20 years!
from this ...
and still riding strong!

Also in this issue:
- Student Led Conferences: Assessment and Reporting
- State Student Councils: NSW, Tasmania, Victoria
- Stopping Being a Token SRC: Yes!!
- Participation in Decision Making for Learning
- Connecting Students and Community
- The History of Student Representation
- Millennium Youth/Student Conferences and Projects
- Resources: National Youth Week 2000, Choice Awareness

& Incorporating the PASTA Newsletter #15

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This Issue: 20 Years On!

I suppose it’s almost traditional to look backwards from various ‘milestones’ (if we still have these) to survey the path we’ve trodden, the hills we’ve climbed. 20 years seems both a long time, and just a blink.

The intention with the first issue of Connect in late 1979 was to share practical information about curriculum projects in which I (and then, rapidly, others) were involved. So the first issues had several articles about students producing community newspapers, working as cross-age tutors, making radio programs, negotiating curriculum and sharing decision-making in small schools. These stories remain dear to my heart, they’re still at the basis of what we call student participation.

Over the years, more people (students, teachers, parents - it was important not to distinguish too clearly) wrote for Connect - some even subscribed! Perhaps some statistics: Over 2100 people / schools / organisations have subscribed at some time (not all at once - about 600 has been the maximum). There are still subscribers from the ‘First 200’ and we thank them for their constancy and support: Kath Haydock, Peter Cole, Julie and Graeme Jane, Bob Semmens, Tony Knight, Jan Hargreaves, Jackie Ohlin, Colin Hollow, Mike Fawkes, James Oakes, VASS, Therese West, Anne Brosnan and Graeme Kent.

How many stories? Well, I’ve indexed about half the 120 issues of Connect, and that database has around 1200 articles on it. In addition, there are over 460 other documents filed (and available for copying).

But there’s so much happening at the moment, that it is difficult to create much space in this issue to summarise 20 diverse years. (To some extent, we did this with issues 60, 90 and 100 - and all these are also available.)

So issue 120 is a ‘hinge’ issue, where we look forward with optimism (Art Pearl taught us to say: “Better an optimist who’s wrong, than a pessimist who’s right”), enthusiasm and expectation. The experience of the past 20 years of documentation throws considerable light on current issues and helps us understand them and, at times, to be wary. So, for example, there are very positive moves (again) in Victoria towards a statewide student network - but also (yes, again) some concern that resourcing for this might vanish! Negotiation of assessment and reporting might have vanished from the senior curriculum (do we remember STC?) but reappears in primary schools (maybe it never went away there).

And it’s just by chance (or is it?) that the issue that celebrates 20 years of Connect is the last to be produced in "a year starting with a 1" (a way of avoiding the millennium debate!). Look at the range of events being organised for next year - and, no doubt, for 2001! And also look again at the cautions we raised in this column in issue 116: does this herald a real shift to participation or is it just tokenism to make the party look great? Tell us! Let’s not wait 20 more years to find out. Seasons best to all readers - have a great holiday and see you in 2000!

Roger Holdsworth
Student Led Conferences

Student Participation in Assessment and Reporting

We believe that, wherever possible, students should be involved with the process of evaluating their own progress. In this way, they are given the opportunity to develop the skills necessary to take control of their lives in the future. Their perceptions of their progress need to be shared with their teacher and their parents. When students are meaningfully involved in this way, evaluation becomes an integral part of instruction and a learning experience in its own right.

In 1999, to involve children in this area of their development, it was decided to implement a new approach to reporting to parents. The children conducted 'student-led conferences' as part of the traditional parent/teacher interviews. Parents were invited to attend an interview during which they could share and discuss their child's work with them.

This form of reporting to parents has been successfully trialled in many NSW Central Coast schools, and continues to be the main positive method of reporting to parents in those schools.

The goals for the students include:

- being responsible for reporting to parents about how well they are doing at school;
- learning to communicate;
- learning to evaluate their work honestly and fairly;
- becoming accountable for work and behaviour;
- learning organisational and leadership skills.

The student led conferences provided an opportunity for parents to accept their child's evaluation of his or her accomplishments and to provide them with support and encouragement for his or her work at schools.

Teachers were present in the room and also involved during the conference, making themselves available for a further discussion at the conclusion of the conference.

Student Responses:
Grade 2/3J

I liked it because:

- I made my reports, not the teacher, and I showed my Mum my work, not the teacher (Chris)
- I like Mum saying my work is good (Scott)
- I got to make the decision about how I was going in class (Joe)
- I liked Mum seeing all my maths and work samples (Thomas)
- I want my Mum to see my work (Laurence)
- I could explain to my Mum how I did my work (Melanie)
- It was my decision to show my work (Hester)
- I could show my Mum what I think I did well in and it was my own report (Amy)
- They need to look at your work and I can tell what I think of my work, not the teacher (Linden)
- I got to say what I thought of the work, not what the teacher thought of it (Chris K)
- I get to show my work all by myself (Sesse)
- My Mum was proud that I made my diorama all on my own with just a little help (Joshua)
- My mother liked the art work (Jaclyn)
- I liked my Mum coming to school to see my work (Lauren)
- I could show my Mum my own work (Mitchell)
- My Mum and sister can see my art work around the room (Jon)
- I think the student led conferences are good because my Mama can see my work (Kimberley)
- I could show my Mum what I was good at (Nadine)
- My Mum enjoyed all my work and she was being funny (Hanna)
- I could show my Mum my diorama and my work (Andrea)
- I could show my Mum what's going on and how well I've done (Cassie)
- The teacher and my parents weren't talking about me when I wasn't there (Helen)
- My parents could see my art work and writing (Emily)
- It was fun at the student led conferencing because I enjoyed showing and explaining all the things in my Work Sample Book (Danielle)
- I got to show my work to my Mum (Ben)
- I showed Mum and Dad how good I am at maths (Nathan)

Parent Responses

Parents were surveyed after the Student Led Conferences. 232 out of 237 responses thought Student Led Conferences were of value for gaining information about their child's progress, and that the conferences were valuable to their child. Some comments were:
Ten Years Ago Today...

In December 1989, Connect celebrated its tenth anniversary with issue 60. The explanatory comments made there are as true and accurate today as they were then. Conditions have changed little:

Connect... has operated under substantial constraints - all of which, I guess, make its contribution more remarkable.

First, Connect has always operated on a hand-to-mouth basis, borrowing funds to keep appearing every second month for a decade. For the record (yet again), Connect is not the publication of any organisation, not has it received any grant or other funding for its operation. It is almost a personal idiosyncrasy, reliant entirely on subscriptions and donations. Those have, throughout the decade, been just enough to cover production and mailing costs, and certainly have left nothing for promotion or initiatives. We end the decade over $1000 in debt - and will, doubtless, continue as we have in the past!

Secondly, Connect's content is atypically Victorian-centred, despite efforts to achieve a national balance. This is almost a natural consequence of being located in Melbourne and is reinforced by a lack of any budget for travel in order to encourage and collect other information.

Thirdly, the development of Connect is constrained by the need to earn an income. For much of the decade Connect was produced 'after hours' - while maintaining 'real' jobs as a teacher, consultant or youth affairs policy worker. I'm now working part-time in order to devote a couple of days a week to production of Connect, but this is constantly eroded with student training days, in-services, working parties, committees and the like. Connect is in absolutely no position to even pay a subsistence salary.

So, what does the future hold for student participation and Connect?

I remain defiantly optimistic! After a considerable slump in support with the conclusion of the Participation and Equity Program (PEP), and a period where we were told that 'participation' was a 70s concept (!), there again seems to be renewed interest. The flurry of activity in support of Junior School Councils in Victorian Primary Schools has been a most interesting addition to the scenario.

I also remain defiantly convinced that we must develop curriculum directions along the paths pioneered by the schools and classrooms documented in Connect in the past ten years. If education is to make sense... if the world is to make sense... and if we are all to learn to exercise control over our lives, then a curriculum that acknowledges the value of students, that affirms that all students can contribute - now - to our society, and that challenges students to learn through a process of shaping their world - then, a participatory curriculum is essential.

With your continued support, Connect will be there for at least another ten years to document, support and argue for that curriculum.

Roger Holdsworth
December 1989

And we are still here!

Denise Bentlin
Reporting/Assessment Coordinator
Point Clare Public School
Takari Avenue, Point Clare 2250
Phone: (02) 4325 0594

Information drawn (with permission) from the Point Clare Public School Newsletter, Term 3 1999, and from Parent Letter.
Year 2000 NSW Student Representative Council

Council Meeting: 18-19 November 1999

There are two SRC bodies in NSW at a state level. They are the SRC Working Party, that organises the State SRC Conference, and the NSW SRC, that deals with any issues that the members see as in need of attention, as well as expressing the views of the individual schools, districts (40) and paired districts (20). They meet with relevant people to discuss issues brought up at the meeting. The NSW SRC, as a group and with the aid of liaison roles, provide different organisations with direct and constructive views of young people of NSW high schools.

The NSW SRC consists of 20 representatives from all around the state of NSW, and two Aboriginal student leaders. Of the 40 districts in NSW, each is graphically paired with another district. A representative from one of the paired districts is elected by peers to the Working Party, and the student leader elected from the other paired district is placed on the NSW SRC. The following is a report from the NSW SRC.

On the 18th-19th November this year, the training day and first meeting for the new 2000 NSW SRC was held. The meeting was the first of four for their term of office. It was held in Sydney at the YWCA (18th - the training day) and the Governor Macquarie Tower (19th - the official meeting). The training day was used to inform every representative of their responsibilities, their rights and also an introduction to the protocol of formal meetings, which provided a very interesting and somewhat overwhelming day. We also appointed new liaison roles and received an introduction to the organisations that we were going to deal with.

The NSW SRC currently liaises with both government and independent organisations, such as YAC (Youth Advisory Council) which has contact with the Premier of NSW (Hon Bob Carr). The NSW SRC advises the Department of Education and Training, the Australia Day Youth Council, the Parents and Citizens Association, Kids Help Line and many other organisations that are devoted to the promotion of the views and well-being of young people in NSW.

Also a large part of the day was spent with five members of the 1999 NSW SRC, discussing what they had done, what they would like us (as the new SRC) to do, and what they got out of being on the NSW SRC this year. This provided a great deal of enthusiasm in the new group.

One of the most important things that we did on that day was name our goals for the coming year. The goals that the 2000 NSW SRC have set out are:

- to address anti-discrimination, violence and Aboriginal Reconciliation;
- to promote youth issues via key speakers and officials at NSW SRC meetings.

On Friday the official meeting of the NSW SRC was conducted in the Governor Macquarie Tower from 8.50 am until 4.00 pm. We used the meeting to put forward students' views on appropriate issues and took in information that would be useful, not only to the NSW SRC, but also useful to the 309,000 high school students of NSW that we represent, and to whom we will pass on the information.

The SRC was addressed by and asked to comment upon issues raised by:

- Denise Lynch, Lecturer at the Department of Social Work, Social Policy and Sociology, University of Sydney, about the new Child Protection Legislation;
- Dr Gregor Ramsey, about the teacher skills and training review;
- John Tansey and Gwen Watkins from YAC, about links with the Advisory Council;
- Linda Hanna about the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme;
- PASTA members, Anna Samson and Greg Arrow, about the International Student Conference 2000: Building a Better Today;
- George Green, the Assistant Director General (ADG), Student Services and Equity, about student participation and leadership, and improving links between the DET State Executive and the NSW SRC;
- Tony Wiseman from the Premier's Cabinet Office about Youth Participation Policy;
- Danielle Smalley about the Australia Day Youth Council.

There was also discussion on issues such as:

- senior colleges and district SRC Networks;
- the United Nations Human Rights Day (December 10, 1999);
- ATOMFEST 2000 (Australian Teachers of Media);
- Young Leaders' Day at Darling Harbour, Sydney;
- the Commonwealth Bank National Coat Day, 'Enormity', to be held in March 12000.

Some, if not all issues will be followed up in future meetings at state, district and school forums, and we will continue to correspond with all groups. If anyone wishes to contact the NSW SRC about anything, please contact:

Stuart Hearne, the NSW SRC Coordinator on: phone: (02) 9886 7450 or fax: (02) 9886 7543; or e-mail: <Stuart.Hearne@det.nsw.edu.au>

NSW State SRC
Tasmanian Statewide SRC

At the end of 1997, as a result of the National Student Participation Conference (NASPAC) in Sydney, Rosny College representatives held a conference to promote the formation of a Statewide SRC. Due to the size of Tasmania, the networking that was already done, and a highly motivated Rosny College (thanks to Kim Roberts), there was great support from state and private school SRCs.

The main conference, held at Rosny College in 1997, was a kick-off for promoting the State SRC. It was received well by both sectors, students were enthusiastic, and a structure was set up for organisation, communication and seeking funding.

The Deputy Secretary for Education, Mr Graeme Harrington, supported the establishment of the State SRC financially, with a grant of $3500. As a result of these initiatives, the State SRC is up and running.

This year (1999) has been a successful year with College participation from Calvin Christian School, Claremont College, Collegiate, Elizabeth College, Fahan, Friends School, Guildford Young, Hobart College, the Hutchins School, Rosny College and St Mary’s College.

Aims

The aim of the Council is to provide a forum for discussion of matters of interest and concern to the students of Tasmania, which may be taken to staff, principals, the Department of Education and politicians.

State SRC representatives want to break down barriers between schools and promote positive interactions between Colleges through social activities.

The aim is to promote student involvement in the community and pursue other such roles as may be determined by the Council.

The basic aim is to provide a voice for students!

Responsibilities

A State SRC should show that students and their opinions are valued, and that students can facilitate change.

Guidelines

State SRC Representatives changed and updated the State SRC Constitution and guidelines in April and May this year. A number of articles were changed. Some of the articles in the guidelines are:

- One grade 12 and one grade 11 student where possible from all secondary institutions in Tasmania, be represented. At least one of these students is to be linked to their school SRC;
- Meetings are held monthly. Meetings shall be conducted on a semi-formal basis;
- Decisions of the Council shall be made by majority vote;
- The duties of members of the Council shall be to:
  - attend meetings of the Council and present matters of concern;
  - act as facilitators and coordinators of committees;
  - carry out actions directed by the Council;
  - liaise with other sections of the community;
  - report back to school SRCs.

(Tasmania Together Year 2020 State Plan)

This year, 12 representatives from the Statewide SRC participated in a judging panel for the Our Future - You Name It competition, headed by the Premier, Jim Bacon. The competition was open to all primary and high schools in the state.

After a few visits to Parliament House, 'long days in the office', going through entries, and trying very hard to find a entry we all liked, the judging team finally found an entry we all agreed on. We later found out that the 'winning' entry was already a Tourism Tasmania slogan. Back to the drawing board. Instead of rounding up all the judges to meet again, the Premier along with his trusty co-workers decided for us and gave us all a call. We agreed and the name ended up being 'Tasmania Together'. It was a very exciting time for some of us, who finally met someone famous!

from the State SRC Newsletter
created by Kristy-Jayne Court (Claremont College)

The Newsletter was an idea put through the committee at our August meeting to promote and advertise ourselves as an important and progressive part of student involvement in the Tasmanian education system.

Kelly West, Secretary
Tasmanian Student Representative Council (Southern Region)
PO Box 47
Rosny 7018
E-mail: westies@southcom.com.au

(A copy of the full guidelines is available from Connect - see page 31.)
The Student Leadership Project developed out of a partnership between Karingal Park Secondary College in Frankston and the School Community Support Branch of the Department of Education in Victoria.

**Background**

A Senior Project Officer position was created (initially for one day a week) to develop a project brief or concept paper. The brief was to examine the feasibility of developing a sustained network of Student Leadership Councils (SLCs) across the state, to facilitate more effective SLCs at the school level and to launch a state student leadership conferences. ASCIV (Association of School Councils in Victoria) were supportive partners in the project at this early stage, offering their established network of schools and regions across the state as a blueprint for future SLC development.

The Student Leadership Council (SLC) Concept Paper argued for nine regional SLC networks to be established across Victoria, with the key support of the Department of Education regional offices. In each region, an SLC would be established which would offer support to individual schools, staff and students, with regard to student leadership programs and initiatives.

In May 1999, during Education Week, two initiatives were launched concerning student leadership. The first, an SLC State Conference would be held in conjunction with the ASCIV Conference in Ballarat, and second, the Student Leadership Excellence Awards would be instituted.

**Inaugural SLC State Conference**

Expressions of interest were sought from all secondary schools for the establishment of a State Conference Working Party, comprising eighteen students (two from each region), who would plan and organise the SLC State Conference.

Nearly 100 students nominated for the Conference Working Party. Short-listing and then extensive interviews determined those students who were successful. Since early June, these students worked with the Senior Project Officer in developing strategies and ideas for the SLC State Conference. Members of the Conference Working Party travelled to Sydney in July, where they were guest speakers at the NSW State SRC Conference.

In August, the entire Conference Working Party met together for the first time in Melbourne for a weekend to begin the detailed planning for their conference. In the meantime, expressions of interest were invited from all secondary schools to nominate a student to attend the conference. Ten students from every region were selected after schools submitted the names of students who had addressed the six key selection criteria. Each Department of Education regional office helped to arrange selection interviews where necessary, and provided communication facilities to enable students in more remote areas (such as Mildura) to stay in touch with the conference development.
Student Leadership Excellence Awards

All schools in Victoria were invited to nominate students for this new award, developed to recognise, publicise and reward the work undertaken by students for their school and local community. One hundred and ten nominations were received. Members of the Department of Education and the Education Trust Victoria Ltd read the applications and made their recommendations, and the nine primary and secondary regional award winners were announced at the ASCIV dinner on Thursday October 14. Also, the two primary state winners were announced: Connor Matthews (Alexandra Primary School) and Jed Kells (Lindenow Primary School); these two students won a trip to the Sydney 2000 International SRC Conference in December 2000. The two secondary state winners - Zack Pretlove (Warrnambool College) and Kathryn Pearce (Ballarat High School) - won a trip to the 25th Anniversary Obessu (Organising Bureau of European Secondary Student Unions) Conference in Paris in April 2000, and will then travel to other European centres in the Netherlands, Switzerland, Denmark, Norway and Italy as guests of Obessu, to study student leadership structures.

The inaugural SLC State Conference was an outstanding success. One hundred and twelve students from across Victoria (plus interstate guests) spent three days in Ballarat at the conference venue. It was organised totally by the Student Working Party and ran remarkably smoothly.

The delegates rated all guest speakers (Howard Kelly, Glen Kruger, Roger Holdsworth, Peter Brock, Fabian Dattner and Ye Chen) very highly for their presentation and relevance. Apart from Ye Chen, the Working Party organised all speakers.

Resolutions that were developed by the Student Forum and by the staff group, are included with this report.

Over 150 secondary colleges responded to invitations to attend. Short-listing was introduced in order to keep numbers to a manageable level and to select the most suitable students.

Over $7000 was raised in sponsorship for the Conference, either in direct grants or products from local and Victorian businesses. Students were responsible for obtaining the great majority of sponsorship.

Outcomes

There are on-going structures and personnel in place as a result of the conference. Two students in each educational region are now members of a Victorian SLC Executive with responsibility to maintain and extend networks of schools across their region and to organise regular meetings and communication between students and schools. In addition, two further students in each educational region are new members of the State Conference Working Party, with responsibility to organise the SLC Conference 2000, in conjunction with the Department of Education, Employment and Training, the Education Trust Victoria Ltd and other bodies.

Student leadership has become a strategic priority for several regional offices that plan to organise major
events during 2000. Regional Offices now have a delegated Student Leadership Liaison person to work with their Victorian SLC Executive and Conference Working Party representatives.

The Education Trust Victoria Ltd has expressed its intention to continue to support both the SLC Conference and the Student Leadership Excellence Awards in 2000, given the success of both events this year. ASCIV has also expressed its desire to continue to cooperate with the SLC in preparation for the SLC 2000 Conference.

There have also been broader outcomes that impact on all schools. The SLC Conference and the Student Leadership Excellence Awards have raised the profile of SLCs, individual student endeavours and the Victorian SLC, amongst principals, staff, students and parents throughout Victoria. Schools across Victoria will develop stronger SLC programs as a result of the conference, with students returning to their schools with better knowledge, ideas and support.

For those directly involved, the outcomes have been substantial. Eighteen students from across Victoria because a highly organised and professional team of conference organisers, and gained skills in selection criteria, interviewing, conference organisation, liaison and marketing, sponsorship development, team building and delegation. Learning outcomes for students were excellent, with over 50% gaining first-time knowledge in meeting procedures and conference preparation.

Students from metropolitan schools learnt of the many problems facing students in rural and isolated communities. A regional centre location for the conference also helped city students gain a better understanding of life in country Victoria.

All students benefited from the representation of a wide mix of cultures at the conference. In particular, Koori delegates were responsible for some significant pro-active recommendations at the conference forum.

There has been broad and ongoing support for these initiatives:

Significant support was gained in a relatively short time from major businesses in Ballarat, other country towns and Melbourne.

Support from regional offices, principals and parents for the Student Leadership Excellence Awards has been overwhelming. The awards were an obvious highlight at the ASCIV Conference.

Media interest in the conference and the awards was high with both the print and electronic media throughout the state. WIN TV in regional Victoria featured the conference in its 6 pm news on Thursday October 14th in a three-minute story.

The Education Minister subsequently met with the Victorian SLC and has expressed her support for their endeavours to increase student participation and recognition in government schools. The Education Secretary met the Victorian SLC and flagged his support for their efforts and offered to meet their executive for a 'round table'.

Ross Appleby
Victorian Department of Education, Employment and Training
33 St Andrews Place, East Melbourne 3002
Phone: (03) 9637 2345

SLC Delegates 1999 after meeting with the Minister for Education, Mary Delahunty
**Student Forum Recommendations**

1. That the SLC State Conference be established and funded as an annual event.
2. That each region elect two (2) members to both the Victorian SLC Executive and the State Conference Working Party.
3. That a universal constitution be written for the state and regional SLCs.
4 a. That a 'round table' be introduced as soon as possible, where the Victorian SLC Executive meet the Secretary and the Director.
   b. That the SLC Executive meet at least once a year (from 2000) with the Minister at the 'Minister's Round Table'.
5 a. That regional SLC meetings be held once a month and be fully funded by the Department of Education to sustain networks.
   b. That the Victorian SLC Executive meet once a term and be fully funded by the Department of Education.
6. That a letter be drafted to persuade the Minister to reintroduce legislation to make it mandatory for School Councils to have two student members with voting rights (to return to the situation of the previous Labor Government).
7 a. That the SLC have a web site containing links to sub-pages for each region's SLC and links to individual schools SLCs.
   b. That the existing SOFWEB page have a link to the SLC site.
8. That the Department of Education be persuaded to provide financial support for students travelling long distances on school-based activities.
9 a. That all government schools be encouraged to introduce studies in years 7-10 that deal with tolerance between cultures.
   b. That each school develop such programs that are relevant to their cultural diversity.
10. That the SLC produce a report that outlines events and outcomes of the SLC State Conference.

**Staff Recommendations**

1 a. That training day professional development be organised in early 2000 for SLC teacher advisers in each region, based on the model implemented by Southern Metropolitan Region.
   b. That resourcing and funding be a joint initiative between the School Community Support Branch and regional offices.
3 a. That a colour brochure be printed and distributed to all government schools summarising the role of the Victorian SLC and its two contributing bodies, the SLC Executive and the State Conference Working Party.
   b. That this brochure also outline best practice for SLCs and ways that effective SLCs can contribute to school improvement and student well-being.
4 a. That the SLC State Conference 2000 be run over four (4) days to allow for more detailed discussion and provide rural students with a more realistic travel timeline.
   b. That the SLC State Conference 2000 be held in a rural centre.
PASS THE PASTA

In this the 20th anniversary edition of Connect our thoughts must first be to congratulate Roger Holdsworth, founder and editor of what has been in the history of the student movement press, the only truly committed attempt at raising student issues for serious debate and promotion. My own contact with Roger has been relatively recent and the first 10 years of struggle for Connect can perhaps be best addressed by Charles Kingston our Vice-President National and International Affairs who first made contact with Roger in the early 80s.

However, in my position as President I would like to first thank Roger on behalf of the youth of Australia for what he, still almost single handedly, has achieved. We in PASTA are indebted to Roger for inspiring our own still infant organisation to first form and to then join him. Roger has encouraged our efforts to take on the seemingly Herculean task, which he still helps to shoulder - that of championing the cause for greater student participation in the decision making and problem solving process particularly in areas that directly effect them and the world that they must live in. Roger has been the fixed star on the student horizon assisting, guiding and enlightening all with whom he makes day to day contact and we in PASTA appreciate and applaud his amazing dedication, enthusiasm, professional expertise and perseverance.

As we approach the dawn of the new millennium what real progress have we made? Some, through frustration, might say very little, yet the tokenism associated with past approaches to student participation has itself become entrenched and normalised. So pressure is felt at all levels that appearances must in themselves be maintained and students are now seen as a necessary and welcome additions to various committees, forums, research surveys, studies, etc.

The recent student roundtable in Canberra was one such event, when having disbanded the previously representative Australian Youth Policy and Action Committee, the Government of the day felt compelled to provide a new youth forum to continue the dialogue with 54 representatives of our nation's youth. The outcome was that a similar level of demand relating to serious issues and concerns that our youth still seek political solutions far from our present politicians, re-emerged. The call for a Youth Card to assist youth as does the Seniors Card the elderly; the call for an extension of the franchise to allow for a voluntary youth vote at 17; an apology to the lost generation; the lowering of the age of consent to 16 and the abolition of the youth wage, were but a few of the major recommendations to also re-emerge.

How can we in PASTA assist in furthering this dialogue into political action - and does our membership see this as a valid direction for our organisation to go? Write to us and we'll publish your letters to help focus our debate and decisions concerning future action.

One suggestion to start what I hope will be an open forum for discussion of issues, has come out of our interaction with our American colleagues through our first two PASTA/USA Tours. Our Prime Minister dismissed the current student roundtable with the usual thank you for their... 

continued page 17 ...
How Do We Compare?

SRC advisers in America were questioned on the similarities/differences between American schools and schools here in Australia. This response comes from Jeff Gerken, an SRC Adviser in Georgetown, Texas.

1. What sorts of things does the SRC do in your School?
   What do we do: Stu Co is not only a link between the administration/faculty and the students but also in charge of a great many of the more fun aspects of school. Homecoming activities are coordinated by the council, teacher and student appreciation activities, school/community/state and country pride activities, safety and drug awareness activities, environmental education/activities. We run all elections, and here the council is in charge of Prom.

2. What power do the SRC have in the school?
   As for power, it really depends on the current administrator. While principals can give a council a huge amount of power and responsibility, it also depends on the council leadership.

3. How much say does the SRC have in school governance?
   Not a lot. So much of our directives come from the school district administration that the kids are pretty much powerless even though there are students on some of the top committees (mostly for show).

4. How is your SRC elected?
   Executive Officers are elected by the entire student body. Representatives are elected by either all the students in their same grade level or by individual class rooms, for instance all 3rd period classes will elect a representative.

5. What sort of networking/contact do your students have with other SRC’s?
   We are members of the largest state delegation in the NASC. Inside the Texas Association of Student Councils there are 20+ Districts. We have District meetings at least two times a year to which we take a delegation; the state convention is in April/May, and then during the summer our association has 13 summer workshops to choose from (some of the finest in the country) and we send a delegation to the national convention. Students can also choose to attend an NLC.

6. What financial assistance is given to the SRC?
   Zero $ from the school and that’s how I want it. The money we have is what we earn; last month my council had over $10,000 in our account. We earned it mostly from Homecoming and Prom. I hate fund raisers. But, if the school doesn’t give it to me then there is very little they can say as to how it is spent. No money from anywhere else, maybe donations.

7. Any other relevant observations
   Anything else, we must be nuts for doing all this stuff you know that! And I wouldn’t have it any other way.

PASTA SURVEY DECEMBER, 1999

PASTA, like all organisations needs constant feedback. You have an opportunity this month to tell us what you think. On our behalf, Michael Selway is organising a survey. We will conduct a more detailed member based written survey early in the year 2000. Please respond to the following statements:

1] PASTA’S mission is to act in a mentor capacity to SRC advisors.

2] PASTA should decentralise by asking interested members to set up branches of PASTA.

3] PASTA’S greatest strength is:

4] PASTA’S greatest weakness is:

5] The USA trip:

6] The 2000 Conference:

7] Connect:

8] The PASTA insert in Connect:

9] The role of student members in PASTA:

10] The role of PASTA in comparison/contrast to official SRC/Youth organisations.

11] PASTA and a National SRC network.

12] The CFC Awards.

Please mail responses to:
Michael Selway
c/- Sydney Boys High School
Moore Park, Surry Hills NSW 2010
or email to: <selway@hiug.com.au>
NB: ALL MEMBERS and POTENTIAL MEMBERS are urged to respond.

Thanks - The PASTA Committee
SUPPORT FROM MAJOR ORGANISATIONS

The First International Student Representative Conference being coordinated by PASTA for 13-17 December 2000 has been recognised as the opportunity to promote a 'Cultural Olympics' at a time when our country is still focused on the aftermath of great achievements in sport. This exciting get-together, also described as an SRC Olympiad of Citizenship and Representation with its theme of Student Representatives - Building A Better Today will only be possible with the support of the major educational institutions of this country as well as those overseas.

Recently two more major educational organisations, of special significance to student and adult delegates in New South Wales, have been added to this list. As the Conference is also being held in that state, their present and potential input into the organisation as key members of the Coordinating Committees is even more welcome.

This Conference is now officially supported not only by The University of Sydney, The University of Newcastle - Central Coast Campus, the National Association of Secondary School Principals USA (through its Division of Student Activities) but now also by the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) and the Parents and Citizens Association of New South Wales (see accompanying articles).

Negotiations are underway with all these major organisations as to the best ways of continuing to promote maximum participation of both students and adult advisers, develop and structure an educationally relevant program and cater to the many 'bread and butter' needs of a major conference.

While funding and in-kind support from business, from other educational institutions (including individual schools) and from the wider community is still a major priority of the convenors and organisers both here and with our North American colleagues, it is the largely in-kind, consultative and professional assistance support from organisations like those above which will from here-on determine the scope, profile and, most importantly, the potential longer term outcomes of this Conference.

We and they now warmly welcome enquiries and offers of support from other such organisations, in particular educational associations and student representative groups. We hope that the recognition of active DET and P and C support in NSW will encourage similar bodies in other states to do likewise.

NSW GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS ARE NOW A KEY PART OF THE PICTURE

An Officer from the Department of Education and Training (DET) has been appointed to PASTA's SRC 2000 Conference Coordinating Committee to facilitate discussions between PASTA and DET personnel.

Mr. Brian Smyth-King, who last year admirably assisted PASTA in its ultimately successful application for DET endorsement of our 1999 USA Student Leadership Tour, has already had several meetings with both adult and student convenors of the Conference. He, as a representative of the DET, now becomes another key member of the Conference Coordinating Committees.

Links are now being developed between PASTA, the Department of Education and Training and the New South Wales SRC to facilitate the participation of secondary school students in this Conference. February and March next year are seen as key target dates for promotion within all schools leading to selection of delegates hopefully by 31 March or the end of Term 1.

We are also establishing links, with the assistance of the Department of Education and Training, with SRC Teacher advisers and Senior Education Officers with a responsibility for SRCs and student leadership in general, and with particular Key Learning Areas (KLAs) in the 40 District Offices.

At a meeting recently, PASTA representatives and representatives of the DET discussed how best to promote the many opportunities there will be each day of the conference, and during the general sessions. (See accompanying article for some necessities and possibilities)

PASTA in NSW is also seeking to involve young people of secondary school age through the Department of Community Services and also the NSW TAFE network.

The support of our peers and colleagues in Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia, Western Australia, ACT, Northern Territory, not forgetting those also from sunny Queensland and our valued Oceanic neighbours in New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific will make this a truly national & regional representation to match the international interest already generated elsewhere.
PARENTS AND CITIZENS SUPPORT THE CONFERENCE

The news that the Parents and Citizens Association (P & C) of NSW is fully behind this International Representative Conference has also come to us in the past two months. As a representative body of parents of secondary students it is highly appropriate and personally pleasing to PASTA members that it should be a part of this effort. Raising the profile and enhancing the skills of representation and citizenship in general amongst both students and student leadership advisers can only improve the aims of the Association in furthering democratic decision-making amongst its members and their schools.

P & C Spokesperson Rodney Molesworth first spoke with PASTA members at our In-Service in 1998 on Civics & Citizenship Education. He or his chosen representative will now be a key participant in the Coordinating Committees efforts to stage a most successful Conference. We hope that this will provide a lead to similar parent and community bodies in other states and those in the private school sector to take part.

NEW NSW SRC MEMBERS GET THE LOWDOWN AND THE UPDATE

Recently, at a meeting of the newly elected New South Wales SRC for their year 2000, the two original Student Co-Chairs, now Co-Convenors, made a presentation to students about the International Conference, encouraging them to become involved.

Anna Samson, also Conference Program Coordinator, and Greg Arrow, the Technology / Internet Communications Centre Coordinator, told student representatives how they personally could participate in workshops, discussion groups and panels, and shared ideas on how they might encourage their constituents to help them achieve their goal of getting to the Conference. Another opportunity for information sharing with the New South Wales SRC has been provided by DET in March, 2000. It is possible that as a result of that meeting the NSW SRC as a body will also officially be added to our list of major supporters before the official preliminary program brochure is printed for distribution here and abroad.

PASTA wishes to thank Christie Flemming (from Moore) who has been their representative on the NSW SRC for her interest during 1999. Christie has been replaced by newly elected representatives for 2000 Kadie Martin, from Kurni Kurni High School and Rorey Redfern, from Hay High School. PASTA hopes that they will not only be capable to keep the NSW SRC and Working Party up to date about the 2000 Conference but, as with all student representative groups, encourage and persuade them to help organise it.

THE YOUNG YANKS ARE COMING

In late April next year, PASTA is arranging a meeting with a visiting representative of the NASSP (USA) delegation Coordinating Committee, Australian conference coordinators and representatives of our major support organisations.

Michael Nolan, Student Activity Adviser at Bordentown High School in New Jersey is bringing a group of c. 10 students from his District for a visit down under and an inspection tour of the facilities, personnel and plans on site for the International Conference. Amongst other things, Mike is one of three key adult members of the National Coordinating Committee for the United States participation in our Conference, the others being the Director of the DSA, Rocco Marano and Peter Cahn - Executive Director of the California Association of Activity Advisers (CADA). Both organisations are described on the International Connections page of PASTA's website.

Under Mike's enthusiastic and thorough leadership, Bordentown High hosted our 1999 USA Tour Delegates for nearly a week last July. And they did it in style, with visits to Washington DC, Philadelphia, New York and the Atlantic seaboard. Not incidentally, apart from our delegate's travel to get to New Jersey, Bordentown Student Council raised all the money to fund the other aspects of that visit. We trust Mike's new group will be welcomed with equally legendary Aussie hospitality.

THE CANADIAN MAPLE LEAFERS ARE COMING TOO

Not to be outdone, our Commonwealth cousins in Canada just north of the border are also organising their own national delegation to Sydney next December. Under the leadership of the President of the Canadian Association of Student Activity Advisers (CASAA - see Connect No. 115) Gane Olsen they hope to bring students and advisers from all Canadian provinces.

Gane has also requested that our USA Leadership Tour in June/July of 2000 include visiting western Canada for the main purpose of assisting them as advisers and student group leaders in staging their first major national student leadership camp.

CASAA, like PASTA also a member of the USA based National Association of Student Councils (NASC), is the only other international country currently privileged to be involved in its widely acclaimed activities. (See Article re. NASC's Leadership magazine in this issue to see how you or your school can also take part.)

NEWS FROM THE MANY HUBS AND CORNERS OF THE GLOBE

Some recent emails augur well for the involvement of representatives of many other countries in this International Conference. However, they also point to the difficulties facing those in less affluent countries in being able to afford it. Please contact Charles Kingston - PASTA's VP for National / International Affairs - if you or your school or association would like to help follow these up and help them to get here. (See Contact Details elsewhere in this issue)

FROM INDIA:

I have just returned from attending the Millennium Young People's Congress at Hawaii which was organised by Peace Child International, UK and Youth For Environmental Service. This convention endorsed by the UN, brought together more than 700 young people in the ages of 19-17 from all over the world. It was organised to formulate youth priorities for the new Millennium as also action plans to implement solutions to those priorities. . . I was the Indian delegate at this convention and I was selected by WWF-India from 50,000 children to represent my country, INDIA at this congress.

I am writing this email in the context of my 'Action Group's' participation in the "International Student Representative Conference" in December next year. After returning from the MYPC, I told my group about this wonderful idea and they were very very enthusiastic about it. My group is a youth led Conservation group of over 160 students from the ages of 12-17 that works from our school. We do many activities concerned with environmental conservation. We hope that we shall be able to participate in the event. On behalf of my group, I request you kindly send us some further details as regards this event. It would be really great if we could be involved in this noble and global initiative. This idea is extraordinary. Anticipating an early response Sincerely yours Dhruv Malhotra, Deputy Director The Conservation Club, Springdales School, New Delhi, INDIA

FROM ALGERIA

Dear friends,

The African Youth Network for Sustainable Development is a young regional youth organization based in Algeria which wants to participate to the different activities related to the UN ideals and have contact with other national, regional and international NGOs to build a strong cooperation and a sustainable partnership.
It could be a very important opportunity to learn, to present
our work and see other experiences if we can participate in your
up-coming international event, but as you know our financial
situation is not really helping to ensure the costs (travel,
accommodation, fee..) so please let us have an idea about the
possibilities of sponsor or help we can ask for.

Waiting your reply, we expect positive, thank you for your
time and attention.
Reda Mehigueni General Coordinator, AYNSD

FROM EGYPT

I am Nihad Makary, Vice President 5th International
Student Leadership Conference held from 29th March - 1st April
2000 at the American University in Cairo. I am very interested in
your conference and I feel that we as Vice Presidents, we should
coordinate together for the benefit for our young programs. As a
way of cooperation, I can announce for your conference in my
university and send you many interested people. I may try with
the administration to sponsor your program. In return, you can
do the same.

For more info: American University in Cairo:
http://auc.aucegypt.edu - isl website (not yet updated):
isl.aucegypt.edu
Looking forward to hear from you.

LEADERSHIP
MAGAZINE
NOW AVAILABLE THROUGH PASTA

This National Association of Secondary School
Principals (NASSP) publication from the USA is part of
PASTA’s ongoing affiliation with NASSP’s Division of
Student Activities (DSA). Connect also receives copies.
Its full title is Leadership for student activities and it’s
published nine times a year from September through May.
Each edition is 50 pages long in glossy colour with photos
and lots of information on the secondary student activity
scene in the USA, especially SRCs and their junior school
equivalents.

How Can You Get It?

PASTA is an international affiliate of the DSA. For
a mere A $30 extra to your annual PASTA membership
fee you / your school / your SRC (or all three!) can become
a member and receive your copy of this nine times a year
publication and associated professional resource materials
sent regularly with it. Plus several other benefits of that
extra membership, including discounts on materials and
conference and in-service fees in the states and a liability
insurance policy for advisers, whose implications for
Australia we are currently investigating.

Check out the PASTA membership form in most
editions of Connect or access PASTA’s website:
http://hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/

The “How To Join” page has a membership form
you can download, then e-mail to us. On both there’s a
box to add your subscription to Leadership to your
ordinary or institutional membership. We let the DSA
know, they bulk mail all subscriber copies to us and we
then pass it on to you with your regular PASTA update
mailings.

Alternatively, if you are or become a PASTA
member and supply us with an e-mail address, you will
as a minimum receive periodic summaries (c. 4 times a
year) of what each issue contains.

CALL FOR PRESENTATIONS
AND PERFORMANCES

The official preliminary program for the SRC
2000 Conference will be going to the printers in a
few months. Draft programs have been published
and circulated for over a year now. They have listed
the themes, potential issues, formats and suggested
timings for this Conference.

HOWEVER, the key ingredient they don’t yet
have is YOU. YOUR SCHOOL. YOUR YOUTH
ACTION GROUP. Here’s a chance to let others know
what you’ve been doing or hope to do. Here’s a
chance to explore on the national and international
stage the real things that encourage and discourage
you.

We URGENTLY need your specific proposals
for workshops, roundtables, panel topics and
presenters, performances, displays, exhibits and all
manner of input. Whether you’re sure you’re coming
to the Conference or not, your input to the program
is vital. Please check out the revised (and Blessedly
simplified!) application form at the back of this SRC
2000 Bulletin and send it in. LIKE NOW!
NB: By filling in this application, you are helping us to organise this Conference. It does not yet obligate you to attend. It is a step in that direction - a more specific expression of interest than those circulated before. Formal registration forms will then be sent to you in due course.

Tick whichever applies in the questions below.

Add explanatory material as indicated.

Registration fees for this Conference are Australian $500 (c. US$320) for all delegates. This is comparable to those for similar functions in North America, Europe and elsewhere. Wherever possible, delegates should seek to be funded by the group they represent and its wider community. If attending as an adult adviser, seek funding as a professional development activity.

Registration includes all Conference needs for the five days from time of registration except housing for adults. Students will be hosted by families in the Sydney region. Adult registrants outside the Sydney metropolitan area will be sent a list of recommended hotels or alternative group accommodation. They will need to make their own bookings unless separate arrangements are made with the organising committee, including any prepayments required. Day registrations at reduced rates may be available if Conference numbers allow, but this will not be known until two months before the Conference.

Further questions? E-mail: ckingston@interact.net.au or write to the postal addresses as indicated in this and all publicity.

Upon confirmation of your application, a more detailed form will eventually be sent to you for mutual exchange of further details.

APPLICATION to ATTEND and PRESENT at the 1st SRC INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE - SYDNEY 2000

A. I ........................................................................................................ wish to apply to attend the above Conference as a:

[ ] 1. Student Representative
[ ] 2. Adult Representative
[ ] 3. Committee Member

B. The name of the group I will represent is:

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------

C. My position in or role with this group is:

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------

D. My/our contact details are as follows:

1. Mailing Address:

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------

2. Phone/Fax and E-mail (if available):

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------

E. I/We DO/DO NOT (cross off whichever does not apply) wish to apply to do a presentation.

F. Please examine the draft program and send us your suggestions for the issues, resources and types of sessions you would like to see at this Conference.

CONTACT DETAILS

Sydney 2000
First International SRC Conference
1 Gladstone Street, Bathurst NSW Australia 2795
Phone: (02) 63322603
Fax: (02) 63322302
E-mail: ckingston@interact.net.au
Bridge Builder

An old man going down a lone highway
Came in the evening cold and gray
To a chasm vast and deep and wide
Through which was flowing a sullen tide
The old man crossed in the twilight dim;
The swollen stream held no fears for him;
But he turned when safe on the other side
And began building a bridge to span the tide.

“Old man,” said a fellow pilgrim near,
“You are wasting your strength with building here;
Your journey will end with the ending day;
You never again must pass this way;
You have crossed the chasm deep and wide
Why build you this bridge in the eventide?”

The builder lifted his old gray head
“Good friend, in the path I have come,” he said
“There followeth after me today
A youth whose feet must pass this way.
This swollen stream which was naught to me
To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be;
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;
Good friend, I am building that bridge for him.”

The Starfish

An old man was walking along a beach early one morning. As the sun rose over the horizon, he noticed that thousands of Starfish had been washed up on the shore by the tide. “What a shame”, the old man thought, because he knew that the tide had already gone out and that thousands of Starfish were now trapped on the beach, which meant that they would soon die in the hot sun.

As the old man walked along, he noticed a young boy ahead bending over and throwing things into the sea. As the old man got closer he realised that the boy was throwing the Starfish that were left on the beach back into the sea.

When the old man reached the boy he stopped and asked the boy, “What are you doing?”

The boy replied, “I am throwing these Starfish back into the ocean, otherwise they will all die.”

The old man then thought to himself, “What a noble but useless gesture”.

The old man then said to the boy, “What will it matter? There are thousands of Starfish on the beach. You couldn’t possibly save them all!”

Just at that moment the boy reached down, grabbed one of the Starfish and threw it as far into the ocean as he could and said to the old man, “It mattered to that one.”

Pass the PASTA - from page 11...

Contributions without any commitment on the part of the Government to take them any further and an indication that some recommendations had little chance of ever being addressed. However, the Hawaiian State Legislature hosts their annual Hawaiian State Student Council Conference and student and staff representatives from each of the Islands gather to address student needs. The recommendations passed by the conference are then taken up by specially formed parliamentary committees where student delegates are assisted by various state politicians and public service officials to draft their recommendations into legislated bills to be eventually presented to the parliament for normal processing. The success of each bill is left to students and other supporters to lobby for and whilst often defeated, the students have a real channel of access to the operating political process.

Some four years ago we in PASTA mooted the need for a permanent National School Student Representative Council to meet every two years in our nations capital, with the NASPAC Conference every other year. Perhaps by showcasing and adapting the Hawaiian model, a process for real political access for youth may be over time forged and a permanent national forum for student voice and action formed. Hopefully before another 20 years of Connect.

Ralph Murray

December 1999
Mail subscriptions to:

NSW 2263
North Head
67-12 Dasson Drive
PASTA Inc.

Membership Form

I wish to apply to join/renew my membership.
JUST SAY YES!

Deciding to Stop Being a Token SRC

When I attended the NASPAC V conference in Tasmania earlier this year, one of the main issues discussed was how to eliminate the tokenism of SRCs in schools. We were aware that many schools have SRCs purely because it looks good; they give the SRC many meaningless and tedious jobs such as continual fund-raising, to keep everybody happy.

Our school SRC has just been re-elected and we decided to go on a camp to bond as a team, create new ideas and learn about the roles of an SRC.

However, one of the things we discovered was the too frequent use of the phrase: “No, our Principal would object”. Too many ideas were put on hold or knocked back, and eventually we realised we had a problem. The direction of the conversation twisted and eventually new questions were asked:

- When did we stop representing students and start representing the Principal?
- Why does she have the final say over all of us?
- Are all decisions made in our best interest, or for what would be easier?

While you can imagine the answers to most of those questions, it does not help the SRC and its members to feel confident in themselves; it is an attempt to kill the feeling that we can do anything and make a difference.

Fortunately, we realised this early in our term, so now we can change this and challenge the rules that have been silently set.

The question I now put to SRCs is: how many can confidently say that if they wanted to do something, their school’s authority figures would back them 100%? The role of SRCs is not just a link between Principal and the students.

Our SRC has come to the conclusion that we don’t want to be a token SRC, as we have been for so long. The sooner everyone realises the potential an SRC has, the closer we come to eliminating token SRCs from schools for good.

Katelin Organ
President, North Sydney Girls SRC, NSW

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CHOICE AWARENESS PROGRAMS

While most articles in Connect detail participatory programs in schools, the Choice Awareness program operates in the community, mainly amongst young people between 10 and 21 years of age, who have little interest in school. The Choice Awareness Program provides a support medium for such young people to re-connect with community - families, peers, youth groups, sporting teams, and other community agencies including schools - by actively working through their options in co-operation with other young people in similar situations.

Nearly three years ago, John McLean and Todd Hartley (in Cairns, Queensland) created the Choice character in their work with young people in Cairns. Choice is a distinctive logo: a young person in basketball attire and sunglasses, which is used to draw attention to issues of importance to local young people, such as unemployment, self-esteem, accommodation, road safety, suicide prevention, drug dependency and so on. Young people are involved in developing responses to their issues and participate in presentations at schools, TV commercials, radio, billboard displays, and speaking at public meetings.

The central theme of Choice is respect for self and others, and within that context, making the most responsible decision in relation to the issue at hand.

In working tirelessly as resource persons for young people, John McLean and Todd Hartley maintain a respectful, non-judgmental relationship while continually asking the question: what is the most responsible choice to make? Their approach has attracted a lot of favourable community comment in Cairns. Many local businesses have donated money to keep the program going. Donations have also been made by the Cairns City Council, the Far North Queensland Institute of TAFE and the Queensland Department of Education Training and Industrial Relations. However, to secure its future and to facilitate budget planning, a more secure and regular source of funding will be necessary.

For further information about Choice Awareness contact John or Todd c/o PO Box 960E, Earleville, Queensland, 4870 or phone 0412 110115.

Bob Semmens
A Challenge

Various initiatives in Australia promote student participation in education. Subscribers to Connect would already be familiar with Student Councils and possibly student participation through ‘schooling for the middle years’, ‘negotiated curriculum’, ‘peer tutoring’, ‘peer coaching’, and so on. There has been a lot of debate amongst academics, educational policy makers, school administrators, teachers and some parents about what students should learn at school (skills and knowledge), how they should learn it, when, where and why they should learn it. From my research so far, it would seem that much of this is decided by adults with students having very little input into the process. As yet, I have not been able to find many schools where students participate in important decision making, particularly with regards to their learning, but if your school does I would love to hear from you!

To add to the debate on what, when, where, how, why we should learn certain things I would like to suggest that students themselves are capable of offering some insights. A professor at The University of Queensland (Allan Luke) is heading a team of people in the Department of Education to look at different ways that schooling could happen and suggests that students be given a large project at three stages of their compulsory schooling to demonstrate what they are capable of. What is being suggested is that a number of tasks be given to students who will then carry them out in the way they see fit.

Here is where you come in. I would argue for the tasks not to be fixed by adults but rather, ones that are created by the students with their teachers so as to set a challenge which would extend skills and knowledge and identify directions that those involved would like to follow.

Below is a hypothetical exercise that individuals, student groups, student and teacher groups might like to have a go at. Your response may enlighten the discussions about student participation that is currently so heavily weighted towards adult opinions. If you would like to respond to me in writing we could start including the information in future editions of Connect, to continue the conversation and possibilities of students being active participants in decision making about their own education.

Hypothetical

Imagine that you have been given the opportunity to create your year at school and for sixty percent of the year you could work on a project or series of projects in order to demonstrate the extent of your knowledge and skills. What would your year look like? What would the project/s be and look like? What would the year feel like?

Your task is to plan the ‘when’, ‘where’, ‘how’, ‘why’, ‘who with’, ‘what’ etc, you will do as part of your learning in school for approximately sixty percent of your time at school next year. You will be able to talk to and get help from a few teachers and you can also involve people from outside school. It is up to you whether you work alone, in small groups or as a class group but you must justify why you choose ‘your way’. There are a number of guidelines to follow to which you might like to suggest changes or additions.

Guidelines:

- Your work should centre around something that is important to you and the world.
- The project should demonstrate a wide range and depth of skills and knowledge and be useful for someone other than you.
- Your work should show an awareness of others’ qualities and differences and you must address issues of social justice and equity.
- You can work with teachers, students of other ages, and people outside the school but this information must be included in your plan to ensure all legal and safety requirements are met.
- Every student will be given a $10 budget to begin with. Any other money needed will have to be raised by the student, the details of how this would be done to be included in the project plan.
- You will be assessed on your achievements by a number of people including your classmates, carers and teacher, an adult audience that you will organise, a group of students and teachers from another school or schools, and yourself.
- You must find a way to show the people above how you went about your project, what you did, who benefited and what you learned.
- You will need to collect evidence of your progress and achievements throughout the project as well as evidence of any assessment to create a portfolio.
- Your final portfolio should include a summary of your project which will be published as an article in a public newspaper or journal as negotiated between you and a teacher. This article should also include any barriers to progress, how you would do it differently if you did the same project again, and how the project might relate to your personal future and that of the world.

What can you come up with? Send your opinions to Lisa Hunter at the address below.
Seeking Information

We need to talk about the good things you are doing. Is this you?

Have you got something good happening in ‘student participation’ at your school that others should hear about?

Are the students active participants in any decision making about their education?

I am seeking teachers and/or students who are involved in classrooms or schools where student participation might occur in any of the following ways:

a) negotiation of classroom learning goals, methods, assessment and evaluation in order to share in decisions on what is worth learning and how such learning can be effective;

b) specific curriculum strategies or initiatives designed to allow students to develop and demonstrate competencies to:

- function as participants with adults in the planning and the resolution of problems in school and community settings;
- learn the processes of debate, discussion and decision making in group structures;
- initiate and plan human service activities;
- link academic content and learning in order to deal with important social issues

(Cole, cited in Holdsworth, 1986, p. 29)

The idea is for me to link up with you and help write your stories for a variety of readers - other students, teachers, principles, policy makers and academics. It would not require a lot of time (unless you so choose) as I can put together the stories/information.

Send a short explanation of how students participate as well as your contact details (email, fax, phone, address and a bit about yourself) to:

Lisa Hunter
Department of Human Movement Studies
The University of Queensland
St. Lucia, 4072
or Fax: 07-33656877
or email <lhunter@hms.uq.edu.au>

If you want to go beyond your short explanation (eg have me ‘talk’ to you over email or phone for more details) just say so in your reply and I will contact you again.

NB: This is not just for adults! Primary and secondary students are welcome to submit their explanations/stories too.

Reference:
Holdsworth, R (ed) (1986) Student participation and the participation and equity program, Commonwealth Schools Commission, Canberra

December 1999
My name is Helen, and I am the one of the coordinators with the Youth Millennium Project, a non-profit organization society in Vancouver, Canada. The project is a joint effort between the University of British Columbia and UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund). We are trying to establish contacts with young people between the ages of 11-14 years and adult facilitators such as parents and teachers from countries around the world to make this project a reality.

The Youth Millennium Project seeks to involve young people from around the world to evaluate and determine global issues, keeping in mind what kind of world they would like to be living in in about 20 years. Young people will then develop a local action plan to respond to these global issues. Below, there is more information about the project itself that will give further details.

At present, we are trying to establish contacts with you! If you know anyone who might be interested in participating in the Youth Millennium project, or if you would be interested in this project yourself, please let me know. This is an opportunity to make a difference in the world, not only now, but for the future. We hope that this project will provide young people with a feeling of empowerment which will enable them to make positive changes in their communities when they reach adulthood.

Our information package could be sent out to young people and/or to adult facilitators by e-mail or regular postal mail. They would not have to have Internet access to participate. There is no cost for them to participate.

More information follows. I hope to hear from you soon.

Helen Kwag
Coordinator for Asia for the Youth Millennium Project

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Dear Youth, Teachers and Youth Leaders:

You are invited to join thousands of groups and classrooms participating in the Youth Millennium Project, a joint initiative of the University of British Columbia, Canada, and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

The Youth Millennium Project runs from January to December 2000.

What is the Youth Millennium Project? The Youth Millennium Project invites any group of young people aged 11 - 14 in every country of the world to discuss what they feel are important global problems and create a local project (plan of action) in response to these issues. The plan of action will then be carried out by the young people as a group. Each group will have three companion groups in other countries and one companion group in the same country.

A plan of action can be any plan addressing a global issue. It can be large or small, lasting one hour to one year! These possibilities were suggested by young people:
- practising resolving conflicts
- working to make streets safe for bicycles
- growing a garden
- maintain a well in the village
- fundraising to counter poverty
- helping the local health clinic

Youth Millennium Conference

The Project will culminate in the Youth Millennium Conference to be held in Vancouver, Canada from July 16-20, 2001. At least one young person from each country will be randomly selected to participate, all expenses paid.

Adult Facilitators

Adults can assist young people as facilitators. Adult facilitators may be teachers, youth leaders, parents or other members of the community. The role of facilitators is to provide support for an empowering and positive experience.

Who can Participate?

The Youth Millennium Project is open to anyone born from 1986 to 1989 inclusive. Schools and all groups involving young people, such as recreational, sports, educational clubs are invited to participate.

If you are a teacher or young person in school, you are invited to participate inside or outside the classroom.

Groups can be small or large, such as two friends, a youth club, a class, a whole school, etc.

Project Goals

Develop awareness of global issues, encourage communication, develop a sense of personal empowerment, and create a sense of community within participating groups and across national borders.

The Youth Millennium Project encourages the participation of young people everywhere (born 1986-1989 inclusive). We invite girls and boys from rural and urban areas, all cultural groups including indigenous young people, and young people with disabilities.
Between October 21 and 29, the Millennium Young Persons' Congress (MYP) was held in Hawaii. The conference was attended by delegates and activists from around one hundred and three countries, all selected through a vigorous National Consultation program. In Australia, this process took place through the United Nations Youth Association of Australia (UNYA) (see Connect 117, June 1999). We were selected to represent Australian young people at the Congress.

The focus of the MYP was and is the establishment of a list of priorities for the sustainability of our planet for the next millennium and a way of implementing those priorities.

Having little to no idea of the structure of the conference, most delegations were a little unsure if not apprehensive about whether or not it would be possible to achieve our goals and how we were to set about it. However, after enjoyable and relaxing sightseeing trips around the island of Oahu during the first two days, we began to break down the barriers of our differing nationalities and get to know one another. Within no time, we were joking and laughing as though we had exactly the same background and had known each other all our lives.

We soon learnt that the word conference didn’t necessarily mean that we were going to do nothing but talk. On the third day of the conference, we spent the day on specific Service Projects which were designed to give something back to a community which had welcomed us with open arms. One third of the group worked on restoring the USS Missouri, another third at a primary school and the remaining third, of which I was a member, converted a patch of industrial wasteland into a potential Hawaiian native garden. Having been worked to the bone under the warm Hawaiian sun, we all looked forward to getting down to the serious business of regional discussions.

At the State Capitol Building in Honolulu, the first day of discussions were held with a varying degree of success. Divided into separate regions, our aim was to begin to gain an understanding of each others’ list of priorities. Australia was a member of the Small Island States Region which considered Education its number one priority. We considered education to be important, both in terms of literacy and, perhaps more significantly, in terms of awareness of problems and solutions to the world’s problems.

Our second priority was Sustainable Resource Management and Environmental Conservation which we hoped would counter the environmental pressures on our planet. Of particular concern to our region was the issue of Global Warming and the rising of sea levels, risking large areas of land on often low-lying islands.

Our third priority was that of Health with a particular emphasis on health infrastructure as well as immediate aid.

Priority number four was that of Human Rights and Responsibilities, where we reaffirmed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and felt that humans had certain responsibilities that went with these rights. We also believed that it was a human right to be free from the scourge of war and that the occurrences of war

Europe had two or three days of heated discussions, during which a shoe was reportedly thrown across the room. North America also struggled because of the apparent unwillingness of the two countries it contained, the USA and Canada, to agree or compromise on any issue. Asia, South America and Africa worked very well, though, and came to some valuable conclusions.

When it came to deciding global priorities, we struggled to make everyone see eye to eye. However, after a day of inter-regional discussions, we voted on what were to be our priorities as the youth of the world. We came to the decision that it was a mistake to number priorities because each region of the world would have the priorities in a different order. The final five were: Peace, the Environment, Health, Human Rights and Poverty.

In order to implement their priorities, each attendee of the conference was required to create at least one Action Proposal. This proposal was designed to be a practical way in which the youth could make a difference in their local community, given some funding. The Millennium Action Fund will be set up by Peace Child, the association responsible for the organisation of the conference, and a youth member from each region will meet in England next year to decide the allocation of funds.

The MYP has been an enlightening experience for everyone who attended. It was a conference notable for the diversity of those who attended it as well as its emphasis on action after its conclusion. We realised that we can work together to come up with solutions to the problems which face our planet. We were willing to work hard and purposefully, allowing nothing to come in the way of our aims, and are proud of the results we have been able to achieve. However, we acknowledge that we have hardly even begun on a road that will lead us down what is, we are determined, going to be a bright future.

Ishaan Nangia and Hannah Nestille
Carey Baptist Grammar, Victoria
<ishaan@aurorahouse.com.au>
The History of Student Representation

(an eye witness account)

First of all, let me congratulate Roger Holdsworth on twenty years of Connect. Without this participation, many voices would have remained silent, many ideas unknown and many dreams unrealised.

Legal Disclaimer: Within the course of this article names have not been changed to protect the innocent, as no one is completely innocent (least of all people I mention here).

Now on with the article. By an extreme turn of fate, I have been present at many (if not all) of the major turning points of student representation over the last seven years, and as a student representative (activist) [now advocate (activist)] I have lived through those interesting times. Isn't that a curse - there were one or two.

After joining my school SRC in 1993, and moving to the SRC in 1994, I was moving up rapidly when the movement hit the tumultuous year of 1995. It all began with the third National Student Participation Conference (NASPAC) in Melbourne.

(Subeditor's note: Actually Greg, something delightfully suspicious began with PASTA's first formation Conference in February that year. But then, what would you know? You were only a student then, right!! The fact you wrote the Year 7 Computer Program at Bathurst High and did your first HSC course - the leadership one - in Year 9 makes no difference. Or does it?: Charles)

This was the first time in a more than a decade that NASPAC had been convened. It allowed students from a number of states to get together to discuss, collaborate [plot, scheme - well not quite] and form alliances that we would later come to rely on as the year progressed.

NASPAC was immediately followed by the Australian Curriculum Studies Association Conference: ACSA - 1995. This allowed us all to meet advisors, academics and teachers [ & bureaucrats - I don't remember any, do you?], to present our position, and to learn more about the history of the movement. Things were looking good. The bomb would drop later that year.

With the arrival of a new state government in NSW [Victoria was still well and truly Jeffed], the decision was taken to change the structure of the Department of Education [they departed from it regularly] from one based around a few large regions, to one based on many small districts. The NSW SRC however, was based heavily on the regional structure of the DET.

I was at the 1995 state conference presenting a workshop on a leadership course that was pioneered by Charles Kingston, Chris O'Rourke and others [aren't you going to try to claim some credit here, for shooting JR perhaps?], I was one of the first students of the course [right on cue, as usual]. I was there [what, on the grassy knoll?] when the announcement was made to the delegates. To some, it was a bitter blow. To the rest, it was devastating. My apologies to those in different states or countries that don't know the topology of the NSW SRC, and to whom this incident had or has little or no effect [this must be even more boring for you than it is for me].

But '95 wasn't finished yet. Soon after Black August [or mauve, depending on who you ask], the Second International Principals' Conference was held. We were able to set up an informational display [don't you mean stage a sit in?], communicate with principals from around the world, put students on [take over] discussion panels, put students on the same stage as [hijack] Ken Boston [etc ad nauseam], and announce to the world our intentions to stage the First International Student Representation Conference. [Is that all?]

1996 passed quietly [without major incident] although momentum for the International Conference was slowly gathering. [didn't you say quietly?]

'97 saw NASPAC IV [conspiracy Mach 4]. This brought both a major infusion of new ideas [more plotting and scheming] and a rapid acceleration of interest in the International Conference. Also at this time, a new idea began to surface [world domination sh?], nothing less than sending a group of Aussie students [an invasion force?] to the USA. Yes, and to visit their annual National Conference and bring back anything of use. [Did you go?]

I accepted the opportunity [here we go,] to stay back here and run [Australia?] a communications base for the group. 1998 saw the USA trip go ahead without incident [none that you'd mention anyway] and preparation for SRC 2000 begin in earnest.

1999 has progressed smoothly with more preparation for the now titled 1st International Student Representative Conference, another USA trip to promote it in North America and applications for the third trip in June next year still open. The DET has given in principle (and principal?) support for the International Conference and everything is looking rosy once again.

Those who have gone before I than. It is only on the backs of giants that we can see the road ahead. To those yet to come, I challenge them to better us, as I know they could if they try. I also say to them that if they need assistance or information there are many people around them who are willing to help if you are prepared to look. You just may have to look in unconventional directions however.

Hopefully this article has been informative or useful in some way. May the Student Representative movement continue to move forward in leaps and bounds, and may the next 20 years be as enjoyable for all as the previous seven have been for me.

Signing off for now.

Greg Arrow
Co-Convenor and Coordinator of the Technology and Internet Communications Committee

To be Continued...
Red Cross Community Action combines education and participation in community settings and offers young people a valued role in their community. It is a school-based program where students aged 14 to 16 are introduced to their community and to the experience of volunteering. They prepare for their volunteer placement by studying their community, volunteering, the Principles and work of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and communication skills.

"Being able to experience different areas of community service. Being able to help people without being paid and knowing that they appreciate your help" (Year 10 student)

Australian Red Cross in Victoria has been running the program since 1987. In 1997, the program was thoroughly evaluated, revealing a range of outcomes for students and teachers. These included improved skills in the areas of community involvement, self-esteem, decision-making, conflict resolution, communication, negotiation and project management. Students and teachers comments included in this article have been drawn from this evaluation as well as from more recent comments.

While recognising the importance of these outcomes for students, it was clear that curriculum resources and support materials were needed to sustain the program.

During 1999 these materials have been developed. This was made possible through the support of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia as part of their commitment to the development of young people in our community.

Experiencing active citizenship

Experiential learning is an effective way for students to gain a greater understanding of the community in which they live. It provides them with authentic learning experiences as it can bring them into contact with some tough real life issues. Through the evaluation, the following factors were recognised as part of the teachers’ and students’ experience of participation in Red Cross Community Action.

Inclusiveness

Red Cross Community Action provides students of all abilities with the chance to succeed. One teacher, commenting on her experiences, said: "(It) has allowed dangerously at risk students to experience 'life' in a totally different capacity. For those not 'at risk' as well as those who are – it has provided a most rewarding experience. They feel valued and realise the worth of volunteer services. It is truly my most rewarding class."

A year 11 student stated that she most appreciated "going out of the school and seeing how other organisations work, how they run. Good experience".

A year 10 boy remarked: "I most appreciated the experience of being able to give my services to local community groups, and I am now more appreciative to people that do volunteer work all their lives."

Contributing to Others

Students are positive about experiences that give them a chance to make a contribution to others. One year 9 girl remarked: "I liked making old people happier and less lonely", while a year 9 boy made the following notable observation: "I liked socialising with the old people. I think young and old have a chemistry that goes well together."

Two other 15 year old boys commented: "What I most liked was the fact that I was doing something for the community, instead of for myself at school." "It gave me the opportunity to work in the community and give something in a sense to others, just by helping them".
Extending Students' Experiences

Many students were empowered by the opportunity to show initiative and to explore new roles.

A Year 9 girl remarked: “I liked working with the children because they are so imaginative and full of energy. It was exciting teaching them things one week, then coming back the next week and them remembering.”

A Year 10 student said he most enjoyed “working with young kids who listened, respected and enjoyed your words and company”, while another said: “The best part for me was having a chance to organise something not only for myself but for others, and having to carry out these activities.”

A 17 year old, reflecting on his experience, said: “It was a different experience from those received at home, school, sports clubs etc.”

Authentic Learning

Authentic learning experiences can bring students into contact with some tough real life issues. This is one reason why Red Cross provides resources to prepare and debrief participants. Students identified things which they found challenging at their placement.

“I did not like seeing the old people cry”; “One man went to the toilet right in front of my face”; “When it was lunchtime I got asked to feed an old person. And some of the people were telling me that they would rather be dead than sit there all day”; “Some of the people passed away without giving us a chance to say goodbye”.

Reflecting on encounters such as these is an important part of the program. Structured activities are suggested in the materials to help both teachers and students. Staff from the agencies involved are also supportive in helping the students deal with the challenges that authentic learning involves.

Increased Interaction

Students recognised the value of interacting with a diverse range of people. One enjoyed “talking to people with dementia”. Another said she liked “meeting different people who are not in my age group”. A year 10 student, commenting on his environmental placement, enjoyed “the chance to get out in the environment and work with experienced people”.

Introducing students to the broader community and taking them beyond their own age group happens naturally as the students volunteer. The words of the participants themselves indicate the value they place on the program.

To find out more about Red Cross Community Action contact Australian Red Cross in your state.

Mandy Reed, Sue Hubble and Ruth Richter
Australian Red Cross
155 Peelam Street
Carlton 3053
(03) 9345 1896
Clearinghouse

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) 9344 9637

Australian:

Breakthrough Bulletin (RACV Energy Breakthrough, Vic) Edition #3, October 1999
Notes from the Student Participation Forum: 'Schooling for a Democracy' (Parliamentary Education Office, ACT) June 1999
YACSA Round (YACSA, SA) September-October 1999
Youth Studies Australia (ACYS, Hobart, Tas) Vol 18 No 4, December 1999

International:

Leadership (NASSP, USA) Vol 28 Nos 2, 3; October, November 1999

STUDENT PARTICIPATION SUPPORT MATERIALS AVAILABLE
See the back page of this issue of Connect

Documents

The documents listed in this column are of general background value. 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
464 Guidelines: Tasmanian Student Representative Council (Tasmanian SRC, 1999) (2 pp; $0.60)

Democracy Starts Here: Junior School Councils at Work
Descriptions and practical information about active citizenship in primary schools.
$7 a copy (posted); $12 for 2 copies
Order through Connect

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NATIONAL YOUTH WEEK 2000

On 23 April 1999, Federal, State and Territory Youth Ministers agreed to hold Australia’s first National Youth Week from 2 - 8 April 2000. Promoting a theme of ‘Count Me In’, National Youth Week will focus on the issues and concerns of young people from all regions and backgrounds and will highlight the positive contribution young people make to society.

National Youth Week will provide a broad range of opportunities to showcase best practise in youth participation and will bring together young Australians in creative and stimulating environments. The key objectives of National Youth Week are to:

- give young people aged 12-25 an opportunity to express their ideas and views, raise issues of concern to them, act on issues which affect their lives and create and enjoy entertainment;
- give the wider community the opportunity to listen to young people and acknowledge and celebrate the positive contributions made by their efforts and achievements; and
- promote a community focus on issues of concern to young people.

KITS

National Youth Week 2000 Kits will be available by early December 1999. To receive your copy contact:

The Department of Human Services
Youth, Family and Community Services Branch
1/555 Collins Street, MELBOURNE 3000
Ph: (03) 9616 7658 Fax: (03) 9616 7812

December 1999
Copy or use this form to subscribe to Connect and to order materials from Connect:

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

Miscellaneous Resources:

- Students and Work - 1985 Connect reprint booklet #5 ($5) $ ...........
- Democratic Decision Making in Schools - Victorian PEP (1987) ($3) $ ...........
- Democracy Starts Here! Junior School Councils at Work (1996) ([$7 or $12 for two copies) $ ...........

Foxfire Resources:

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

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