groups ('equity' comes with a year's worth of projects, not demanded of each);
- have a realistic and recognizable time frame;
- maintain good records and evaluate relative success and future steps needed.

Some projects that get at the essence of decision-making:

Annually issue to all a statement of SRC goals, structures and projects

- Enable officers and other SRC team members to conduct relevant discussions during classes;
- Have seniors visit junior classes periodically, explaining various aspects of school administration, what it means to be 'a senior', academic subjects etc;
- Enable juniors to do the same for seniors (but only after the latter have been 'retrained' to see the relevance of listening to 'younger folk');
- Establish regular meetings (formal or informal) between chosen representatives and administrators, faculty heads, other year and activity advisers, parents and local media outlets;
- Personally invite relevant non-SRC students, faculty and community people to meetings;
- Use all means of communication at your disposal, change the look or sound of it regularly and be vigilant in assuring that other groups within the school community do likewise.

Formulate a code of behaviour for all members of the school community

- Establish a student rights and responsibilities committee and revise/promote agreed rules;
- Establish a student grievance board ... and a student jury to address problems;
- Organise for speakers on student citizens' legal and consumer rights and responsibilities;
- Poll student opinion on political and social issues and organise appropriate forums for these.

Work towards developing joint student/staff policies on a wide range of issues

- Aim for in person representation at periodic staff, school council and P and C meetings;
- Join (or establish) committees with parents and teachers to implement school priorities;
- Examine examinations, assessment and reporting procedures. (Assure SRC/SL activities get credited on reports!);
- Act positively and involve yourselves with the details to assure price and variety in the canteen, excellent assemblies and ceremonies and a swimming pool (Ha! Caught ya, eh?);
- Cooperate with the staff on planning innovations in the curriculum (eg new courses; new activities within existing courses; excursions, performances, exhibits, contests etc);
- Coordinate the yearly calendar activities for all school activity groups.

Encourage positive attitudes in areas such as citizenship, political awareness, current affairs, tolerance, responsibility, community affairs

- Create your own SRC citizenship awards - small things regularly; bigger things end of year;
- Promote academics with awards for excellence or improvement that you create and present;
- Voice opinions to regional, state and national bodies on academic and welfare issues;
- Submit environmental, social and cultural resolutions to the state or national parliament;
- Liaise with local councils, neighbourhood centres and community service organisations;
- Seek regular representation with local community Arts, Historical and Recreation bodies.
Orientation is SRC Development

Being a representative of one’s country is no more, no less than what all students, parents and professional educators should expect of their representatives at home. Be they elected parliamentarians or student council members, selected ministers or peer support leaders, good representation is both a learned skill and an art form, one that needs professional development training as well as the regular experience of actively ‘doing it’.

The awareness of who and what one represents has to be met with an equally sound understanding of how to do it. ‘Getting there’, that is, being a good student or adult ‘rep’ is exciting. It is educational. It is a challenge. The main challenge is to find the time and the resource support base to make it happen. The same as in your SRCs.

The Itinerary for our 7th Overseas SRC Leadership Tour (see box) only lists dates and places and events once people have left behind the people and schools and communities they represent. It does not mention the months of representations beforehand, the talks with potential sponsors, the intended discussions with SRCs, with the larger student body, with teaching staff in many subjects. And, as national as well as school reps, with the community.

This year in particular, it’s about the themes in the ISRC 2004 program and the recommendations to be presented, collectively as well as individually, by this Australian national delegation at this 2nd ISRC. Later it will be, as it always should, about what is, what can be and how to ‘get there’, whatever ‘there’ is, at the local school level.

All our overseas tour delegates are expected to attend one or more weekend orientation workshops and engage in extensive background reading - much of it emailed. They receive a detailed Orientation Folder which, along with their interactive workshops, covers not only the practical travel matters but history, socio-economic, cross-cultural matters to do with the countries being visited. For each ISRC year - the ‘Olympiad of Citizenship & Representation’ in the summer Olympic years - this means global awareness. (See program themes)

Before being a representative - of anyone else, much more so of a whole country of young, diverse secondary school students - these SRC reps must know themselves, understand strengths and weaknesses of others, and talk.

The orientations include self-appraisal and team development. Though all reps are clearly already high-achieving, out-going individuals, the interactive workshop processes push the boundaries of their potential, create a cooperative climate and teach as well as encourage and advise. Just as should happen within our schools.

7th (ISRC 2004) TOUR

- Thurs 29 July: Depart Sydney for Edmonton
- Fri 30 July - 2 August: Edmonton Heritage Days + Australian Delegation Final Orientation and International Guide Workshops
- Tues 3 - Sat 7: ISRC 2004 (see Jan 2004 draft program)
- Sun 8 Aug: Depart Edmonton for travel to Denver, Colorado OR Seattle, Washington State (some student and adviser delegates may be returning home following ISRC 2004)
- Mon 9 - Fri 13 Aug: Cross-cultural experiences/Host School and State SRC Contacts/Sight-seeing
- Fri 13 - Wed 18 Aug: NASC National Leadership Camp - Camp Cheley (Estes Park, Colorado) This NLC was the first, begun by Dr. Earl Reum 45 years ago. It focuses on self-awareness and skills. Such camps are highlights of all our tours.
- Wed 18 Aug: Travel Denver (via LA) to Honolulu
- Tues 24 Aug: Depart Hawaii (lose day) for
- Wed 25 Aug: Arrival back in Sydney

Things to Do Just for Fun

Wear two different coloured socks ... Wear your watch on your leg ... Follow the postman ...
Take a bath with your clothes on ... Change your clothes every hour ... Wash your neighbour’s car ...
Wear a Santa Claus suit - in public - in the summer ... Cook a meal for a blind person ...
Walk around in a sandwich sign ... Walk around in slow motion ... Give an apple to a teacher ...
Tickle somebody’s feet and say it makes you laugh ... Send your grandmother some flowers ...
Write or call a TV or radio station and tell them that an excellent program IS excellent ...
Tell someone who is beautiful that they are beautiful ... Write yourself a letter ...
Call someone special and remind them of how valuable they are ... Get real! Tell yourself the same thing

“Laughter is good stuff; it rejects ulcers; it cracks parched lips; it makes us human.”

March 2004
2nd International Student Representative Conference (ISRC)

3-7 August 2004
Edmonton Alberta CANADA

Hosted by CASAA, the Canadian Association of Student Activity Advisers
In conjunction with the ISRC International Advisory Board
"One World, One Dream - Think Globally, Act Locally"

For secondary school student leaders and student leadership advisers
(As begun by PASTA - the Professional Association of SRC Teacher/Advisers in Australia
at the 1st ISRC - December 2000 in Sydney)

Mission Statement
The International Student Representative Conference is committed to the development of all youth as global citizens. The global citizen is one of good character who seeks for excellence in all things, develops a spirit of school and community, thinks globally and acts locally, and serves others selflessly with dignity, respect, and integrity.

'It takes the whole village to educate a child." - African Proverb

31 July - 2 August
Edmonton's Heritage Days Festival
(includes Australian Delegation Final Orientation/Training for International Guides)

Tuesday, 3 August: Day 1
“Celebrating Cultural Diversity”
Registration and Displays/Student and Adviser Workshops and Roundtables start today;
Opening Ceremonies featuring
Stephen Lewis (UN Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa);
Host Family Evening and Adviser Evening.

Mosaics (International Groups):
Questions to help you prepare:
- Describe the diversity in your school and community? (eg race, religion, gender, age, socio-economic, housing, cultural pursuits, media and political access - strengths and weaknesses etc)
- How do your school and community cope with diversity?
- What are your recommendations for improving the celebration and appreciation of diversity?

Wednesday, 4 August: Day 2
“Global Awareness”
Dream Weaving and Welcome/Further Student and Adviser Workshops and Roundtables;
General Session featuring Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister of Canada);
Activity Oriented Workshops/Barbecue and Mini-Olympics.

Mosaics:
Questions to help you prepare:
- What is the role of schools in educating the global citizen?
- How can we more effectively enlarge student and adult horizons and promote mutual respect and understanding around the globe and in our own communities?
- How do your school and community use initiative, originality and change while preserving and appreciating valuable traditions and structures that already work well?
- What are some practical ways that you, your school and your community can be more involved in education, media, politics and in shaping everyone's future on this planet?

Thursday, 5 August: Day 3
“Environment and You”
Dream Weaving and Welcome/More Student and Adviser Workshops and Roundtables;
General Session: * Dr David Suzuki (Scientist, Environmentalist, Broadcaster);
(* indicates final confirmation of these speakers is still pending)
Activity Oriented Workshops and City Tours/Activities and Dance.

Mosaics:
Questions to help you prepare:
- What are you, your school and your community doing to address these issues?
- What are your school and community doing to preserve and enhance the environment?
- What are your recommendations for improving health and the environment?
...Somewhere over the world’s multiple rainbows...

Friday, 6 August: Day 4
“Developing Our Community”
Dream Weaving and Welcome;
Community Service Projects Day; General Session: * Jamie Sale and * David Pelletier (Gold Medallists, 2002 Olympics);
West Edmonton Mall and World Waterpark.

Mosaics:
Questions to help you prepare:
- How are you and your school involved in global and local service projects?
- What initiatives can be successfully undertaken in your school and community?
- How can we encourage positive, open-minded and fair attitudes of citizenship, political awareness, current affairs, tolerance, responsibility, and involvement in local as well as global community affairs?

Saturday 7 August: Day 5
“One World - One Dream”
Dream Weaving and Welcome/Final Student and Advisor Workshops Today;
General Session: featuring * Adrienne Clarkson (Governor General of Canada);
The Main Event: Presentation of Recommendations/Development of Action Plans;
Fort Edmonton: Closing Ceremonies/ World Showcase and Variety Show.

Mosaics: Questions to help you reflect:
- How will you apply what you have learned?
- How can ISRC 2004 recommendations be successfully undertaken in your school and community and who will be the best people to help you with that?

Sunday 8 August: Day 6
“Think Globally, Act Locally”
Travel Day - Dreams of Future Successes
Delegations on your global paths: Questions to help you represent:
- How can I best explain this unique event to those back home?
- What actions can I take to encourage others to become involved so that another ISRC occurs in four years time?

“Looking Forward . . . Looking Back”
A FEW ISRC 2000 VIEWS OF CONTINUING THEMES FOR ISRC 2004
A total of 68 recommendations, on five major themes and twelve subtopics, resulted from the 1st ISRC in Sydney. As ISRC’s Co-Convening Team Member Anna Samson put it in her introduction to the final published versions: “Due to lack of time, not all ... were able to be fully debated by the Conference as a whole... Note, however, that all recommendations have undergone rigorous discussion within the particular Melting Pots from which they emanated. As such, delegates are not bound to pursue purely those recommendations that have been passed by the whole Conference but are free to implement those about which they feel the most passionate.”

SOME SAMPLES OF ISRC 2000 RECOMMENDATIONS:
“Celebrating Cultural Diversity” (Day 1 Theme in both ISRC 2000 & ISRC 2004)
- “ISRC 2000 supports the establishment of world-wide cultural awareness programmes that seek to involve the media in a positive way.”
- “... supports efforts to educate the community about needs of indigenous peoples around the world.”

“Challenges Facing Young People in the 21st Century” (Global Awareness’s)
- Discrimination, Health, Voluntarism, School Environment, Global Campaigns
- “... acknowledges the work performed by volunteers as an important community service. ISRC 2000 wishes to express its gratitude towards these people.”
- “... that the UN promote public policies that seek to cancel the debt of Third World countries.”

- “...supports the promotion of environmentally-safe and renewable energy resources.”
- “The Media / Political Process and You” (in 2004: “Developing Our Community”)... encourages the promotion of a positive image of young people, particularly in the media. ... expresses its disappointment in lack of positive media coverage. Conferences and forums such as this should be advertised and more interested shown by newspapers and TV.”

(FOOTNOTE: NO major Australian media even mentioned ISRC2000)

ISRC: It’s structure, function, and future
Recaptured and relaunched till someone else takes up the challenge in another 4 years
The Theme of ISRC 2000 was ‘Building A Better Today’. Continuing the initiative, “One World, One Dream - Think Globally, Act Locally” is that of ISRC 2004...
“ISRC2000 recognises that it is vital that countries unable to physically attend ISRCs should still be allowed to participate in the Conference...” (various ways suggested)
“...calls on The UN to support the work of young people of the world and acknowledge them as a force for social change rather than a problem. As such ISRC 2000 recommends the establishment of avenues within all relevant organisations through which young people can express their views.”
“...suggests each nation holds an annual national student representative conference,”
“...recommends the UN provide assistance in the development of student representative bodies in countries where resources are limited and assist in forming an organisation of these councils at the national level.”

THE MAIN EVENT:
If Now Moves North of the Equator (and “Across The Big Pond”)
“... the Student Forum, which articulated the Recommendations) did not ‘just happen’. The more than 300 delegates to that first ISRC came to that Conference prepared to hear and talk actions about its serious global themes and local needs. Go to PDF files ‘Program’ and ‘Recommendations’ on the PASTA Website for full texts.
In addition, as the first such action-oriented international gathering aimed exclusively at global secondary student representative groups and their advisors, its success created its own momentum. Thus, our Canadian hosts now carry on ‘tradition’. What we then called ‘Melting Pots’ - run daily by ‘International Guides’ and enabling such worthy matters to be shared - now translate to ‘Mosaics’. Australian Achievers now are transported to Canada’s Own. Even some themes have altered - the world never stays the same.

DRAFT PROGRAM as of January 2004
http://www.hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/ then go to the “ISRC2004” page
For Canadian Host Information: Email: info@isrc2004.ca
or go to: http://www.isrc2004.ca/(CASAA site)

March 2004
A role play activity to teach formal meeting procedures, parliamentary procedures and the formal roles of officers within such meetings.

**Participants:** works best with 15 to 30 people. Fewer misses the point. More only if officers really know what they are doing and can keep it moving efficiently.

**Time:** About 50 minutes, preferably more to do well. Can be 30 minutes if preparation and follow-up happens at other times.

**Venue:** The room should be set up as best approximates the group’s normal meeting area.

**Materials:** Role cards need to be prepared and given to all participants so that everyone has something to do. See lists below.

**Preparations:** If time is limited the Agenda can be already set beforehand - initial wording of motions and amendments is printed on the cards. Or 2... If time is a luxury, create the motions and general business items as part of the process and then assign the roles. This enables people to suggest other motions, the secretaries to prioritise them, lobbying to be done before starting the meeting etc.

**Roles:** Assign roles for maximum practice value. Those who already know how to be a Chairperson or talk to a motion can have a less up front role to enable those less confident or less familiar with procedures to have a go. The meeting is then carried out to extent time allows. Record results. Always allow time for post-activity observations.

**Limitations:** Unless needed for practice, recommend standard agenda items like Minutes of precious meeting (pretend there was one), correspondence etc be done in a cursory fashion to get to the motions. An exception is ‘Apologies’. All present need to know who is not there to learn the skills so they can help them later.

**SPECIFIED OFFICER ROLES**

- **CHAIRPERSON**
- **SECRETARY / ASSISTANT SECRETARY**
- **TREASURER**
- **PARLIAMENTARIAN (optional)**
- **ADVISER** (when called upon by Chair)

**ACTION CARDS FOR ALL OTHER PARTICIPANTS**

Each of the following is to have an
**AGENDA ITEM NUMBER:**

(more speakers for and against can be encouraged or not depending on the number and/or level of interest of other agenda items and the total amount of time available)

- **MOVER OF MOTION #**
- **SECONDER OF MOTION #**
- **SPEAKER FOR MOTION #**
- **SPEAKER AGAINST MOTION #**

The following may or may not have an
**AGENDA ITEM NUMBER:**

(the decision depends on total time available for the activity, the relative sophistication of participants and the level expected of voluntary offerings as opportunity arises as opposed to ‘forcing the issue’)

- **MOVER OF AMENDMENT FOR MOTION #**
- **SPEAKER FOR AMENDMENT**
- **SECONDER OF AMENDMENT FOR #**
- **SPEAKER AGAINST AMENDMENT**

The following may be explained as useable for any motion or amendment

- **MOVE THAT THE MOTION BE PUT**
- **MOVE THAT THE MATTER BE TABLED**
- **MOVE A POINT OF ORDER**
- **MOVE THAT WE GO INTO COMMITTEE**

**SAMPLE MOTIONS:**

Be creative. Throw in several you know will get a giggle and be totally impractical (eg ‘That every Friday the school holds a nudist lunch!’); others which show good intentions but need more specific wording (‘show teacher appreciation’); others quite specific but long-term over years so the kids have to consider what specific steps they could feasibly put in the motion now for real action (e.g. ‘That we build a new gym.’) and a few seriously controversial (eg “That the SRC should organise protests against the war.” ... ‘That we go on strike until we get proper air-conditioning.’)

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Some other useful ‘games’ for SRC Student Leadership Skills Development:

- Group Dynamics: “Problem People”, Group 5 (Headbands or Who Am I?), Fishbowl
- Values: “Canteen Catastrophe”, Survival, Desert Island, Miracle Workers & multiple variations
- Trust: “Too Valuable to Die”, Interdependence, Running The Gauntlet, Initiative Games
PASTA RESOURCES - SAMPLE TOPIC MODULES
(in preparation)

Share what you know with us and the SRC world.

Tell us what you need first most.

Here's a few of many draft ideas.

“Communications for Representation”
Module 1: What is it? What helps it? What blocks it?
Module 2: Facilitating Training in Communication
Module 8: Surfing your SRC/Processing your
Product: Computer Chat for SRCs

“Goal-Setting for Leadership”
Module 2: Facilitating Training in Goal-Setting:
Practice Workshop Activities
Module 6: ‘There’s more to life than the HSC’
Module 7: Putting theory into practice 1: A case
study of Primary SRC excellence

“Project Planning for Participation”
Module 3: Putting theory into practice:
Secondary school student project activities
Module 5: Publicity/Promotion for your specific
project
Module 6: Evaluation as an art form: with a very
practical purpose

“What Moves Meetings?”
Module 1: FOOD, FUN AND FORWARD-
PLANNING: Why people say they ‘hate’
meetings/the basics of venue, time and task
Module 2: TYPES OF MEETINGS: From
parliaments and law courts to talking over lunch
in the playground
Module 10: CONVERSATIONS WITH
PARLIAMENT: Interviews with our parliamentary
leaders on what moves their meetings

“Resources for SRCs and Student Leadership Groups”
Module 3: Using Resources productively with
your student activity group
Module 5: Student Leaders Write: A Collection
of speeches and articles from OZ
Module 6: Teachers Write: Australian Viewpoints
on Student Leadership

PASTA Calendar (Draft for 2004/05)

- 3-4 January: 2004 Tour reunion weekend (Norah Head, NSW)
- 22 January: NSW DET/PASTA meeting (Ashfield)
- 28 February: AGM (PTC Leichhardt) and General Meeting - Working Conditions/Calendar
- 10-11 April: ISRC 2004 Tour Orientation (Central Coast NSW) Note: There will also be orientations in Melbourne (and perhaps other states if delegate numbers warrant) on dates TBA
- 23 April: NSW DET/PASTA meeting
- Term 2: 'Fresh Start 2004' (PD Day) - Date and Venue TBA. Materials also available at cost.
- 12-14 June (Queens Birthday Weekend): workshops (as needed) on ISRC recommendations
- 26 June: PASTA Meeting (venue TBA) - PD: future PD plans and PASTA publications
- 15 July: NSW DET/PASTA meeting
- 29 July: 7th Tour departs for Canada (ISRC 2004) and USA Leadership Camp
- 3-8 August: 2nd International Student Representative Conference - Edmonton CANADA
- 21 August: Return from Tour (some delegates may return following ISRC)
- 28 August: PASTA meeting (venue TBA) - PD: 2004 Tour Report and ISRC local Action Plans
- 7 October: NSW DET/PASTA meeting
- 23 October: PASTA Meeting (venue TBA) - PD: PASTA resource modules
- 4 December: Christmas Meeting (dinner venue TBA - as for all meetings, everyone welcome)
- early January 2005: ISRC 2004 Delegates Reunion (venue TBA)
- 26 February: 2005 AGM
- c. 25 June / 24 July 2005 - 8th Overseas SRC Tour (69th NASC Conference and NLC)

March 2004
20 Reasons Why Teachers Might Write:

You:

- Know what to write about;
- Know that the best way to start is to start;
- Know that there is someone you trust to help you;
- Know that you can ‘ask a friend’ or colleague to read your first efforts;
- Know you’ll be paid - in self-satisfaction, in revealing and useful responses from others;
- Believe there is something special about what you do;
- Believe your project deserves recording while in the process of becoming;
- Believe you can write - just as you can talk;
- Believe others will be interested once you let them know what’s interesting to you;
- Believe it’s a part of the job of being an educator;
- Think it’s about time somebody said it;
- Think it’s your experience, your enthusiasm that adds to what others have written already;
- Think it’s something you, hence others, might never have seen in your area, your field;
- Think it’s time this was looked at again, time to put ‘your take’ on the matter;
- Think there’s needs/values/useful outcomes/future directions you can point ways to;
- Give time to yourself for reflection - in print;
- Give writing tasks - even short ones - a higher priority;
- Give your life beyond the school a larger dimension;
- Give encouragement to your students and your peers - confound ‘the system’;
- Give yourself a whole posy of tall poppies. You deserve it.

101 Reasons Why Students Should Write:

- All of the above PLUS ...
- There are more of you than there are of us. You are teachers and mentors and empathetic peers also. You and those who follow you need your guidance and support. We all do.

Next Time?

Next time we’ll look at some examples of potential audiences and outlets for your work.

There are heaps. But, in the meantime, do not forget, in the mind-field of student and teacher participation, leadership and representation:

Connect - the Australian magazine of student participation and...

PASTA - the Professional Association of SRC Teacher/Advisers

Write to us. About this and that, about you and us, about the state of your school and the state of the globe. Now. Grab a piece of paper. Bounce your fingers on that keyboard. Just do it.

We can’t guarantee you’ll be famous, but at least you’ll be in print.

Charles Kingston

PASTA, Bathurst, NSW
The Professional Association of SRC Teacher/Advisers (PASTA) is a voluntary non-profit education group affiliated in Australia with the Professional Teachers Council (PTC) and overseas with the United States National Association of Student Councils (NASC) and the Canadian Association of Student Activity Advisers (CASAA). It is incorporated as a national professional association in Australia.

PASTA works in cooperation with the NSW Department of Education and Training, the Victorian SRC Teachers Association (VISTA), the Parents and Citizens Association of NSW and other government and professional bodies in all states and territories interested in the pursuit of student leadership, representation and participation.

Membership is available at less than half the cost of a day's teacher casual relief for the whole year. Your membership helps support PASTA's main aim, which is working to improve the profile, recognition, time, training and resources for student council and other leadership, representational and participatory activities - the adviser's role in sustaining such programs year by year and the teaching curriculum aspects which go with it - in secondary and primary schools throughout Australia and overseas.

Some of the more immediately available tangible benefits of membership are:

- a year's subscription to Connect, the Australian magazine of student participation which incorporates our PASTA Newsletter. Connect is published in Melbourne, Victoria by Roger Holdsworth. It has been successfully recording and promoting student involvement since 1979;
- 4 times a year PASTA - Food 4 Advisers, a members only publication (news, views, resources, advice for advisers and schools involved in student leadership development);
- discounts on 'Fresh Start' (for new or renewing advisers and consultants), Non-Government and Primary School PD Days and other teacher training opportunities;
- advance information, priority and discounts on national and international tours, conferences and camps run by PASTA or by those organisations here and abroad with which PASTA is formally affiliated;
- special prices and/or free offers on resources re SRCs and other leadership activities amongst many of our members and/or those we have or are in the process of publishing - eg SRC resource modules series in preparation, student council curriculum kits, leadership course guides etc;
- access to e-group and net sites of current or potential use in a range of subject areas, not just SRCs ... the knowledge, skills and attitudes of SRCs apply to all subject areas and career paths;
- a friendly, supportive network of advisers, students, schools and professional associations and publications in Australia, North America, Europe and elsewhere;
- access and encouragement to attend OR contribute in other ways to all meetings of the PASTA Executive Committee, its subcommittees - yes, even to become an active part of these if you choose to.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES (ABN No. 49 398 096 539)

Inclusive of GST (tax-deductible: PASTA is a not-for-profit educational association)

- **Ordinary** ($55): SRC and other student activity and/or leadership teacher/advisers; year and curriculum advisers and consultants; senior education officers; members of other professional associations or teacher unions; any interested school, parent or community members, etc;
- **Institutional** ($88 pa): schools, SRCs, youth groups - all members thereof therefore are eligible for teacher professional development and student leader training and tours opportunities;
- **Student and Concessional** ($27.50): includes all benefits except voting rights at AGM;
- **Overseas** ($55): same benefits, just a bit more remote - items take longer to arrive;
- **Corporate** ($110): a sign that business and/or the media supports positive active citizenship and the training of our current and future leaders as a worthy educational thing to do.

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

March 2004
I wish to apply to join/renew my membership for the year ending 30th June, 2004

Title ___________________________ Given Names ___________________________

Family or Institutional Name ___________________________

Home/Postal Address ___________________________

School/Business Address ___________________________

Phone Number

Home ___________________________ Work ___________________________

Fax ___________________________ E-mail ___________________________

Employing Authority

☐ NSW Department of School Education

☐ Other (please specify) ___________________________

Area of Particular Interest

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary ☐ Tertiary

Membership (includes GST and subscription to Connect magazine)

☐ Ordinary $55 ☐ Student $27.50 ☐ Overseas $55

☐ Institutions $88 ☐ Concessional $27.50 ☐ Corporations $110

☐ I enclose an additional $20 for subscription to the NASSP Leadership Magazine (USA)

☐ I enclose a cheque for $ __________ made payable to PASTA Inc.

OR ☐ Please debit my credit card for the amount of $ __________

Credit Card ☐ Bankcard ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa

☐ Please check your credit card number before sending this form

Signature ___________________________ Expiry Date _______ _______

What does membership of PASTA offer you?

• Positive support for SRC teacher advisers

• Practical workshop ideas for use in schools

• Regular seminars, workshops and conferences at an Association, State and National level at reduced registration rates

• Regular newsletter and journals including annual subscription to Connect and optional access to NASC's Leadership for Student Activities

• Training and development within the SRC area

• A support network for SRC advisers

• Access to SRC networks

• Special resources for students and teachers

• Opportunities to be involved in discussions on the future of SRCs at all levels

• Attendance at open meetings of PASTA which are held at the Joint Council Buildings, Corner Marion and Norton Streets, Leichhardt, NSW

Phone: (02) 9564 3322; Fax: (02) 9564 2342

Mail subscriptions to:

PASTA Inc.,
c/- 12 Dyson Drive,
Norah Head NSW 2263

Please keep this section as your Tax Invoice

Amount Paid: ______________ Date: ______________
Students Taking the SRC Seriously

I have been heavily involved with the SRC for my entire high school life. Here’s a little background: I was elected as class representative every year from Year 7, then at the end of Year 9, I was elected onto the executive for a two year term. First year I held the position of Secretary (Year 10), then in Year 11 I was President. I was on the District SRC from Years 9 to 11 where I have held the position of Vice President. Also from District SRC, I was elected onto the NSW SRC - the peak of student leadership in NSW - for one year (Year 11). Through the school SRC I have been on various school committees such as the uniform committee, and also on the School Council. Also, in June-July of 2003 I traveled to the USA with 16 other students and four advisers from around Australia, to attend the American National Student Leadership Conference (Buffalo, NY) and a National Leadership Camp (Lake Tahoe, Nevada). The trip was organised by PASTA that publishes a segment in Connect.

So I have had a lot of experience with SRC and student leadership. I have also had the opportunity over the years to talk to a lot of different people from lots of different places and hear about their experiences with SRCs - problems and successes!

One of the first things I learnt about SRCs is that they are all different - every single school has different systems and styles, different goals, and of course different students and teachers. Everyone has things that work and things that don’t work. Because of these differences there is an opportunity to learn from each other and yes, as cheeky as it sounds, steal each others’ ideas!! You have to find ideas that are relevant to your school and your students in order for them to be successful, so if that means doing something another school has done, go for it!

Overcoming Elitism

All SRCs face this problem, whether it is that all the ‘cool kids’ only get in the SRC, or the SRC is only for ‘geeks and teachers’ pets’. Some schools overcome this by allowing the teachers to vote in elections because they will pick the right people for the job. Personally I disagree with this because it takes the ‘student representative’ out of SRC. Let the students elect their own representatives. Often kids don’t even know about the elections or what they are voting for/about and sometimes that’s why one elite group is always being elected. Make a big deal about elections: get up on assemblies, write in school newsletters, just make sure everyone knows. Self-nomination is good coz then kids who otherwise wouldn’t stand for election, then go and nominate. Promote how rewarding it is and all the awesome stuff you do because then students have a better idea what SRC is about and they will be more interested.

The special education section of our school, and for the first time this year we are doing the same thing with Aboriginal students. Also, we allow every student to nominate, even if they are on the worst levels of our welfare system. We believe everyone has to be represented, even the bad kids! Sometimes kids who are really disobedient, actually do a great job and bring new dimensions to your SRC.

Small things like this help to get a better cross-section of your student body, and therefore a more effective SRC.

Reject Trivia

SRC stands for Student Representative Council, not ‘raise money for everything’ council, or ‘teachers know best’ council!! All members of the SRC and the school community, including teachers, have to know this.

How do you get the message across that you are the voice of the students and not a fund-raiser?

• Communicate. Get representatives to talk to students and search out the problems in the school community. It may be something as small as they want soap in the bathrooms, or something as big as there is a bullying problem. We have a huge advantage because we are not teachers, we are students – people feel more comfortable talking to their peers.

• Set goals. Once you know what the students want, you have to make plans on how to fix these problems. Be realistic and do things that are achievable. You may still decide to support charity, but only pick one or two for the whole year. Remember, you’re not a charity case; stay focused on your school and your goals.

• Students making decisions. When your SRC is making any decisions, it should be done by the student members. Although teacher

February-April 2004
advisers play a huge and very important role in the SRC, they should not be dictating what happens. Decisions must be made for the students, by the students.

- **No joke, we’re serious!** The student body and the teachers have to know that you are serious about what you’re doing and you’re not just there because you get to skip class sometimes. Listen to the people you represent. Don’t just say you’re going to do things: actually do them. Always be active and publicise what you’re doing. Earn respect.

**Being Connected**

Ditto to the above point. It’s all about respect. If everyone knows you’re serious, hard working and committed, then the stigma attached to your SRC will disappear: just create a good image.

At my school we have found that we always inform the staff about what we are up to and what we have planned for the future. We just find that they like to know what’s going on, even though they may have no influence on our decisions. If we are planning something big and new, we always send a couple of representatives to discuss the idea with our principal. We never talk to him or the staff unprepared – we plan exactly what we’re doing and what we say before we go in there. Because we have been organised and promote everything we do, we are at the point now where we have the unconditional support of our principal (which is just fantastic!). Staff are seeing that we are a great thing and we have more support from them than we have ever had. We now have teachers coming to us with problems and having them say: “I want the help of the SRC with this because I know you can do it”, or “what do the students think about this issue?” If there is that good relationship with staff, your SRC can do almost anything it wants, within reason!

Another good idea is to make sure you have student representatives on all decision-making and influencing committees in the school – that includes P&C, School Council, welfare, uniform etc. The student voice must be heard.

**Part of the Curriculum and Effective**

As a school SRC, we try to stick to the recommendations handed down by the NSW SRC that deal with issues such as student participation, student well-being and health etc. We invite guest speakers from the police and community centres to come to school and talk about having parties etc, and issues that really affect us. We have some members involved with our local community health centres. We held a ‘spirit week’ where the aim was to get everybody actually wanting to come to school and also have lots of participation. Every year we organise ‘motivational media’ to come to the school to show their presentation. It is compulsory for all students to attend and then year advisers use the new information to teach students during guidance lessons. If it wasn’t for our SRC, MM wouldn’t come and students and teachers wouldn’t have that wonderful resource. We also promoted and offered incentives to use the recycling bins around the school. Whatever the issues are in your school, you have to act on them even if it’s seen as not cool to do it – like the recycling in our school: make it cool!

On being effective, it’s all about having a great team to work with; everyone has to be hard working, passionate and really want to change how things happen. To get them that way, you have to have a great executive. If the leaders of your SRC won’t work, why should anyone else? You have to have great teacher patrons who are actually interested in what you’re all about and support you no matter what. And lastly, you need that never-give-up attitude; the staff and students aren’t always going to support you, but if you keep doing new stuff or keep doing the stuff that needs to be done, you will earn that respect that you deserve. Just stay positive!

I hope that this has been of help to you. A member of my school SRC is also preparing a response on behalf of us as well: I just thought my extra experiences would add another spin on things.

Best of luck!

Melissa Haberfield
Year 12 student
James Fallon High School
Albury, NSW

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**The Scrouch gets in your face and personal!**

*Connect invited over 200 of you to respond to the challenges in this issue. Some did... but many were silent! Why?*

Maybe you’ve already got it together and answered those challenges. So, either you’re selfish and deciding not to share; or you’re deluding yourself that you’re perfect and that there’s nothing to change!

Or you think these challenges are not important: which only reinforces the challenge!

Or you couldn’t care: what a sad life! Why do you even bother? You’d do better to dissolve your token Student Council and stop pretending!

Well, I’m here to say: You can do it better!!*
Do you want your participation to have an impact?
Do Something Real!

"30,000 children will die today as a result of starvation and hunger-related diseases. They don’t die due to cancer, heart disease or leukaemia; their heart stops because it doesn’t have enough food energy to keep it going. This means that approximately 12 million children perish each year, as victims of global poverty. All of them – deaths that could have been prevented."

Do something real! This year there are so many opportunities for young people to help people who are living in some of the poorest communities in the world.

For instance, one of the best ways you can do something really worthwhile to help people living in desperate poverty is to sign up for World Vision’s 40 Hour Famine. If you want to become an active global citizen, the 2004 40 Hour Famine is one of the best ways you can get involved!

The 2004 40 Hour Famine will be held from May 14 to 16, and there are two ways you can do it. You can either skip food for 40 hours (eight hours for children under 12), or shut down all technology for 40 hours. Alternatively, you can make a worthwhile contribution to sponsoring a participant. It’s a great feeling to know you’re doing something real to help.

As a student, volunteering as a Group Organiser is also an effective way to get involved in the 40 Hour Famine. As well as helping to provide solutions to global poverty, you’ll also gain experience in leadership and organisational skills.

If you are interested in being a Group Organiser, I’d highly recommend that you contact the SRC at your school and let them know you’d like to organise it on their behalf. One of the biggest issues faced by SRCs is that they’re swamped by charities to assist with the promotion of events and fundraising. The purpose of an SRC is to voice and lobby for the student voice, not to run themselves into the ground for other causes. Yes, they can support a few, but not all.

This year, money raised from the 40 Hour Famine will be used by World Vision to address the urgent need for assistance in Tanzania, Africa. So, by getting involved, you can help to fight poverty in a country where more than half of people are in need of food, shelter and basic necessities.

Funds will also help World Vision to respond to global humanitarian emergencies, and support the Global Rapid Response Team (GRRT). This is an international squad of highly skilled professionals who can respond to a disaster anywhere in the world within 24 to 72 hours – that’s pretty impressive!

To get involved and make a difference, sign up for the 40 Hour Famine by visiting www.40hourfamine.com or phone the hotline on 13 32 40 today.

World Vision also runs Youth Leadership Conventions each year for young people who are committed to making a difference in the world. The 2004 Victorian YLCs will be held in Bacchus Marsh from April 15-16 and April 17-18. Each school is invited to send two participants to learn valuable leadership skills. You can find out more about this opportunity by visiting the website: www.40hourfamine.com

Finally, good luck, get involved, and remember, even the smallest effort can make a huge difference. Hunger is real. So is helping someone who feels it.

Chris Varney
craskoo@hotmail.com

David Hookes' Legacy

Irrespective of your attitude to David Hookes’ contributions to our wider society, or the amazing media beat up over his recent tragic death, the following story has relevance to kids of all ages, in all situations:

In a recent match against NSW, the Victorian cricket team (coached by David Hookes) were discussing the difficulty of the task which they faced on the last day of the match. To win they had to amass 450 runs - a feat which no other team had ever achieved. They are a young, relatively inexperienced team and the general feeling at the team meeting was a negative one - which the coach knew needed to change if they were to have any chance at all.

He asked the team why they were feeling so negative. The response didn’t surprise him. They had had a good season so far, but 450 was just too many runs to get. Their conversation then continued something like this:

DH: How many overs will we have to face tomorrow?
Team: At least 55.

DH: Let’s consider that in terms of one day cricket - how many games is that?
Team: Two

DH: How many runs would that be for each game?
Team: 225

DH: How many teams have won with a score of 225?

The atmosphere suddenly changed. Team members weren’t sure of the actual figures, but there was general agreement that most teams chasing 225 would consider they had a good chance.

DH: All we have to do is do that twice and we can create history. Let’s all have a go and see what happens!

Result: Victoria won with a couple of overs to spare. At the start of the meeting all people, except one, felt they faced an impossible task, but by the end they all believed it was achievable and were committed to having a go. What changed?

We all need to ask: does this story have any relevance to my life? How can SRCs draw from it?

I would welcome feedback from anyone on this story. Does anyone have similar stories from other fields? LETS SHARE THEM AROUND!!!

Tony Gleeson
SRC Advisor, Alstonville High School, NSW
PO Box 52, Broadwater NSW 2472
ph: 02 6662 8145; email: teegeeto@yahoo.com

February-April 2004
Equity, Fairness, Participation

Equity, Fairness, and Participation were the buzzwords for the 2004 New South Wales Student Representative Council at their three day training program and inaugural meeting, held in Sydney in November last year. The young leaders were introduced to key organisations affecting students such as the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group and the Commission for Children and Young People, and were also addressed by the Premier of NSW, the Hon Bob Carr. In addition, the NSW SRC began planning to take action on goals that were set by the representatives, and five resolutions that were passed by a student forum of the 2003 State SRC conference.

The slightly overwhelmed students were glad to have the training days open with a panel of former NSW SRC members to field questions and offer advice. Therese Weir, Equity Co-Ordination Unit (DET) then addressed the Student Council members, raising issues such as overcoming language barriers in schools and encouraging the active participation of students. Louise Byr, Principal Education Officer (DET), introduced the four pillars of learning: ‘learning to be, to know, to do, and to live together.’ They were encouraged to engage in an Acknowledgement/Welcome to Country in their own schools. The 22 representatives crawled into bed that night only after having read the NSW SRC Constitution and other such lengthy documents.

Resolutions

They did, however, awaken fresh for a day of busy brainstorming on the resolutions passed at the SRC State Conference held at Vision Valley in August 2003. The resolutions included:

1. The DET publish the SRC Toolkit written in 2002 by Rod Batkin and make it available to all SRC teacher advisors.

2. In 2004, each of the ESCs within a region individually hold termly meetings as current districts do and that a selected number of students from each ESC are elected to represent the regional SRC.

3. The 2004 NSW SRC lobby Australian Health Officials to promote funding, awareness and support programs for school students suffering from eating disorders.

4. The 2004 NSW SRC promote ways of saving energy and therefore money within the DET and schools across the state. This will particularly concern a reduction in consumption of electricity and water.

5. The 2004 NSW SRC act on improving communication between SRCs and maintain existing communication. The 2004 NSW SRC should develop:
   a) A statewide SRC website incorporating e-groups, chat rooms and forums for SRC members, with information, updates, and a suggestion area for the general public;
   b) Improved technological support eg teleconferencing for schools outside the metropolitan area.

Goals

The students set the following goals for the NSW SRC 2004:

1. To promote Public Education and teaching as a career;
2. To improve communication links by encouraging the effective use of e-groups at an ESC level;
3. To promote student leadership and participation through ‘Healthy and Safe, the Ideal State’ school based SRC projects;
4. To promote Stewart House as the SRC charity and to encourage student support for Stewart House.

Liaison Roles

In addition to working on their resolutions and goals, the SRC were assigned liaison roles with various organisations:

School Safety and Security: Amy Robbins
Police Youth Issues: Zahid Farhan
Premier’s Youth Advisory Council/Youth Week: Peter Beard, Raymond Padora
Commission for Children and Young People: Emma Blandre
Travel/Accommodation: Ashleigh Johnston
‘Reconciliation’: Lewis Young
Aboriginal Youth Issues: Jason Percival, Penelope Riggs
Technology: Michael Kelleher
Publicity (Connect Magazine): Jess Carter and Zhen-U Teoh
State SRC Conference Working Party: Leigh Cummins
PASTA: Taryn Dircks
P&C Association: Kara Bloukos
Keep Australia Beautiful: Andrew Chambers and Jodi Hobday
Anti-Bullying Code of Practice consultation: Chris Hellmundt and Kate Hyland
Equity/Communication/Special Initiatives: Georgia Eddy, Stuart MacFarlane and Sriram Srikumar

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Connect 145-146;
Steve Robertson and Doryon Sarkissian from *The Commission for Children and Young People* briefed the group on the history and role of the Commission. NSW is the only state to have a totally independent body that represents children and young people. The *NSW PeC Association* also had their say, promoting healthy canteens. An evening of shopping in Sydney and relaxing at Darling Harbour over a rugby match was the reward for the day's hard work for the students.

The 2004 NSW SRC had their first official meeting on Friday, 21 November 2003 at the NSW State Parliament House. After Mr Graeme Spindler, Education Officer, welcomed the Council to the Jubilee Room of Parliament House, Mr. David Mackie, Acting Director of Student Welfare, began the meeting with a discussion on a possible Regional SRC structure. The highlight of the day was an address to the student representatives by the Hon Bob Carr, Premier of NSW, regarding achieving personal dreams and student involvement in the government. The Premier particularly supported an idea of engaging in a 'student forum' in schools to increase student participation. After a snack, the Australian Electoral Commission conducted a mock ballot exercise and emphasised the importance of fair voting. It was recommended that preferential voting should be used in school and district elections.

Following an Acknowledgement of Country, Greg Maguire, of Multicultural Programs (DET) endorsed student-led anti-racism programs and shared the success of previous endeavours. Each member of the Council then reported on the activities of their District.

This bought to an end our meeting. We all have numerous tasks to complete before our next meeting in Sydney in March 2004. We are enthusiastic and committed to working hard to represent students in Public Schools across NSW for the next year.

Jess Carter (Tamworth District)  
Zhien-U Teoh (Liverpool District)
Earlier in this issue of Connect, we briefly discussed issues associated with students on bodies like School Councils. Students have complained that procedures here are obscure and difficult to follow, and that this locks them out from being able to participate fully.

It’s not just the students who have to change! If a School Council or any other body is serious about supporting the participation of students, then it needs to look seriously at how it operates. It might also find that improvements in its processes serve to empower others on those bodies.

The following ideas about changing committee procedures to encourage the active participation of students were first drafted in 1984. While they were particularly written about students on central Education Department committees, they have wider relevance to other representatives and other committees - both of student groups and where student representatives share decision making with others (eg at School Councils).

Before the Meeting

1. A detailed agenda should be sent out, giving (where possible) recommendations to be moved.
2. Discussion meetings should be held before the main meeting, to go over the agenda and the main business. For example, students could meet with other students and with an advisor, to talk over what is likely to happen.
3. Meetings beforehand could be held with other committee members where they explain to students what they aim to do in the meeting and how they will do it.
4. In particular, experienced committee members who will act as in-committee ‘mentors’, should meet with students before the meeting.
5. Pre-meeting meetings should be seen as part of committee members’ commitments. In particular, accurate time commitment information should be given to students when approaches about committee membership are made.
6. A support person should be allocated to meet with students before the meeting and, where possible, to sit with students during at least the initial meetings.
7. The meeting should be held at a time when student representatives can attend with minimal disruption to their studies.

At the Start of the Meeting

1. An experienced committee member should be nominated as ‘mentor’ to each student member for each meeting. This role could rotate between members, with attention paid to positive gender role models.
2. All members should be introduced and identified, for example, with a place name. This should show both the name and the organisation/role represented.
3. All documents should have a face sheet summarising the main ideas and recommendations.

Procedure of the Meeting

1. The meeting should stop before decisions are made, to allow time for students to:
   • talk with each other;
   • talk with committee tutors/mentors;
   • talk with any support persons present;

   to make sure they understand the issues involved.
2. Motions should be written out and, where possible, copied for and circulated to all members of the Committee.
3. There should be a clear statement about the style of each part of the meeting, identifying ‘brainstorming’ and ‘formal’ times.
4. Arguments and discussion from subcommittee meetings should not be repeated in committee meetings.
5. At the end of each item of business, the chairperson should summarise the decisions on action to be taken and clearly indicate responsibility for action.

Language

1. All members should avoid forms of jargon:
   • initials should be avoided except where they’re explained in documents;
   • other groups, committees or individual roles should be explained fully;
   • an attempt should be made to put motions and discussion in direct and plain language.
2. Any member should be able to query the use of a name, word or phrase and have that query treated seriously.

After the Meeting

1. At the end of the meeting, the chairperson or Executive Officer should summarise the major decisions made, especially indicating what action is to be taken, by whom and by when.
2. The committee mentors and/or support person should meet with the students to talk over what happened in the meeting. This should also be regarded as part of the meeting commitment.

Reprinted from Connect 27/28, June-August 1984; also reprinted in Connect 116, April 1999; the time to remind us about this has come round again!
Student Councils and Education for Democracy in English Secondary Schools

Derry Hannam, Project Director, The Phoenix Education Trust, UK

We are now one year into the implementation of the Citizenship Order in English secondary schools. Although the Order does not statutorily require schools to facilitate the creation of school Student Councils, it nonetheless 'encourages' them to do so and this 'encouragement' is reinforced in Ofsted's Inspecting Citizenship 11-16.

Studies through the 1990s that attempted to gauge the proportion of secondary schools in England having Student Councils (Fogelman, 1991; Ashworth, 1995; Alderson, 1999; Baginskiy and Hannam, 1999) found the figure to be around 50%, with the number of Councils regarded as being 'effective' by the student body to be around 20%. The total number of Councils accords with my experience as an inspector of over 80 schools during this period, though I would personally regard the figure for 'effective' Councils as being a little on the optimistic side.

It would appear from the Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study: First Cross Sectional Survey 2001-2002 that the 'encouragement' or 'spur' of the Citizenship Order and the Ofsted inspection guidelines has certainly had an effect on the number of secondary head teachers/school leaders claiming to have Student Councils in their schools. The survey came up with the slightly astonishing figure of 94% in a randomly selected sample of 200 schools, though this is tempered by the fact that only 64% of students felt that they had any opportunity to be involved in running their school through a Student Council, and only a third indicated that they had been involved in electing Student Council members. In fact, the numbers indicating that they had had any degree of participation in proceedings in the last year are 9% for Year 8 and 11% for Year 10 (the survey does not make clear to what level this participation refers, ie whether it be class discussion or representative year or School Council meeting).

If my own work in one LEA is any guide, this figure of 94% involves a degree of wishful thinking and future-gazing by some head teachers. My guesswork would be that the 94% covers the widest possible spectrum from 'utterly tokenistic and constrained and regarded with sceptical and deserved indifference by most students', through 'early stages of planning - not yet had first meeting', and 'launched but struggling to fly', to 'well established and seen to be effective by most students', with the proportion at the latter end still at about 20-25% maximum.

This somewhat gloomy view of the current state of Student Councils in secondary schools is borne out by Ofsted's National Curriculum Citizenship: planning and implementation 2002/03. Although it involved only a small sample of 25 schools, nonetheless these were not randomly chosen. They had either been recently inspected and reported to be making significant preparations for the implementation of the Citizenship Order, or had been recommended by LEAs as being worth a visit. Most, as one might expect given the selection process, had Student Councils. As the report states, Councils '...have the potential to involve all pupils, who can discuss Council matters in their tutor groups and elect and make accountable their representatives.' Unfortunately such practice was not the norm even in this selected sample:

...some of the school councils fail to involve all pupils through such representation. Some have very limited ambition, with agendas being principally concerned with food and toilets. In a minority of the schools, school council members are appointed by staff rather than elected. In these cases, little or nothing is contributed to National Curriculum citizenship for most pupils.'

One can be fairly sure that such Councils are not perceived to be 'effective' by most students in those schools! There was some good practice in some of the 25 schools but only one is referred to as 'exemplary'.

So what makes for an 'effective' Student Council and why is it so hard to achieve?

The literature is not vast but there are common threads to be found. (See: Davies, 1998; Clay, Gold and Hannam, 2001; Hannam, 2001; Inman and Burke, 2002; Taylor and Johnson, 2002; Trafford, 2003. It is encouraging that two of these works were published by professional associations - one by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) and another by the Secondary Heads Association (SHA), and that a third was funded by the DfES.) They are driven by both principle and pragmatism.

The first absolutely clear point is that a Council that is felt by students to offer serious and effective opportunities for participation in school decision making cannot be an
add-on extra to a fundamentally authoritarian and coercive institution. It must spring from a deep belief in the right of young people to have a voice. The literature indicates that this belief must be held by the school leadership, the head teacher in particular, and at least a significant minority of the teaching staff. When I conducted a pilot study for CSV/DfES in 2001 (Hannam, 2001) to explore associations between student participation, attendance, exclusion and achievement, I found this commitment to the students' voice as of right in all of the 12 selected more than usually participative secondary schools. Some of the schools actually referred to the Student Council as the principal means for implementing Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CROC) in the school prospectus. This commitment to students' rights shines from the pages of Bernard Trafford's excellent little book School Councils, School Democracy, School Improvement. It is the mainspring of his success with democratic innovation at the independent Wolverhampton Grammar School. (Trafford, 2003)

A close second to a commitment to the right of students' to a voice comes the recognition that a democratic participative ethos is associated with enhanced learning, and that some important learning can only take place through the experience of participation in democratic decision making. The most obvious, and supported by large-scale research, is an understanding of and commitment to democracy itself. Both recent IEA studies, Citizenship and Education in Twenty-eight Countries (Torney-Purta et al, 2001) and Civic Knowledge and Engagement in Upper Secondary Students in Sixteen Countries (Torney-Purta et al, 2002) conclude that:

'Schools that model democratic values by... inviting students to take part in shaping school life are most effective in promoting civic knowledge and engagement... and they are more likely to expect to vote as adults than other students.'

The authors conclude with the sting in the tail that: '...this approach is by no means the norm in most countries.' The component IEA English Report (Kerr et al, 2002) endorses these findings for 14 year-olds in English secondary schools and agrees that a democratic approach 'is by no means the norm' here either.

Of course the improvements than can accrue to learning do not stop at learning experientially about democracy. The democratic participative approach also appears to provide the key to deep learning about associated issues such as human rights, justice and morality. There is also evidence that the democratic participative ethos is associated with enhanced learning across the whole curriculum, especially when the participation includes decision making about what is to be learned, and how, when and with whom it is to be learned. (Hannam, 2001; Trafford, 2003).

Schools with effective Student Councils also seem to understand that many other contributions to school improvement follow from effective listening to the student voice and open-hearted sharing in decision making. There is hardly any problem affecting the day-to-day running of a school on which the students do not have a unique and valuable 'take'. These schools take issues of concern to management to the Students' Council and reciprocally listen carefully and positively engage when students bring their issues to management.

Schools with effective Students' Councils do not attempt to restrict and constrain what can be discussed, though they may well negotiate sensible guidelines. Some would argue that it is necessary to set clear boundaries for what may be discussed, but I stand by the view expressed in the 'Toolkit' that I co-authored for the DfES/School Councils UK (Clay, Gold and Hannam, 2001) which is supported by Bernard Trafford (Trafford, 2003):

'Most effective councils do not exclude anything from being discussed, apart from matters of personal confidentiality. The power of councils to make decisions and take action are likely to expand as students become more confident. If rigid limits are imposed on councils at the outset, students are unlikely to develop any enthusiasm for them.'

Other criteria for effectiveness indicated by the literature include:

- high profile support for the Students' Council from school leadership, drawing in the support of teachers, non-teaching staff, parents and governors;
- conspicuous reference to the importance of Student Councils in key school documentation including prospectus and development plan;
- getting the structure right so that effective meetings are possible;
- the opportunity for meetings to be as frequent and of sufficient length as the business requires;
- provision of appropriate accommodation for meetings and access to computing/reprographic facilities (in some Scandinavian Upper Secondary schools that I have visited, the Students' Council has its own office with telephone, computer and photocopier);
- opportunities for effective meetings to take place in every constituent class and tutor group;
- excellent communication and feed-back to and from representative Council meetings;
- skill development activities for Student Councillors and teachers who work with them;
- regular communication with governors through the presence of elected students as 'associate members' of the governing body (now formally set out as an option for governing bodies in the new regulations that come into operation for State Community Schools from September 2003).
• a budget;
• the possibility for at least some meetings to be in ‘curriculum time’;
• thoughtful integration of the Student Council activities and experience into the overall citizenship curriculum.

It is encouraging that the DfES has recently published a draft document entitled Working Together: Giving Children and Young People a Say (DfES, 2003) which will, in time, become the official guidance to schools for the implementation of section 176 of the 2002 Education Act. This requires LEAs, governing bodies, and schools ‘...to consider the views of children and young people and involve them when making decisions.’

This is a positive step towards the statutory rights to participation in school decision making awarded to secondary students in many other European countries such as all the Scandinavian nations, the Netherlands, Spain and Austria. These are set out in the ‘Country Guide’ produced by OBESSU (The Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions) which can be obtained by e-mailing their office in Brussels at obessu@obessu.org or from their website www.obessu.org, and in the shortly to be published All European Study of Student Participation Policies compiled for the Council of Europe by Karlheinz Duer of the State Centre for Political Education in Baden-Wurttemburg, Germany. School students in the four nations of the UK are almost alone in Europe in not having a school students’ organisation and thus miss out on many European activities and opportunities to meet and exchange ideas with young people from other Council of Europe member states. However a group of enthusiasts have formed the ESSA (English School Students Association) network which, with the support of the Phoenix Education Trust (but not much yet from government!), is actively working towards creating such an organisation.

England is not alone in finding it hard to make Student Councils work effectively in all secondary schools but it must be said that it is not in the vanguard, and that it has much to learn from the countries such as Norway and Finland that are.

Traditional attitudes and anxieties of the teaching profession and, in particular, expectations of the ‘strong head teacher’, expectations of some parents and the media, the incorrect association of rigid authority with high academic standards, inappropriate forms of accountability such as league tables that take no regard of social circumstances or the achievements of less academic students, a failure to understand the nature of effective learning, and sheer in-built cultural deficit models of childhood that determinate, marginalise and even criminalise the very existence of young people - all play their part and must be tackled.

New developments at the National College for School Leadership give one cause for optimism. Their advocacy of the notion of ‘dispersed leadership’ which takes in the students as potential leaders in schools is an exciting development. Schools that truly believe in the potential of their students are what we need, with head teachers willing to take risks to allow this potential to develop. Thank God there are some who are bravely showing us the way!

**Schools that truly believe in the potential of their students are what we need, with head teachers willing to take risks to allow this potential to develop. Thank God there are some who are bravely showing us the way!**

### References


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February-April 2004

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Students and Educational Policy-Making

The Concerns of Students Relating to Their Involvement in Educational Planning and Policy-Making:
Findings From Several Surveys Conducted With Students

Several writers have argued that secondary students are not satisfied with the amount of student involvement in educational policy-making that affects their education and in fact, have argued that the students generally feel left out of the entire policy-making process in schools.

Newton (1986), for example, writes about a survey of student attitudes regarding school which was conducted in Trinidad. Students participating in this survey were selected from schools across the nation. Students were asked to write comments about their school under five headings which included school organisation, school administration, staff-pupil relationships, curriculum, and the school plant. The findings from the survey suggest that students across Trinidad thought their schools were too bureaucratic. The findings also suggest that the students were concerned that their voices were not taken into consideration during educational policy-making. According to this report, the students thought the schools were only concerned about producing a final product, and that the humanistic side of education was entirely left out.

The educational system is geared to produce intellectual robots for a bureaucratic society. In fact, from early childhood, children are fitted into slots like Junior Secondary, Prestige School, five-year school and so on. (p. 71)

Throughout Newton’s (1986) study, the Trinidian students demonstrated very clearly that they desired to have more say in all school matters that affect them and their education. The author reported that, “the student body should have a say in the matters concerning the school and should not be there only to help raise funds” (p. 74). Because of their lack of input into school matters, the Trinidian students felt that the school climate was deeply affected by the strict hierarchy and the lack of cooperation in decision-making between the students and the teachers and administrators. During the survey, the students made reference to their school climate as similar to that of a jail.

One of the main reasons for the lack of student involvement in educational policy-making, as identified by the students in the Trinidian survey, is that the administrators and teachers simply did not take student participation in policy-making seriously. Therefore, the report indicates that the teachers and administrators were simply not willing to take the concerns of students into consideration.

Often, even when students have an opportunity to express themselves, nothing results. For example, a students’ council may be proposed by the students; the administration receives the proposal and nothing happens. The staff fail to realise that, if students are not involved in matters which concern them, they cannot be expected to cooperate. (p. 74)

The author argues that the Trinidian students felt that they were being ignored in helping to make educational decisions because the teachers and administrators did not respect them and their abilities to make decisions.

Teachers believe that teacher-teacher relationships are different from teacher-pupil relationships. In fact very often, there is no relationship between pupil and teachers at all. When there is, it is a matter of the teacher above looking down at the student below, instead of an “eye to eye” relationship as it ought to be. (p. 75)

Overall, Newton’s (1986) findings suggest that the Trinidian students involved in the survey were very discontented with the amount of participation they had in helping to make educational decisions. As a result, the students suggested that their lack of involvement - the non-democratic way in which the schools were being run - deeply affected the school climate and the relationships between students and their teachers and administrators.

Brown, Ching, Yau and Ziegler (1992) reported on the “Every Second Student Survey” (1991) conducted in the secondary schools under the Toronto Board of Education, Toronto, Canada. During this survey, the students were asked to what extent they agreed with a list of prepared statements about school climate.
According to these authors, the results of the survey demonstrated that only half the number of students surveyed agreed that students have enough say in educational decisions.

Two thirds to four fifths of students agree with all of these statements, but one. Over 80% agree that extra help is available at school when they need it; only half the students agree that they have enough say over things that are important to them. (p. 13)

The findings from a study I conducted in Newfoundland (Critchley, 1998), suggest that students attending school in one school district do feel that they have a part in helping to make educational policies, especially since school councils have been established for every school in Newfoundland. However, the students who participated in this study have acknowledged that they are only involved in educational policy-making at the school level and, even at this level, the involvement of students is very basic. The students indicated that they are only permitted to be involved in the everyday-running-of-the-school type policies such as discipline, course selection and graduation procedure decisions. The administrators who were interviewed during this study agreed that students are only involved in educational decision-making at a very limited level. The students who participated in the Newfoundland study indicated that they wanted to be involved in educational policy-making and they wanted to be involved at all levels in the educational system. The students felt that they should have an input into everything that goes on in school. The students also felt that they should have an input in helping to make educational policies at the school board and departmental levels, as students and their education will be affected by any decisions made.

The school principals who were interviewed during the study agreed that student involvement in educational policy-making should not be restricted to the school level. However, the principals suggested that this is often very much the case. As, pointed out in this study, the Director of Education, who was involved in the study, agreed that student input in educational decision-making should be implemented at all levels in the educational system. However the Director of Education also suggested that the amount of student input in policy-making at the board level (in this particular district) is presently zero.

I carried out another study examining the concerns of students about their role in educational planning and policy-making at the school, district, and provincial level in Canadian school systems (Critchley, 1999). The students participating in this study from across Canada felt that they do contribute to policy-making at the school level in an informal manner. The students felt that their involvement was strictly advisory and that their main function in policy-making was to provide data to the policy-makers. According to the students, the policy-makers (school administration, teachers and school board) analyse the information collected from students and incorporate the data into their policy-making process. According to the students participating in this study, the policy-makers gather this information using such mechanisms as school councils, student councils, surveys, school improvement committees and direct consultation between students and their principals and teachers. During the study, one student in Nova Scotia, Canada stressed the need for the concerns of students to be taken into consideration during policy-making:

"It is important for students to know and realise that their concerns are heard when new policies are being developed" (Critchley, 1999, p. 134).

One of the problems with student involvement in policy-making, as pointed out by the students participating in this study, is the lack of written policies providing for student involvement. All of the students participating in this study indicated that there are no such policies in their schools. Policies do exist at the school level, but these policies are for determining how students will be elected to the student council or the school council, or how students will conduct themselves throughout the school day. According to the students, there are no policies which outline how students will be involved in helping to make policies for the school. Therefore, students are not formally involved in making policies for their school and they certainly do not have the final say in what policies will be adopted: their function is strictly advisory. During the study, one student in Saskatchewan, Canada, stressed that administrators do all the policy-making:

"The students really have no involvement in making policies because it's always been left up to the school administration" (Critchley, 1999, p. 134).

At the district level, most of the students participating in this study felt that they do not have any role to play in helping to shape policies at the school district level. The exception to this is British Columbia, in which student representatives get together with teacher advisors and principals on a district, regional, and provincial level through the network called BC Student Voice. This organisation was formed by the British Columbia Ministry of Education and the British Columbia Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association and is designed to allow students to discuss common concerns across the province. One student in British Columbia, Canada emphasised this point:

The Student Voice is currently being organised in my area; a province wide network of advisors, administrators, and students which deals with educational and social issues at provincial, regional and district levels. It was organised in 1990 by the BC Ministry of Education and the BC Principals and Vice-Principal Association (BCFPP) (Critchley, 1999, p. 135).

In the other jurisdictions across Canada, students can only be influential at the district level through student surveys conducted by the district board or through their student representation on their school councils.

The students participating in this study reported that several different mechanisms are used by the school administration to gather thoughts and ideas from students. However, the two most common ways in which students can act as advisors is through their student representation on the school council and student council.
This point was emphasised during the study by one student in Newfoundland, Canada:

Students in this school are involved in the practice of policy-making in three ways. The entire student body is involved through student surveys which have a direct influence on development of new policies. Certain students on the school council are involved in direct debate of new policies. They act on behalf of the entire student body in their decision. The student representative council can bring the concerns of other students in relation to school policies to the administration (Critchley, 1999, p. 134).

Students indicated that the information collected from them is used to help produce policies that deal not only with extra-curricular matters, but academic issues as well.

According to the students in this study, students should have more input into making policies that will have an influence on their education. The students do not want to take full control of policy-making, but they would like to play a more formal role in sharing this responsibility with the adults.

The table (opposite) summarises the involvement of high school students in policy-making at the school level as reported by the participating students in this study.

The results from Wood’s (1977) study on “Student Influence In Decision-making In Secondary Schools” (Toronto, Canada) showed that students had a moderately small amount of participation in such matters as school rules and smoking, but they had even less input into decisions involving such matters as student discipline, student evaluation, new courses and teacher evaluation. The writer also found, during this study, which involved two schools, that the students in one school wanted more say in educational decision-making than did students in the other school. He advises that the school climate in one school was more acceptable to student participation in decision-making than in the other school.

The “Leaving School Survey” conducted by Statistics Canada (1993), found that close to half of all students (41%) who drop out of school, do so

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<tr>
<th>Province or Territory</th>
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<th>Type of Student Involvement In Policy-Making</th>
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Connect 145-146;
because of school related reasons. According to Statistics Canada (1993), some of the reasons why students drop out of school are because the students are having problems in courses, students and teachers do not get along, classes are not interesting, rules are too strict, and students simply do not like school. Perhaps if students had more input into all school matters, some of the reasons for students dropping out of school could be eliminated. Deborah Stern (1992) asserts that at-risk students will be more accepting of education if they are included in the planning process.

Many at-risk students feel that high school course offerings are totally irrelevant to the true business of life: survival. The key to success with these students is to expand the scope and the extent of actual, active student participation in planning, implementation, and evaluating their courses of study. (Stern, 1992, p. 45)

Dyneson (1992) writes about a study completed by Dyneson, Gross and Nickel in 1987, involving more than seven hundred high school students in the United States. The purpose of the study was to find out what the perceptions of students are in terms of what makes good citizenship. The team made a list of ten different characteristics of good citizenship and the students were asked to rank them. According to this study, the top five characteristics of good citizenship, as selected by the students during the study, are as follows:

1. A person must possess the ability to make decisions;
2. A person must be concerned about the welfare of others;
3. A person must possess a willingness to accept an assigned responsibility;
4. A person must have the ability and freedom to question ideas; and
5. A person must maintain a moral and ethical behaviour.

Therefore, the researchers conclude that students are fully aware of what is expected of them in terms of becoming productive citizens. The question that remains is: “How can students develop these skills if they are never allowed to practise them in a democratic process of educational policy-making in school, in terms of their own education?”

Conclusion

All of the studies examined above have demonstrated that students want more input into educational policy-making at all levels of the educational system. Students want more input because all educational decisions have a direct impact on the students themselves and on their education. The students in the various studies have pointed out that an increase in student involvement in educational planning and policy-making can only take place once school administrators and teachers take the abilities of students in policy-making more seriously. In doing so, formal written policies must be put in place to enable students to take an active part in helping to plan their education, and various vehicles for enabling students to take an active part in policy development must be put in place. Once this happens and students are permitted to take on the role of being active stakeholders in planning policies that will help shape their education, then the educational experiences will become more valuable to all students.

References


Newfoundland Department of Education (1996) Education Act (chapter S-12), St. John’s, Newfoundland.


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I have been in the education field for 25 years, with 23 of those years as a teaching principal at the elementary and high school level.
**Student Action Teams Manual Reprinted**

The Victorian Department of Education and Training, as part of its Middle Years of Schooling initiative, has reprinted copies of the Student Action Teams 'How To' Manual which was written by the Australian Youth Research Centre in 2001. Initially titled Acting for Change, and now simply called Student Action Teams: Learning in the Community, the manual is available in printed form and is also downloadable from the Department's website.

Descriptions of Student Action Teams, and links to the Manual and to two information pamphlets, can be found at:


For further information, and for printed copies of the Manual, contact Kim Hamilton on (03) 9637 2196 or e-mail: <hamilton.kim.l@edumail.vic.gov.au>

**Useful web sites:**

- **Youth in Action Network:**  
  http://www.teaching.com/act/

- **What Kids Can Do - Powerful Learning with Public Purpose:**  
  http://www.whatkidscando.org/

- **Youth Action Net (Connecting Youth to Create Change):**  
  http://www.youthactionnet.org/

- **r. u. MAD (ie Making a Difference):**  
  There are also program resources available from this page:  
  http://www.rumad.org.au/resources.htm

- **I*EARN (International Education and Resource Network):**  
  http://www.learn.org/home.html  
  "... a non-profit global network that enables young people to use the Internet and other new technologies to engage in collaborative educational projects that both enhance learning and make a difference in the world."

- **Connecticut Non Profit Information Network:**  
  http://www.cnpro.org

  Designed for nonprofits and adults, but some potentially useful info. See the Advocacy and Lobbying Toolkit at:  
  http://www.cnpro.org/Pages/NonprofitResources/Advocacy_Lobbying_Toolkit.asp

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**Form One Lane in Victoria**

Two Form One Lane training days for teachers and students involved with Student Councils are being held in the Melbourne area early in 2004. This issue of Connect will be published too late for the first, but last minute places may be available at the second:

1. **Form One Lane (Advanced):** 27th February
2. **Form One Lane (Standard):** 11th March

Both are being held at LaTrobe University.

For all the details, contact David Mould, Second Strike Productions: phone: (03) 9855 8900 or 0412 743 951; or check:

http://www.second-strike.com
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AEU News (Abbotsford, Vic) Vol 9, No 9; December 2003
Calendar (Copyright Agency Limited, Sydney, NSW) December 2003
Curriculum Perspectives (ACSA, Deakin West, ACT) Vol 23, No 4; November 2003
Doing New Work: Materials for Queer Teachers and Youth Workers (Compiled by Michael Crowhurst and Mic Emelie, Australian Youth Research Centre, Melbourne, Vic) December 2003
Education Views (Education Queensland, Brisbane, Qld) Vol 12 Nos 20-22; October-November 2003
Network News (Network of Community Activities, Surry Hills, NSW) December 2003
Yikes! (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic) Vol 2 Edition 10; December 2003
Youth Studies Australia (ACYS, Hobart, Tas) Vol 22, No 4; December 2003

International:
Education Now (Nottingham, UK) Issue 42 (Winter, 2003)

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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
544 The Central Place of Student Voice in Democratic Renewal: a Chilean case study (Michael Fielding and Marcia Prieto) from Learning Democracy and Citizenship (ed: Michele Schweisfurth, Lynn Davies and Clive Harber, Symposium Books) (11 pp; $1.10)
545 Student Action Teams: Information for Schools and Information for Community Agencies (Victorian Department of Education and Training, 2004) - introductory pamphlets (4 pp; $0.80)
546 MAD Foundations: A Resource Guide for Establishing a Student-Run Foundation (r.u. MAD?; Education Foundation, Vic) (52 pp; $5.20)

policy @school

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.policyschool.org

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• ‘Youth Radio’ issue of 3CR’s CRAM Guide (1985) ($1) $ ........

• 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) $ ........

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• A Foxfire Christmas (Doubleday hardcover) ($25) $ ........

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