Primary School Students
Local Research and Recommendations to Council

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& Incorporating the PASTA Newsletter #33

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This Issue:

A visit to Adelaide recently to talk at a Civics and Citizenship Education workshop involved some fruitful discussions with teachers in junior primary, primary and secondary schools. They talked of fascinating projects and approaches, which are centred in active student participation and empowerment. Three stories are in this issue.

So it’s perhaps logical that my mind should turn to ways of further showcasing this and other work, and of heading back to Adelaide later this year. The Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA) biennial conference (see page 23) offers such an opportunity to do both. In this issue of Connect, I’m floating the idea (publicly) that we (you, me, others... students, teachers) could co-present a workshop at that Conference to report on and discuss such participatory, action-oriented and valuing curriculum approaches. While South Australian schools might be the most logical to take an active role here, schools (students and teachers) engaged in similar approaches in other states might also wish to attend and be involved.

And we could, if enough people are willing, link the ACSA participation with a full day’s mini-workshop on the Saturday immediately prior to the conference - a sort of midwinter National Student Participation Workshop could be possible! On page 9 of this issue of Connect, I outline some possibilities and ask the critical question: Are you interested? Interested enough to help organise it?

Classroom Meetings

In the last issue of Connect, I suggested that issue 142 - now the next issue - focus on Classroom Meetings: stories about how to do them, traps to avoid, greatest disasters and so on. There have been a few responses (though nothing in writing yet) saying that this is greatly needed and promising to write something. More responses are needed! I know you’re sitting there, thinking about it.

Copy is needed by the end of July. I suggested last month (and summarise again) that it would be useful to have articles about:

- Student Council representatives reporting back to students, having purposeful discussions, and generating ideas;
- Sharing curriculum discussions and decision-making in the classroom about purposeful and productive learning - the ongoing discussions about what and how;
- Including all students in these class meetings - not just the verbally self-assured, the confident, the loud or the compliant students, but also those students traditionally excluded from participation (including those who sit quietly, saying nothing). If you need a starter, see Charles Kingston’s notes on writing - page 20.

Roger Holdsworth

NEXT ISSUE: #142: August 2003
Deadline for material: end of July
Special issue on Class Meetings - see details on page 22.
Your contributions are needed NOW!

Front Cover:
North Adelaide PS SRC students strongly recommended to Adelaide City Council that playspace equipment should be challenging.
Children ‘seen and heard’ by Adelaide City Council

During 2002, students at North Adelaide Primary School (NAPS) had the exciting opportunity of being involved as consultants to the Adelaide City Council (ACC) on two projects the Council was currently undertaking. These projects were about making Rundle Mall in the city more appealing to young people, and upgrading the twelve playspaces in the ACC area.

Background

The Adelaide City Council (ACC) has for some time been keen to develop links with the community, with particular emphasis on young people. It conducts a program called ‘City Links’, in liaison with the handful of schools within its jurisdiction. NAPS has been involved in several worthwhile projects associated with ‘City Links’ over the past few years. When a grant of $1500.00 was offered by Discovering Democracy to support new initiatives last year, the year 6/7 teacher, Suzi Vladimir, and teacher librarian, Jacque Holdich, successfully applied.

North Adelaide Primary school (NAPS) is an inner suburban school with approximately 240 students and is within walking distance of the Adelaide Town Hall. Established in 1877, the school has an interesting, eclectic mix of students from about 40 postcodes. Throughout 2002, the school underwent a major $2.2m. upgrade which caused enormous problems of noise, disruption and lack of space, so that the projects were carried out under quite a lot of difficulty at times!

Suzi’s class was at one end of an assembly hall with Jacque’s library at the other end, with a classroom-sized computer area and quasi sports shed and storage area in the middle. The benefit was that Suzi and Jacque were able to keep in close contact.

How we began the projects

The first step was for Suzi and Jacque to attend an initial half-day workshop (peaceful bliss!), on March 25, for successful applicants from schools. There we discussed the aims of the projects and how to undertake them, ensuring active participation by students. The workshop was organized by Leanne Carr and Mary Hudson, South Australia’s coordinators for Discovering Democracy, and Adelaide City Council’s Education Officer, Rebecca Cox. The notion of action research was emphasized and a list of possible projects was distributed. Teachers undertaking the projects were to be supported by two more half-day meetings to monitor progress, give additional information and assist with any difficulties.

Suzi and Jacque decided to attempt two distinct projects, with Suzi’s year 6/7 class and the school’s SRC (facilitated by Jacque and Suzi) each taking responsibility for a project. The projects were to be finalized by August 22, when there would be a formal presentation by the participating schools in the Banqueting Room of the Town Hall, in the presence of the Lord Mayor, Alfred Huang, and the Councillors and Project Officers responsible for the projects.

Back at school, the various projects were separately presented to the year 6/7 class and the SRC and they each decided which project they would like to work on. The year 6/7 class chose ’Making Rundle Mall more appealing to youth’, and the SRC chose ’Upgrading the ACC Playspaces’. The Rundle Mall project had great appeal for the older students, while the same could be said for the SRC and the playspace project. The SRC ranged in ages from 5-13 and they were eager to have input into a project that would directly benefit them. With the school upgrade, including the playspace areas, they were keen to be able to give advice to the School Council as well as the ACC!

Planning

Suzi and Jacque planned the projects using another half day funded by the grant. Suzi took the major responsibility for facilitating the
Rundle Mall Project, and Jacqui the Playspace Project, whilst each supporting the other project as much as possible. Suzi used Bloom's Taxonomy to plan the Rundle Mall Project, while Jacqui used Gardner's Multiple Intelligences as the framework for the Playspace Project. Suzi also included studies of the three levels of government to occur concurrently with the Rundle Mall project. Both teachers were mindful that their plans were susceptible to change as the aim was for the students to have a voice in directing the projects. The guiding principles for participation in the projects were:

- Student contributions are valued.
- Active engagement meets genuine needs.
- Participation has an impact beyond the classroom.
- The projects are challenging.
- Opportunities are provided for planning, acting, presenting and reflecting.

For each project, it was suggested that we could invite the ACC Project Officers in charge of our projects to visit the school and talk with their respective group, to gain an understanding of what was required. The students agreed and the Project Officers visited early in Term 2. During these visits, Eleanor Button (Rundle Mall), and Ray Scheuaboeck (Playspace), were able to give the students a clearer idea of what was required of them. For example, Ray told the SRC that the Council wanted the students to tell them in which order did they think the playspaces should be upgraded, and how would they spend $50,000.00 to improve a playspace. He also said the Council did not have well-established guidelines for playspaces and that they could give guidance there as well. After these visits, the students were keen to get into action. It was decided that we would make an I-movie of the processes of both projects to include in our presentation on August 22.

**The Rundle Mall Project**

During Eleanor Button's visit she showed the students large maps and drawings of Rundle Mall, outlined the project and answered many questions. She asked the students to explore the following:

- What does Rundle Mall mean to you?
- How often and at what times do you visit?
- Is the visit mainly to meet others, or to shop?
- What facilities are missing from the Mall now? What facilities would you like to see introduced?
- Do you feel welcomed by the business community?
- What are the main things you like/dislike?
- Do you feel unsafe in the Mall? If so, why do you feel unsafe?

Back at school, findings were shared and graphs devised. The survey findings were analysed and presented to the class. Six hat thinking and de Bono's PMI were used to explore Rundle Mall possibilities. Debating and exposition writing were incorporated at this stage.

The students decided that Marion Shopping Centre was a trendy place for young people and a group of students visited the Centre to conduct a similar survey. Comparisons were made.

Students brainstormed ideas that would make Rundle Mall more appealing to youth. Their ideas included shelter, lighting, signs, entrance banners, video screens at both ends and flags or posts to indicate location of shops. More ideas were colourful benches, more art work including sculptures, an interactive games centre with music, 'Kid's Centre' for lost children, a monorail, a skateboard path and greater police presence, security and cameras. In pairs, the students drew up plans and stated reasons why their particular plan would be useful. They created 2-D models of their ideas for making Rundle Mall more appealing. These included a 'Tech/Muse' café, 'The Easy Zone' flat escalators, Australian animal sculptures, 'Four Wheels Under' go-karting under the Mall, 'Clipsal' video screens on either end, a large dome in the middle of the Mall and decorative murals. These exciting and colourful plans were presented to the class. All of the plans were presented in a portfolio for display on August 22.

Richard Brecknock, of Brecknock Consulting, a street-scape and playspace consultant, and guest speakers from the Adelaide City Council Planning Group, were invited to speak to the class and respond to the students' questions.

The students decided to make a 3-D model of their ideal Rundle Mall. A group of students visited a model
shop and spent $200 on features used by architects for their models. After some perseverance, they discovered that the task was too great and decided to make a model of an ideal playspace instead, to support the SRC playspace project. This proved to be a much more manageable and very successful task!

The students gathered together all of their findings and recommendations and created a presentation of five minutes duration for August 22. The finishing touches were a survey of some parents and all of the students to discover their views of the project, and a six-hat evaluation of the project by the students. Rehearsals of the presentation took place and the publicity team put the finishing touches to the I-movie.

**The Playspace Project**

The SRC Playspace Project proceeded parallel with the Rundle Mall Project. Ray Scheuaboeck, the ACC Recreation Project Officer spoke to the students. He told them that the ACC goals were:

- To have better playspaces in the city.
- To develop an order for improving playspaces in the city.
- To develop guidelines for planning and designing playspaces in the city.

Following his visit, the students brainstormed questions for a survey to go to families at the school regarding their views and uses of playspaces within and outside the ACC area. They also created a survey to use themselves while they visited many playspaces, including inner city school playgrounds. A bus was hired on two occasions, courtesy of Adelaide City Council, for all of the students from Reception to Year 7 to visit playspaces and evaluate all aspects of them. The students really enjoyed this hands-on activity! Photographs were taken at each playspace and charts were made, with comments by students on the features they liked and disliked.

Students in several classes assisted with an imaginative activity in which they magically turned into a favourite piece of play equipment and why they chose that particular one. Their efforts were used as a survey of popular equipment and made into books.

Some older students visited playspace expert, Richard Brecknock, in his city office and increased their knowledge of good design for playspaces. Others visited Street and Park Furniture to assess and cost features such as rubbish bins, seating and lighting. Another playspace expert, Jackie Hunter, was invited to speak to classes in the school regarding the school playspace design. Jackie strongly promoted the notion of fitting in with and using the natural environment. Many ideas were generated.

Surveys were analysed and an ideal playspace was designed and costs estimated. The SRC created a map of the local playspace showing their recommendations, estimated to cost $50,000.

As the time for the presentation drew near, recommendations and general guidelines were agreed upon, the presentation by six of the students was rehearsed, and parents and SRC students were surveyed regarding their thoughts about the project. Visits to the school by Leanne Carr, Mary Hudson and Rebecca Cox during this time were encouraging, and we were assured we were on track for our presentation. The I-movie was completed a couple of days before August 22. They were ready to go!

**The Presentations and Responses**

The students who presented each project were well rehearsed and gave a clear outline of the active research that had taken place as well as their findings and recommendations. The concluding six-minute I-movie, titled 'Captions and Actions', gave very visual insight into the action research processes employed by the students. During morning tea, the Lord Mayor said he was so impressed with the presentations and I-movie that he hoped the students would apply to present their recommendations at a full council meeting. One of the year 7 students, walking back to school, enthused that it was the best morning he could remember!

In a press release in The Advertiser, The Lord Mayor was reported as saying he wanted first-hand experience from young people on how to improve the city. He said, 'I'm quite surprised at how well these young people prepared themselves and the depth of the studies they carried out.'

The presentation was also recorded in the teacher's journal, Xpress.

Our school Principal received a letter from Peter Dale, General Manager, Policy and Planning, which read in part:

'On behalf of the Adelaide City Council, I would like to thank you and congratulate you for enabling the involvement of the students of North Adelaide Primary School with the Civics and Citizenship program. It is evident that the staff and students put in much time, effort and enthusiasm in participating.'

The students' descriptions of projects on Playspaces and Rundle Mall design, and the recommendations which they made, will be of great assistance to the Adelaide City Council in its endeavour to create a vibrant place for young people. Council looks forward to further investigating the ideas presented.

It is assured that the recommendations made by the students of North Adelaide Primary School are being acknowledged throughout Council.'

June 2003
The Spin-offs

Suzi and Jacquie applied for and received a $400 Discovering Democracy grant to be involved in Celebrating Democracy Week. The students made a formal application to the Secretary of ACC to present their recommendations to a meeting of ACC in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall. This occurred on the evening of Monday 28 October, which was chosen because it was during 'Celebrating Democracy Week'. Two students represented each of the projects. A few days before their presentations they were given a guided tour of the Council Chamber by the Secretary so that they would not become overawed on the night. They were very impressed by the formal grandeur of the room.

On the night of the meeting, it was said that the students were the youngest people to make recommendations at an Adelaide City Council meeting. The SRC students were only nine years old and needed to stand on a stool to see over the lectern! Prior to the meeting, the Lord Mayor and all Councillors had each been presented with a folder, made by the students, with all of the recommendations, photographs of the students at various stages of the projects, media clippings and letters. The map, charts and a copy of the I-movie were presented to Council at the meeting. Councillor Richard Hayward moved that the students' recommendations be seriously considered by Council. The vote was unanimous. The Lord Mayor commended the students on their very professional approach as consultants to ACC.

The Federal Member for Adelaide, Ms Trish Worth, had been invited to attend the Council Meeting. She replied:

'Thank you for your kind invitation to witness your presentation to the Adelaide City Council next week as part of Celebrating Democracy Week.'

Unfortunately at the time of your presentation I will still be travelling back to Adelaide from Canberra, and so will not be able to attend. However, I would like to pass on my best wishes and congratulations for the work you are undertaking.

I think it is wonderful when students such as yourself not only learn about the processes of democracy in Australia, but also take the next step and put forward your own views. After all, that is exactly what democracy is all about - giving everyone a chance to have their say on the future of our nation.

I'm sure the Adelaide City Council will be very keen to hear your ideas and opinions, particularly as young people often provide views that are refreshing and that may not have been considered previously.

Even though I cannot be there on Monday night, I would be very interested to have a look at some of your project ideas at some stage.

I wish you all the best with your presentation. I'm sure it will be well received by everyone present.'

A presentation folder, similar to the one presented to Councillors, was posted to the Minister, along with a video of the I-movie, for her information.

The Adelaide City Council presentation was recorded in the City Messenger, with accompanying photographs.

During Celebrating Democracy Week, the SRC also presented their findings about Playspaces to the NAPS Council, having made an earlier presentation to the NAPS Environment Committee. The Environment Committee had been so impressed with their recommendations for the school playspace, which was about to undergo major renovation, that they invited them to a full Council meeting. This gave another group of students the opportunity to present. Many of their recommendations have now been put in place. Some are recorded for adding when money becomes available. The students were very pleased to be able to give advice on the design of their own school playspace and see quick results.

Another outcome of the projects was that Suzi and Jacque were invited to share their experiences with other teachers. They presented a workshop for teachers at a Thinking Skills Cluster Network Conference day on Monday 2 September. They also presented on the final day of the Discovering Democracy course, Whole School Grants Professional Development Project, organized by Leanne Carr and Mary Hudson on Monday 11 November, with the purpose of giving the teachers practical examples of how Civics and Citizenship can be approached in schools. Recently, they accepted an invitation to give two workshop presentations in Canberra on May 8 at the Discovering Democracy Conference at Parliament House.

A further spin-off was that our school was invited by Mary and Leanne to present a brief report of our projects at the Celebrating Democracy Week Awards event at the Education Development Centre on Tuesday 29 October. Two students, who were representatives of both the SRC and the Year 6/7 class, briefly explained their involvement in the projects and showed the I-movie they had made. The audience was from several schools and included the South Australian Minister for Education, Trish White. This event was recorded in our school newsletter with a photograph of our two students with the Minister.
The ACC Project Officer, Ray Scheuauoeck, returned to NAPS near the end of the year to report to the SRC. He said that all their recommended guidelines for playspaces were adopted by ACC, and that it was proposed that the first playspace to be upgraded would be the one nearest our school. The children had said that this should be first because it is used so greatly by the school, which is very lacking in playspace. Also, it is much used every day by the community. Understandably, the SRC students were very pleased to hear of such a quick and satisfying response!

Ray Scheuauoeck's visit was followed up on April 7, 2003. Jill Andreouos, Recreation Project Manager at ACC, and playspace designers, James Hayter and Amy Ford, of James Hayter & Associates, visited the school for a meeting with several of the SRC students who had been involved in the project. A plan had been drawn up for the local playspace, with strong reference to the SRC recommendations. Feedback from the students was sought at the meeting. The students discussed the plan very thoroughly and decided that they were very happy with it. The plan now requires endorsement at an ACC meeting, and if that is given, work should start in July.

The parent and student feedback

The results of the parent and student surveys were collated and gave some interesting insights into the projects.

Some comments from parents were:

'John likes meetings and we think it is great for him to see decision-making in progress.'

'I think this has been a very worthwhile project. Empowering young people to take part in their environment and community can only add value to a healthy community.'

'Adelaide City Council is to be commended on its consultative community approach.'

'Jane has been excited about the field trips and extra responsibilities that have been placed on her by the teacher(s) especially when she was told why she was being chosen for certain tasks (eg. coatings).'

A summary of the results of the student evaluation surveys, which were conducted just prior to the presentations on August 22, is as follows:

1. I am part of the community and I can contribute actively.
   80% Playspace, 75% Rundle Mall
2. I enjoyed being involved in field trips and action research that helps the community.
   87% Playspace, 86% Rundle Mall
3. I liked dealing with real issues.
   87% Playspace, 80% Rundle Mall
4. I could practice skills like organization, planning, group work and time management.
   82% Playspace, 79% Rundle Mall
5. I had opportunities to communicate with others and share my ideas.
   78% Playspace, 82% Rundle Mall
6. I have good ideas and have learnt I can make a difference.
   80% Playspace, 74% Rundle Mall

The students participated in a Six Thinking Hats evaluation of the project as well, so that they could make personal comments. Most were positive and thoughtful, and the six hats gave them opportunities to think about the project from various viewpoints. A few comments were:

'I am happy to be involved in this and am proud that I am about to represent my school.' (Red hat)

'We created new ideas and shared them as a group. I made some chair lifts.' (Green hat)

'Everyone was involved.' (White hat)

'It was really fun going to Rundle Mall and making designs and interviewing people.' (Yellow hat)

'That our ideas won't be excepted (sic) or took (sic) seriously into deep consideration. Because we know what we want.' (Black hat)

'We had to think about how we were going to go about it in the first place, then go through it, stage by stage.' (Blue hat)

The benefits

The students involved in these projects have been part of the process of democracy in action. The year 6/7 students learnt about the three levels of government, with the civics component complementing the active citizenship nature of the projects. The students have seen the need to be well informed before offering advice. They have developed their skills of research and presentation, understanding that these are necessary to get action taken on issues that are of concern to them. They have been listened to and have seen, and continue to see, results emanating from their endeavours, both of which are truly exciting.

Contact

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YEA means Youth Environment Activists and empowered students

Christies Beach High School is situated in the southern suburbs of Adelaide. It is classified as a 'category two' disadvantaged secondary school. There are approximately 800 students in the school. The school was recently renovated and restructured from two campuses into one; this resulted in a purpose built middle school area. The school motto is "education for all". There are a variety of programs and courses which are aimed to help all students to stay at school and do their best. The school has a commitment to maintaining and growing strong parent and community relationships.

At Christies Beach High School we have initiated and implemented an Environmental Program entitled YEA (Youth Environment Activists).

Nothing new here. What is different about this project is that students are making real decisions with REAL money. The students go through a democratic process to decide which environmental projects will be funded, AND they learn and teach project management skills to students proposing the project.

The YEA was formed through our student voice conference. Through discussions we decided that a 'safe' area to enable us to introduce focused meeting skills to students would be to use the environment as the central topic. We called for volunteers and at the same time nominated a few students who had been identified as 'students at risk'. This group met and we began the process of teaching them the skills of meeting procedures and democratic processes using the Discovering Democracy resources. The group used democratic processes to select a name (Youth Environment Activists - YEA) and a logo. T-shirts were organised and printed with the logo, immediately giving the students a strong sense of identity within the school. The students were also taught project management and application writing, and developed a pro forma whereby other students in the school could apply for a grant to undertake environmental activities with their class or for the broader school community.

The range of projects that the students have been involved with are: tree planting, plant propagation, Water Watch, Clean Up Australia Day, photo records of oil refinery areas, painting rubbish bins, celebrating and publicising World Environment Day, debates, hosting conferences, and sending students to conferences and workshops. These examples have all involved the process of application writing to reflect project management, providing funding through a budget line, follow up and mentoring of project organisers.

The outcomes of the project have been wide and varied. One of the most powerful aspects of the project was that students had access to a budget. Through the Civics and Citizenship grant we received, the students were empowered by having access to a budget to put into action the projects classes applied to undertake. The students involved have spoken at conferences, developed skills in public speaking, been involved in the state Youth For Environment Council and undertaken various environmental projects across the school. We now have student representatives on the school's environment committee. Students involved have undoubtedly constructed new identities through their involvement in the YEA. Their identity is constructed visually through their t-shirts, structurally through having their own space within the school, and connected through common practical experiences. It has become clear that a major benefit of the project has been the connection of students to democratic processes through actual real life experiences, making democracy relevant and something that can be lived rather than just taught.

Kerry Rochford  
English/School Promotions Co-ordinator

Vivienne McQuade  
Middle School Co-ordinator

Members of YEA prepare for a visit from the Minister of Education Hon. Trish White
The following YEA Grant Application Form was designed by the group for use by classes or individuals wishing to apply for funding for an environmental grant.

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**ACSA Conference**

28-30 September, 2003
Adelaide, South Australia

The Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA) holds its national conference every two years. Since about 1995, there have been attempts to encourage students to be part of teams attending the conference. Students have been workshop and paper presenters, members of panels, reporters, publishers etc. This is a way of focusing on active student participation in curriculum.

In September, the ACSA Conference returns to Adelaide, with a theme that links curriculum conversations and curriculum action.

**Student Participation Workshop**

I am proposing that a six-hour workshop be offered (over the three days of the conference) that explicitly highlights and discusses student participation in an 'action curriculum'. As part of that workshop, I'd like to feature mini case studies (devoting about half to one hour to each) from schools involved in this area: with students and teachers as presenters. Are you interested to take part?

Other student participation in the Conference might also be possible - students producing a conference 'newspaper', being respondents to discussions or presenting sessions. Again, are you interested?

**A Pre-Meeting?**

In the past, we have also tried to make time for student participants and support staff to get together before the Conference, to talk over issues, rehearse presentations, organise the workshop. That could be in Adelaide somewhere on **Saturday 27th September**. Would you be interested to attend if we could organise this?

At a 'minimal' level, this could be a time for those involved in the 6-hour workshop to get together and plan it. At a 'middling' level, we could aim for a full day meeting for SA students and others attending the ACSA conference to meet and be introduced to the issues. At a 'maximal' level, is there interest in organising a National Student Participation Workshop (NASPAC 6.5) for that Saturday and getting students and supporters of student participation from around Australia, to meet for the day to share experiences, network, take part in workshop sessions etc.

For these possibilities, we'd need a local school or organisation to be willing to host the event, offer premises etc. Information could be circulated through Connect and other networks. Note that these dates are in school holidays for most states: that is both a difficulty and a possibility.

Let me know urgently if you would like to be involved and if you think any of these options might be possible.

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Roger Holdsworth
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**Project Name/Idea:**

**Leaders of project:**

**Teacher Support:**

**Who Involved:**

**How will the project work?**

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**How long will the project take until completion?**

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**What resources needed:**

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**Itemised Cost:**

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**Duty of care issues (safety):**

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**Approved/Not Approved**

**Further information required:**

**Comments:**

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June 2003
Civics and Citizenship in the Early Years - Reception to Year 2

At Magill Junior Primary School, Civics and Citizenship Education plays a key role in providing students with across-curriculum programs and activities that integrate the core values of the school, the South Australian Curriculum Framework, Essential Learnings and Key Competencies.

The learning environment enables young students to develop skills in lifelong learning through active participation in decision making, negotiation, planning and taking on special roles and responsibilities. Students have opportunities to engage in a wide range of groups, activities and events, enabling them to develop an understanding of democracy and government in a community.

Whole school programs include:
- Student Representative Council;
- Peer Mediation;
- Library Monitors;
- Litter teams;
- Sport monitors;
- Special days and Celebrations;
- Assemblies.

In day to day learning experiences students participate in:
- establishing expectations and consequences;
- having special responsibilities;
- making choices and decisions;
- class meetings, working in teams;
- solving problems;
- planning and organising information and activities;
- communicating ideas.

Students are trained and supported in their roles as representatives on the SRC, Peer Mediation and Library Monitors. Class teachers manage Litter Teams and Sport Monitors. Assemblies are held every two weeks with students playing a very active role in planning and organising and presenting. All students have the opportunity to have a say in suggesting projects for casual days, planning and organising special events and celebrations.

Enterprise Education

This year a school garden has been established with two groups of students from Reception to Year 2 participating. They have been responsible for choosing a selection of vegetables and flowers, digging, planting, weeding and watering. The garden groups have seen the results of their hard work and have sold some of their produce to the staff at the school. Money raised will pay for more plants. The students have already decided to buy rose bushes and more vegetables to sell.

Civics and Citizenship at Magill Junior Primary School empowers, trains and supports young students, enabling them to develop as active citizens with skills for lifelong learning.

Patricia Lutz
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PASS THE PASTA

The PASTA executive is very pleased to welcome three new Teacher/Adviser Member Representatives to the Committee: teacher Christine Murray comes from Asquith Girls High School in Hornsby, NSW; Tony Gleeson is SRC Adviser at Alstonville High School in far north country, NSW; and Mark Dell ‘Oro is Leadership Coordinator at Aquinas College, a comprehensive Catholic Boys School in Perth, Western Australia. These add to the three other new members on the Committee this year: previous overseas tour veterans Lisa Wiseheart and Anna Dickinson from Central Coast parts of NSW, and Alfie Walker from Goulburn. All six have contributed to our projects in the past. All now have a more active voice in what we do.

April saw delegates for the 2003 USA tour get together for their orientation meeting. Held this time on the first Sunday and Monday of the New South Wales school holidays, we were very pleased to have all but one of the delegates able to attend. This very full two day program saw the team (and their parents) given a thorough briefing on what is planned for them during their 30 day leadership program in America. All who attended can now guarantee that this experience will be no holiday.

It also saw a very busy 8-day program in place for a group of American Student Council advisers and students. Put together by a Year 12 Asquith Girls High School student (2001 tour delegate Amy Bott), it saw them spend time on the Central Coast as well as in Sydney. Highlights of the trip included some tourist activities (cuddling koalas) as well as more cultural experiences such as attending the ANZAC Day Dawn Service.

Discussions still continue with the NSW DET on PASTA’s ‘Working Guidelines’ (to use its shortened title) regarding matters to do with SRC Teacher/Advisers. Summaries of these plus other written items relating to those discussions are now available on our Website through any of the pages titled ‘Issues For Advisers’, ‘Curriculum’ and/or ‘Publications’. In NSW at least, it appears that student leadership in primary and secondary education needs to be approached in distinct ways. Though each level shares common aims, achieving K-12 continuity and enabling a positive profile across all levels will not happen quickly. The fine words seen in the state government’s policy document give heart. We reiterate our mutual desire for more feedback on these guidelines and lobbying efforts from all and sundry. Contact our Secretary at: esheerin@ozemail.com.au if you would like to have input into this important area of our work.

Ken Page
President
OZ-US SRC INTERACTION

Over the last six years, a strong relationship has grown between the students and staff of Bordentown Regional High School, New Jersey, USA and the Australian delegations to the annual American leadership programs. This relationship has resulted in a number of joint activities both here and in America. In April, PASTA hosted the second visit by American Student Council members. Their time in Australia was planned by former delegate and current Year 12 student Amy Bott. Here is her account of this visit.

On the 18th April 2003, the American student delegation arrived from New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Georgia to a very wet Sydney’s Kingsford Smith Airport. Lead by Mike Nolan (NJ), Carolyn Robinson (NJ) and Kathy Coll (PA) came Erik and Mindy (PA), Stacey, Kristen, Stephanie, Kate, Lindsay, Brianna, Olivia and Brian (NJ) and Meagan from Georgia. With help from Gorokan High and Asquith Girls High, the Professional Association of Student Representative Council Teacher Advisors (PASTA) sponsored these delegates and organised an 8-day intensive itinerary in Sydney and its outer regions.

An intensive few months was spent trying to organise not only places to see that would be of interest to American students, but also to keep costs within a very tight budget. Many hours of negotiation with bus companies, State Rail, Taronga Zoo officials etc, not only ensured that everyone had a worthwhile visit but that costs were kept to a minimum.

These visitors got to experience the Central Coast and the Blue Mountains and had a close look at Sydney city, including trips to the Zoo, Centrepoint Tower, Bondi Beach, Manly and the obvious: the Harbour Bridge and the Opera House. More importantly, these students got the chance to experience what is the Australian lifestyle. They were constantly interacting with students their age and were hosted up at the central coast by Gorokan High and in Sydney by students of Asquith Girls. This not only allowed them to make friends with the students but really understand how a student’s life runs down here in Australia. There were fascinated to learn everything they could about every aspect of our lives that are so totally different from theirs including the Aussie colloquialisms and lingo. That they thoroughly enjoyed.

These students attend either Bordentown Regional High in New Jersey or Rockdale County High in Georgia. Bordentown’s student council advisor, Mr Mike Nolan, who has significant involvement in the PASTA American leaderships tours held annually, selected them. This school usually accompanies the Australian Delegation to the National Association of Student Councils Conference each year and has hosted delegates more than once. We have sent two delegates from AGHS over the five years that this program has run and Ms Sheerin of the LOTE staff has been an advisor of four of these tours.

Committee members of PASTA, which includes our very own talented Christine Murray, our technologically advanced Ellen Sheerin and Ken Page of Gorokan High and Sue Page of Narara Valley High, had an enormous involvement not only in the organisation but also in the supervision or, as we like to call it, the accompaniment of the delegation.

We would like to thank all those who contributed to the success of this venture, especially those who freely gave of their time and their homes during the 8-day visit. It appears as if the only complaint from those involved was that they weren’t here long enough for us to do all that we wanted to do or to show them more than a fraction of what Australia has to offer.

Amy Bott
Asquith Girls High

The PASTA Newsletter is edited by Ken Page and distributed bi-monthly as a supplement to Connect magazine.
WHAT’S HAPPENING DOWN SOUTH???
THE JAMES FALLON HIGH SCHOOL SRC

With a group of about 40, the James Fallon High School Student Representative Council (SRC) is a group of students that represent a student body of about 800. Students get involved because they would like to improve their leadership skills, public speaking skills or they just want to be more involved with the school. To get onto the James Fallon SRC you have to get voted in by your peers. You have to nominate yourself. One representative is voted in from every English class in the school. All students are eligible to be nominated.

The James Fallon SRC takes part in many activities and experiences. We organise and run many events such as:

- Taking student suggestions and working hard to get something done about them;
- Speaking for the student body;
- Speaking on school assemblies;
- Organising and running the James Fallon High School SRC Display (a dance, gym, music and drama display);
- Organising and running the end-of-term discos which have a great DJ, funky dress-up themes eg Glow, Geeks and Freaks, and a freebie eg Fairyfloss, glow-stick, pizza;
- Raising money for worthy charities eg Smart House, sponsor a child, Jeans for Genes Day;
- Operating canteens at cross-country and discos;
- Taking part in leadership camps;
- Going to district and state SRC meetings.

The James Fallon HS SRC shows its school spirit by wearing our school uniform with pride, and supporting our school in every way we possibly can.

With two fantastic teachers to assist us, the SRC is a fun and exciting group to be part of.

Freya Hunter and Adisa Hubanic
Year 9 SRC Representatives

In 2003 we also have Year 11 SRC member Melissa Haberfield as our international representative on the PASTA Overseas SRC Leadership Tour. Melissa is the liaison student from the NSW SRC to PASTA.

JUST DON’T QUIT

When things go wrong as they sometimes will,
When the road you’re trudging seems all uphill,
When the funds are low and the debts are high,
And when you want to smile, but you have to sigh,
When care is pressing you down a bit –
Rest if you must, but don’t you quit.

Life is queer with its twists and turns,
As everyone of us sometimes learns,
And many a “failure” turns about
When he might have won had he stuck it out:
Don’t give up, though the pace seems slow,
You may succeed with another blow.

Often the goal is nearer than
It seems to a faint and faltering man
Often the struggler has given up
When he might have captured the victor’s cup
And he learned too late, when the night slipped down,
How close he was to the golden crown.

Success is failure turned inside out,
The silver tint of the clouds is doubt,
And you never can tell how close you are,
It may be near when it seems afar,
So, stick to the fight when you’re hardest hit -
It’s when things go wrong that you mustn’t quit!

PASTA subscriptions and queries:
PASTA Inc.
50 Balmoral Drive
Gorokan, NSW 2263
http://hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/

June 2003
RESOURCE MODULES

Creating updated resource modules on a wide variety of SRC leadership, representation and participation skills areas and on publications available is one of our long-term projects. This year we are concentrating on the group processes of goal-setting, project planning and meeting procedures, on the personal skills of communications and on lists of available publications (from any source) in this field. A warm invitation for anyone to contribute to that process, especially if they are aware of useful publication already available on such and/or would be willing to link with us on our Website.

ISRC 2004

Planning for the 2nd International Student Representative Conference (for secondary students and advisers) is well underway. PASTA is working together with CASAA, the national advisers organisation in Canada, the NASC in the USA and any other interested countries with national student or adviser groups on making this second conference even larger and better than the first, which we initiated in December 2000 in Sydney and the Central Coast of NSW. ISRC 2004 will be held in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada from 3 - 7 August next year. Its overall theme is “One World, One Dream - Think Globally, Act Locally”. If interested in further information, email Greg Arrow at garr7071@mail.usyd.edu.au

6th ANNUAL OVERSEAS SRC LEADERSHIP TOUR

A highly intensive month-long educational experience begins once more on 19th June and includes the 67th NASC Conference hosted by Lancaster High School near Buffalo, New York, USA. Prior to it, our Australian international representative delegates will be ‘adopted’ and most welcomed guests of the Pennsylvania Association of Student Councils as they, together, take a week touring their own state and being hosted by their own ‘SRCs’. Following Buffalo and some cross-cultural experiences in New Orleans and Mississippi, a personally and professionally invaluable leadership skills training camp is to be undertaken at Lake Tahoe, Nevada. This is a major national secondary school leadership event attended by about 2000 student and SRC adviser leaders.

This year we have delegates from these NSW schools: Aquith Girls HS, Belmont HS, Brisbane Waters SS, Freshwater SS, Galston HS, Gorokan HS, Hornsby HS, James Fallon HS, Mosman HS, Narara Valley HS, North Sydney Boys HS, North Sydney Girls HS, Pennant Hills HS and Swansea HS. Three of those students are also current members of the NSW SRC. Victoria is represented by Ganga Ranjit from Mentone Girls HS in Melbourne, while Year 10 students Joseph Pickett and Kristy Saltmarsh complete three years in a row of Prospect HS in Launceston, Tasmania providing two fine delegates from the Apple Isle.

PASTA MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

The financial year ends on 30 June: time for membership renewals and encouragement for new members to join now to get a full year of regular publications, access to resource modules and professional development opportunities, while at the same time showing their real support for our main job of lobbying for more time, training, resources and recognition for SRCs. A short version of the membership form is below in this newsletter. The full version and more details are on our Website’s ‘How To Join’ page at: http://hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/

For now, just complete the details below and send your payment to:
The Secretary, PASTA, 50 Balmoral Drive, Gorokan, NSW 2263

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Students complain: “We need a break!”
Teachers protest: “We don’t have time!”
Principals and Head Teachers remind both:
“Reports are due!” The ‘system’ says to us: “The curriculum is over-
crowded.” Parents caution: “But what about your HSC results?”

We all have competing agendas. We are all too busy for words. So life is overcrowded. SO?
So SRCs and student activities in many schools rely so much on creating productive working time for their members and advisers out of lunchtime, recess and (if they don’t have to catch a bus or ‘pick up the kids’) before or after ‘school’. And then they and others wonder why they so often fail to do an adequate job of representing that school.

Or get frustrated because they’re told they “don’t do enough for the students”. Or get stressed when told they are “not spending enough time on their school work”.

Well, since September 2002, Kelso High (in Bathurst, in the Central West of NSW) has been experimenting with several solutions. Medium term solutions admittedly, but better than none at all. (Or worse, just another woeful time whinge.) Historically, none are new. But for this school at this time, all are new. And that’s the crux of the matter. Like the currently in progress ‘new’ construction of a written constitution - to replace the one that no longer exists. (But that’s for a another article.)

Each SRC, each leadership representative group must reinvent itself periodically. And find time when time is scarce.

One solution is using roll/reading time to meet. A second is scheduling full period timetabled meetings on the same day but on a rotating period basis. A third is, like these formal meetings, explicitly including student activities such as workshop training days, district SRC meetings, community service efforts and discos in the year’s calendar. (You know, the one that goes to all staff in all schools, but, oddly, not to the students in most.)

The Kelso High SRC roll ‘class’ has met now for nearly three terms every morning for 20 minutes (only 10 on Thursdays, but Wednesday lunch is a longer school scheduled one - perfect for committees or SRC office work - when remembered). Thus, daily, while the rest of the school is counting heads, mouthing messages and (some) silently reading, SRC leaders have time to plan together, meet others and sometimes even actively carry out parts of ongoing projects - or get input into new ones - in other roll classes.

Kelso also has a ‘Senior Leadership Team’. It’s a group of about 16 Year 12 students who work separately but in consultation with the SRC. They have their own advisers; the SRC has theirs. (Or, by the way, the senior advisers and the SRC advisers all believe leadership skills training is an essential part of being student representatives. When they have time to do it.)

So when, in the past, did these two fine but virtually mutually exclusive groups find time to get together? Never. (Well, hardly ever.) After one term, the benefits of the daily SRC get together (without the burden of being labelled a ‘meeting’) were so apparent to the seniors that, one week into the new school year, they had their own roll group as well. Now each can get to know themselves and meet each other without taking ‘time out of class’.

No, Kelso High hasn’t solved the lack of time for student activities problem entirely. After all, even though they live ‘over the Blue Mountains’, they can’t ‘move mountains’. Until such time as ‘the system’ and those who work within it recognise that SRCs and such are valid curriculum, no amount of time perceived - however incorrectly - as ‘non-class’ time, will completely solve that problem.

Providing knowledge of governing and decision-making processes needs supplementary teaching time and resources. Training students and advisers in the multitude of communication, organisation and personal relationship skills is best done in block time segments. And - especially - it needs sustainable development over a long time to develop the many positive attitudes active citizenship through the SRC and student activities generally can do so magnificently. When given more than 10 or 20 minutes sound bytes to do so. But so is learning the English language. Or Maths. Or Art or . . . Or Industrial Arts . . .

Or being flexibly skilled enough for multiple careers. Hey, how about that then?

If your school is NOT having a shortage of time for these things, then please write and let us know. You are indeed rare and privileged.

If you’re more like this comprehensive 7-12 government school, then borrow some time from Kelso High’s current trials. Trial SRC (and SLT and SLC and SLA etc) use of roll time, use ‘normal class’ time for normal SRC meetings, involve the student decision-makers intimately in helping to construct the year and each term’s more detailed calendars.

In other words, maximise use of what little time you have. Hectic yes. But the rewards are worth it. As the maxim says: “If you want something done, ask a busy person.”

And, if you have no scheduled leadership class, account for the legitimacy of your SRC ‘class’ by providing skills training workshops regularly. And, when the boss asks, “Done your reports yet?”, tell her or him that “Yes, student leadership is on all reports.”

And tell the students and parents that too. (Oh, sorry. That’s also for another article.)

Charles Kingston
Vice-President (Country) of PASTA
charleskingston@ozemail.com.au
Issues, Questions and Comments: Letters to Connect

Looking for an Effective Student Voice

I am a year 9 student at a South Australian High School and currently we are studying Government in Society and Environment. As a personal project, I have decided to study 'student voice' and the way it should operate in schools and the way that this school can adopt an effective way of valuing student voice.

I was writing to ask if you had any resources or information about student voice that may be useful in my research and also if you would be able to answer some questions.

1. What is Student Voice?
2. How can students effectively participate in their school’s government or decision-making processes?
3. How important is it for student’s voices to be heard and to have input?

Here’s some background on the situation at our school:

Our school does have an SRC that I am a member of. Personally I don’t feel that it does enough for the students. Most people dislike the SRC as they feel that there is no point to it. I guess this is why I chose the topic of Student Voice as I wanted to improve our school’s student voice.

Many people don’t know why a student SRC is actually in our school as our current SRC isn’t too active. We have weekly meetings but not very much ever seems to happen - well, from what the students see. I would like to have a much more active and involved SRC; we need an effective way of listening to students’ ideas and opinions.

I think that the year level committees should be more involved in our SRC so that every person in every homegroup’s voice is heard. I also think that once in a while an open meeting should be held where the students are invited to attend and it could be held in a public place - such as the oval, or library etc. This would allow the students that want a say to be able to participate.

I am currently in the process of writing my own survey for the school and the SRC is also sending one out about certain events etc. I will use my results for research and stats.

After raising the issue at a recent meeting about it not being fully student driven and the fact we are quite heavily relying on teachers, SRC members have begun to lift their act and have been thinking a bit more about their role on the representative council and their 'duties'.

Our SRC is selected by a panel of one teacher and two students who read applications and interview people. They select a range of different people and do not exclude people on the basis of age or your grades etc. Each year level is equally represented on the council but there is an increased number of year 12s as they have more school contacts and have more time to help out.

We have representatives on each decision making board in the school - but as the meetings are held after school, it is often difficult for people to make it because of transport arrangements etc. We are currently looking into how we can improve this - either by getting the meeting times changed, or getting cab charges etc.

I think that Connect is a great magazine and it has really helped with my research and has got me thinking deeper into the issue.

Communication is something we’re not too good at. How do you suggest we can improve this?

How can we make our Council more student driven and not run by teachers?

Heather Browett
<browethea@ghihs.sa.edu.au>

Old SRC Members ... Go On Training

Since finishing year 12, over the past few years (make that since 1997), I have been dabbling in a bit of student training and running workshops on how to develop effective participation in schools and how to help create useful Student Representative Councils in schools. You know where I got the spark from for my ideas: some grey-haired guy that the Department of Education used to bring up from Melbourne for a couple of days to impart his knowledge to the SRC kids up north.

Well, since 1998, I have only held a few workshops a year (having a two year break to travel overseas), lent my advice to a few High School and College teachers, and accepted the microphone at the odd conference around town. That has always been enough to keep my spark going in between working and studying at Uni fulltime. (Oh, and not forgetting a few sleep-deprived nights at NASPAC 6 in Melbourne with the 'crew' to make you really know you’re alive!)

A few months ago, I got a phone call from a High School teacher again asking me to run an SRC training workshop for his school. Again I engaged the services of my small training business, Evolve Training and
Communications. I conducted this session with the school and together we developed a lot of good ideas and plans of action for their school's SRC. Same old story, but this time it was different: this time I got paid!

You might (or might not) remember a conversation we had about 5 or 6 years ago where, after I stated that I wanted to run training workshops for schools in Canberra, you told me I wouldn't make a million dollars, but I would have a fun time trying. The sad news is that I haven't made a million dollars with my first pay cheque but, with the money I did make, I'm investing it in Research and Development in my business. I'm doing this by sending Connect my entire first pay cheque. I owe a lot to the people who have written articles, shared their wisdom and ideas on the pages of the magazine and, as a result, supplied me with a lot of tools and ideas to pass on to others. Please accept my re-subscription with my thanks and hopefully it will also make up for the issues that you've sent me for free in the past to remind me to pay up!

In closing, can I say not only thanks to the people who write and contribute to Connect (all too often it's not me - sorry), but also to you for the perseverance and dedication that you have shown in the area of supporting student participation. You're right: I may never make a million dollars, but as I worked out a long time ago, I'm not in it for the money, just the fun to be had along the way.

Todd Wright
Kambah, ACT

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**A Statewide Victorian Student Representative Council:**

**Possible or Pipedream?**

For as long as I've been at school, I've always been aware of a student representative body.

In primary school, it was a Junior Council made up of students from Years 4 to 6. In secondary school there was an SRC, with a representative from every form in Years 7 to 10. In my experiences these committees always discussed student issues in a forum where other students could easily agree or disagree with claims made by a particular class through their representative. If the issue needed action, the SRC would delegate members to talk with school management, teachers or students in order to help deal with the issue.

The SRC or Junior Council representatives were of course also positions that received badges of office and, in most cases, a period out of class each fortnight to attend a meeting. These were privileges that came with the responsibility of being a representative. However, in my experience, these privileges were abused by those who were attracted to status or power which an SRC badge could provide.

For many of you who are reading this article, you too have an SRC or something similar to it. Perhaps you too have seen behaviour by SRC representatives that doesn't necessarily fit their job description, or any sort of image that they should be upholding. If you have, you may argue:

"Why have a Statewide SRC?"

For the last five years, I have been involved in two attempts to establish a Victorian SRC because I believe there is a point to having a Statewide SRC. True, these past two attempts did not succeed as was hoped, nor did they necessarily go according to plan. But that doesn't mean we should throw away years, even decades, of work that has brought us to where we are today. Granted, I am now no longer a secondary school student, and I do not know what it's like for students these days, but that doesn't mean I can't help out and guide current students over the hurdles that defeated us. The point of a Statewide SRC is support: support from other schools and students in raising money for a charity (a typical SRC activity); support in making links in your local and wider community between schools and people; support from resources that provide information for SRCs from other SRCs concerning constitutions, successfully run programs, and leadership training; support in dealing with school issues; support from a forum that represents every student in Victoria.

These are only some of the possibilities that could happen if a Statewide SRC was running, however these ideas are based on previous models and may not be relevant to current students in Victoria. So here's the big question that you should be asking all the nay sayers. Remember not to take a simple "We don't need one" as an answer, but seek an explanation to the answers given when you ask this fundamental question:

"Why not have a Statewide SRC?"

Zack Pretlove
recent secondary student

---

*Victorian SRC: see contact details page 22*
Youth lead planning
for environmental projects in the Riverina

Seven students from the Riverina who travelled to India for the Clean Ganges Student Congress shared their experience and took a lead role in developing plans for strategic environmental and social projects in the region at the award-winning Youth LEAD program in Wagga Wagga on May 23-25.

This was a great opportunity for young people in the Riverina and surrounds to meet other young people with outstanding leadership skills and a passion for the environment, while also being involved in a national network of young people working in their local community and beyond to build a life-sustaining society.

Oz GREEN’s Youth LEAD focuses on training young people to turn concerns or ideas into a plan for a project they will implement in their local area or beyond with the support of Oz GREEN and the Youth LEAD network across Australia.

“Young people have the ideas and the energy – Youth LEAD is a great program that helps them develop the skills and a plan for action to really do something significant,” says Oz GREEN Director Sue Lennox. “Youth LEAD picks up where other leadership programs end – young people develop a plan and implement their own environmental or social project with the support of Oz GREEN and the Youth LEAD network.”

Youth LEAD is applicable for ages 15-25 including school students, Uni and TAFE students, young professionals and unemployed youth. For more information phone (02) 9984 8917 or check out the website http://www.ozgreen.org.au

The Youth LEAD Program Participants undertake a two-day training workshop focused on skill development, where they use strategic questioning skills to develop action plans for eco-social enterprise projects.

Following the workshop, participants are supported to implement their projects through e-mail and phone contact, follow-up meetings and an interactive website. After progressing on implementing their individual projects, opportunities will be provided for Youth LEADers to act as mentors for new participants in the program. Youth LEAD participants also have the opportunity to become volunteers on Oz GREEN programs in Australia and overseas, further building their skill base and experience. An annual forum is held for all people in the Youth LEAD network to share stories, re-energise and celebrate achievements.

Oz GREEN

Oz GREEN is dedicated to addressing critical water quality issues by enabling informed and active community participation in the protection of the world’s waters and the building of a life-sustaining society. Over the past 10 years, Oz GREEN has empowered and motivated thousands of students in over 150 schools, and over 5000 business and communities across Australia to take an active involvement in environmental issues. Oz GREEN has been and continues to be active Australia-wide, and in village communities in India, East Timor and Papua New Guinea.

Contact:

Oz GREEN
PO Box 1378
Dee Why NSW 2099
Ph: +61.2.9984 8917
Fax: +61.2.9981 4956

Ben Taylor
Program Co-ordinator

Social Educators' Association of Australia (SEAA)

2003 Biennial National Conference

Social Education for a Changing World

Rydges Hotel, Exhibition Street, Melbourne

July 9-12, 2003

Conference Themes:
Environmental Sustainability; Discovering Democracy - the way forward for Civics and Citizenship Education; Indigenous Issues; Rediscovering Social Justice; The Challenges of Globalisation; Values in a changing world.


18
Student Councils have ‘significant effect’ on behaviour and attitudes, says new research

The largest and most comprehensive survey of pupil participation in the UK has suggested a link between effective student councils and improved behaviour and academic attainment.

443 schools in Essex took part in a four-year research project conducted by Professor Gordon Bell for Essex County Council and School Councils UK.

Comprising written responses and field studies, the study looked at the effectiveness of structures that involve pupils in school decision-making. Findings in 1998 were compared with current progress to assess the impact of citizenship education on student councils.

The report was launched at a conference for participating schools at County Hall in Chelmsford on Monday June 3rd.

Key findings included:

- 75 per cent of schools have a student council;
- The number of student councils has risen by 25 per cent in the past four years;
- 52 per cent of schools reported that the student council had a ‘significant benefit’ on relationships between pupils;
- 37 per cent of schools reported that the student council had a ‘significant benefit’ on behaviour;
- 12 per cent of schools reported that the student council had a ‘significant benefit’ on academic work.

For further information, contact Steven Brand, Essex Learning Services at steven.brand@essexcc.gov.uk or School Councils UK. To download a copy of the executive summary of the research report, go to www.schoolcouncils.org

School Councils UK promotes and develops effective student councils in British schools through training and resource provision.

Gideon Lyons
Training and Marketing Co-ordinator
School Councils UK
Lawford House, 5 Albert Place, London N3 1QB

Students Building Just Communities

If schools are to develop strategies and learning programs that will make a difference to the local community, then more significant community involvement is required to engage students in making sense of the issues and to devise long term sustainable solutions as part of their valued school curriculum.

There is a strong history of the University of South Australia working with the Australian Education Union and the Department of Education and Children’s Services on supporting schools to do action research which is integrated into professional development. In 2003, a project involves Rob Hallam and Lew Zippin working with Lynne Hall and Nigel Howard to design an accredited Professional Development Program for teachers working with community members and organisations. The project is developing educational programs based on schools in social partnerships that involve young people and children in projects of consequence in the community.

Teachers will work in school/site work teams to investigate and develop their own teaching programs which will support their students to engage with the community to actively build social capital. These projects will provide rich, authentic learning experiences for students and will assist the student’s development as future community leaders as well as providing authentic learning experiences. The projects will also provide supported and challenging opportunities for teachers to improve their practice and to better understand school reform and change processes.

The project involves teachers and students from pre school to post compulsory years and in metropolitan and regional settings. A workshop at the ACSA Conference later this year will involve the design team teachers and students involved in the program sharing their projects.

Contact:

Nigel Howard
Project Officer, Senior Years Strategy, DECS

June 2003
TEACHER / STUDENT WRITING

(IE SELF-REFLECTION/ACTION RESEARCH/CASE STUDIES/ARTICLES)

All brainstorms - and all reflections stemming from them - are valuable. Writing for yourself can be just that - an extended brainstorm. With word processors these days, it's as easy as 'turn on, click in and let your fingers roll with your thoughts'. About anything.

Almost too easy really. Why are volunteer editors and their real or potential audiences so constantly on the prowl for more material? And why is it so difficult to get otherwise very capable and very productive teachers and students to write about the issues and projects they immerse themselves in daily?

Your individual or collective brainstorms, your plans and evaluations, your spoken - but rarely written - reflections can end up as written pieces, valuable in and of themselves to you as the writer because of the process involved. Or, with persistence, to willing collegial audiences (even small ones, like the person at the desk next to you) as published articles.

Here are some thoughts on what it is that stops us from doing it. It's merely a start.

Well? What do you think?

Send Connect and PASTA your thoughts and we'll rehash them with our own. And, if you want us to, we will serve up something in the next several issues about these items. And more if you want. With examples?

- Some reasons why we might write
- Some ways of helping us to do it more consistently
- Some examples of potential outlets/audiences
- Some essential writing hints
- Some less essential but creative things to try
- Technology to help you spill your brains in print
- 1000s of Ideas and Projects just aching to be spelt in print
- A selection of articles written by practising teachers and students in the field of student leadership/representation/participation

Don't worry. We won't quote you if don't want us to. But if you do, thanks are due. Don't expect royalties. Yet? Just the fun and satisfaction of having contributed your expertise to some or lots of others.

Charles Kingston
PASTA, Bathurst, NSW

20 REASONS WHY TEACHERS DON'T DO IT

- Don't know what to write about
- Don't know how to start
- Don't have someone they trust to help them
- Don't have an audience
- Don't get paid to do so
- Believe there is nothing special about what they do
- Believe the project isn't finished so they can't yet write about it
- Believe they can't write
- Believe no one will be interested
- Believe it's a job for academics and professional writers
- Think it's already been done
- Think it's already been done better by someone else
- Think it's already been written about ... somewhere?
- Think they saw something 'similar' ... sometime?
- Think there's no need/no value/no useful outcome/no future in it
- Have no time
- Have too many 'more urgent' tasks at school
- Have a life other than school
- Have no encouragement to from the system or by peers
- Have grown up with the tall poppy syndrome

21 REASONS WHY STUDENTS DON'T DO IT

All of the above plus

- The fact they are 'students'. What do THEY know about teaching and learning?
Australian National Leadership Camp (NLC)
To be held in NSW: 23-27th July 2003
Contact: bananapower@optushome.com.au

NLC 2003 is a five day intensive leadership and personal development training program for young people which will equip them with the necessary skills to become better leaders in their schools and the wider community. The camp will additionally give participants the opportunity to undertake a unique interactive, challenging and practical program which will highlight the importance of developing inner strength and personal character, while enhancing leadership and interpersonal skills.

The 2003 NLC is being undertaken as a project under the Commonwealth Government’s Enterprise and Career Education Program, a Commonwealth funded initiative of the Department of Education, Science and Training.

The 2003 NLC is being held at the beautiful Fitzroy Falls Conference Centre, just south of Wollongong. Transport will be arranged, departing from various major departure points including the Sydney Kingsford Smith Domestic Terminal and Central Rail Station, to accompany students to the camp venue. Approximately 150 young people from both private and public secondary schools and colleges from all over Australia are expected to attend.

If you have any questions or require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Rebecca Heinrich
Director, BANANA POWER
ph: 9873 1479, mob: 0414 891 736
email: bananapower@optushome.com.au

ACER Surveys and Report

The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) is to collaborate with Professor Michael Bernard, Principal Fellow at the University of Melbourne and currently at the College of Education, California State University, to provide schools with surveys that measure students' social emotional well being. It is hoped to have the questionnaires available to schools within the next two months.

Improving the Foundations for Lifelong Learning

ACER has released a new report, Engaging Secondary Students in Lifelong Learning, which provides a set of case studies undertaken in a number of secondary schools in South Australia and Victoria. The report identifies ways that the foundations for lifelong learning can be built in secondary schools.

To read more: <http://www.acer.edu.au/mediacentre/ENews/May03/Teacher_Awards_May03.htm>

ACER eNews

To subscribe to ACER eNews, send an e-mail to mailserv@acer.edu.au with the words: subscribe enews in the body of the message.

Australian Council for Educational Research
Private Bag 55, Camberwell 3124

International Democratic Education Conference

IDEC 2003 will be held in Albany, New York, USA between 16th and 24th July. A detailed conference schedule can be viewed at:

It includes most speaker times, film showings, the school and college fair, excursion times, the open scheduling times and much more.

There is also a youth committee for those students who want to be involved in the organisation and planning of the conference.

Contact Isaac Graves: youthcommittee@idec2003.com

Registrations for IDEC 2003 are at:

More information from: dbennis12@yahoo.com

Dana Bennis
on behalf of the IDEC 2003 organising committee

WA Youth Survey

An online youth survey from the WA Office for Children and Young People is available at:
AUSTRALASIAN ASSOCIATION for
PROGRESSIVE and ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

Creating communities through education

Call for Presenters

The third annual conference of the Australasian Association of Progressive and Alternative Education aims to bring together educators, parents, students and others interested in future opportunities and challenges. We aim to provide a forum in which we can explore the aims of our association.

The 2003 conference will be held at

Pine Community School, Brisbane
from the 2nd-4th October

and will focus on sharing pedagogical practices, learning environments and developing positive communities and continue to address the ongoing debates such as national standards and testing.

We encourage presentations that are innovative and informative. They may include research papers, discussion groups, workshops and activities.

Your group may also like to be represented by submitting photos, worksamples and if possible performances. Please indicate if you would like to be involved in such a way.

Submit the following details by e-mail to lokikane@yahoo.com.au or send applications to:

Cathy Wilton
33 Boyd St
Cabramatta 2166

Name/s of presenter:
Name of Institute if applicable:
Mailing address:
Phone number:
Fax number:
E-mail address:
Title of Presentation:
Abstract (200 words):
Approx. time of presentation:
Contribution of photos/worksamples/performances:
(Please give details.)

Call for presentations close 27th June, 2003.

Attention Victorian Secondary School Students

Attempts are being made to reinvigorate a Victorian Student Representative Council (VicSRC).

Are you interested? Can you help?

The VicSRC needs students who are interested to assist with networking at local and statewide levels.

If you have time and energy and a vision for a statewide student group - you are needed!

Contact: Victorian Student Representative Council, C/o 22 Menzie Grove, Ivanhoe 3079
Phone: 0414 781 413; E-mail: vicsrc@srecteachers.org

If we are to have effective Student Councils;
if we’re to make schools more democratic;
if we’re to build meaningful participation,
then the way we operate within our classrooms is critical.

Class Meetings!

How do we do them? What have we learnt? What are some do’s and don’ts?

You are invited to contribute stories, ideas, approaches, techniques for the next special issue of Connect.

All contributions welcome - from primary and secondary schools!

Deadline: end of July, 2003
Local and Overseas Publications Received

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

Australian:

AAPAE Newsletter (AAPAE, Lane Cove, NSW) No 2, March 2003
AEU News (Abbotsford, Vic) Vol 9, No 4, April 2003
Curriculum Perspectives (ACSA, Deakin West, ACT) Vol 23, No 1, 2003
Education Views (Education Queensland, Brisbane, Qld) Vol 12 Nos 4-9; Feb-May 2003
Ipisimag (Melbourne, Vic) Pilot edition, May 2003
Network of Community Activities (Surry Hills, NSW) Annual Report 2002
Starlink (Victoria University, Vic) Issue 49, March 2003
Yikes! (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic) Vol 2 Edition 6, April 2003

International:

The Active Learner (Foxfire, Georgia, USA) Vol 3 Issue 2 (Summer 1998); Vol 4 Issues 2-3 (Summer-Fall 1999); Vol 5 Issue 3 (Fall 2000); Vol 6 No 1 (Spring 2001); Vol 7 Issue 1 (Winter 2002)
Institute for Democracy in Education (Ohio, USA) Annual Conference - Call for Workshop Proposals
Leadership (NASSP, USA) Vol 31 Nos 8, 9; April and May 2003

Documents

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

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

Code Description/Pages/Cost
535 The Political Nature of Environmental Education (R A Hart, 1997) (2 pp; $0.60)
536 No school is an island: environment and education (Josephine Lang in EQ Issue 1, Autumn 2003, pp 7-8) (2 pp; $0.60)
537 Suggested Further Reading: Citizenship Education through Environmental Education (Josephine Lang) (1 p; $0.50)

Friends of Connect

By subscribing at a higher rate, the following have helped keep Connect going. We gratefully acknowledge receipt of the following contributions since the last issue of Connect:

Supporting Subscribers ($50 pa):
Tony Knight North Carlton (Vic)

Sustaining Subscribers ($100 - two years):
Todd Wright Kambah (ACT)

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- a student organisation (SRC, JSC etc) subscription $10 $20  
- a supporting/sustaining subscription $50 $100  
- a lifetime subscription: ... forever: ... $1000  

Subscription Sub-total: $ 

* cannot be paid for with an organisational cheque  
** all payments in AUD; add $10 pa outside Australia

MATERIALS:

Back issues of Connect ($4 single; $6 double issue). Circle issue/s required: 


- Cross-referenced index to contents of Connect back issues ($3) $ 

Miscellaneous Resources:  

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

Foxfire Resources:  

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

Documents:  

- Photocopies of the following documents: $ 
- Cross-referenced Index to photocopies of documents ($3) $ 

(all prices include postage and packaging) 

Materials Sub-total: $ 

TOTAL ENCLOSED: $