Connect
supporting student participation

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Students Building a Culture of Peace

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This Issue:

At the start of a year, it's becoming a Connect 'tradition' to challenge students and teachers around the development of effective Student Councils. Here we go again.

At the end of 2001 and the start of 2002, I assisted with a couple of discussion sessions at student 'planning days' and was asked about ways in which groups could think about reorganising to overcome some of the difficulties they were having. At the same time, a couple of Connect readers wrote and asked similar questions: "How can we organise our SRC to be more effective?" "How can we increase students' awareness of what representatives can do, so that it's not just the 'popular' students who get chosen?" Some of these questions came from primary schools, and some from secondary schools - so the answers might vary a lot.

In thinking about this and responding to students and teachers, I started by saying "it depends..." - on your circumstances, history, intentions, culture etc. But I also realised that there were 'clusters' of possibilities, that might be useful starting points in both primary and secondary schools. And so, with the advice of a few others, the initial articles in this issue emerged. Not a definitive or simple or authoritative answer, but some starting points for us all to think about possibilities - including possibilities for doing it differently!

You might have noticed that this issue is a double issue; you might also notice that it's being published a little later than normal. I'm about to take some leave, during which I'll be talking with people in the USA, UK and Europe about related issues: ways in which students can participate in 'authentic learning, 'real-world problem solving, 'active citizenship,' making a difference through their learning'. And so this is a double issue before I go, that picks up some of these themes from 2001 and earlier.

In the last issue (#132, December 2001), I wrote: "I hunted for stories about positive and participatory programs that were responding to these uncertain and dangerous times. Slowly, articles have begun to arrive."

This theme is continued in this issue with a strong editorial from the US journal Democracy & Education (page 15), and an Australian article about the development of a 'Culture of Peace' in a group of schools in Melbourne's eastern suburbs (pages 16-17).

Also here, the issues of 'consulting pupils', 'student voice', and 'students researching education' are picked up in articles from the ESRC Network project in the UK. I'll be meeting with these and other researchers and advocates during 2002, bringing back stories of their work, and taking the stories documented in Connect to them.

So, as noted previously, the next issue (#135-136) will also be a double issue - in August - a bit of a time gap in publication ... but some fascinating and substantial reading to make up for it. I'd love to come home to find a huge pile of articles in the in-tray, ready for sharing!!

Roger Holdsworth

NEXT ISSUE: #135-136: August 2002
Deadline for material: end of July
Organising Structures for Student Councils for Success

What's the ideal structure for an effective Student Council?

In some ways that's an impossible question to answer - it depends on the school situation and characteristics (size, other structures, resources and activities and so on), the role of the Student Council, the nature of support in the school and the history of student participation in that school and community. But it's still a frequently asked question. So, here's an attempt over the next few pages, to define some of the possibilities - and the questions you might need to be asking yourself.

First, I think there are some basic principles:

- The Student Council is a student organisation, and thus must be 'owned' by students and driven by their needs and wants. The structure must make sense to them, be one they have 'invented' and serve their needs.

- Issues of equity must be considered: the Student Council cannot be 'captured' by one particular group in the school and lock other students out of participation. It cannot be a small, isolated and separated group; this is also a practical question if it is to be able to operate with student support.

- The Council must be practical and able to do things. This means that attention to functions and structures are essential - it must be able to get on with its work; it also means that structures must pay attention to issues such as the amount of student and teacher time available.

- The Council must be supported: one or more staff advisors who are interested, accepted by the Student Council, and recognised by the school administration, need to be provided and resourced; students also need to be provided with time and resources (space, funds, training etc).

The practices of a Student Council are then always open to challenge around these principles, in considering how well the Student Council is operating. Are students in control? Is it representative? Is it functioning efficiently? Does it have support? Good Student Councils are always reflecting on and reviewing their operation, and considering possible changes to their structures. Just because 'it's always been like that' doesn't mean that it has to continue that way. Just because it worked this year, doesn't mean it'll continue to work after the current personnel have gone.

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Home Group Representatives  
S.R.C.  
School Council

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February-April 2002
There are four basic options for the appointment of students to the Student Council. Each has pros and cons:

a) students are elected by students;

b) students apply and are chosen (eg by a selection panel);

c) students volunteer;

d) students are persuaded or co-opted because of skills or interests.

These measures should be specified in the Student Council’s constitution, so that everyone is clear as to how these processes happen.

In practice, many schools use a combination of these approaches, for example where criteria are made public, students must present an application, and an election is held, plus other interested students can be co-opted to the Council or to its working groups.

**Election:**

*Students nominate or are nominated, present reasons (speeches or in writing) and an election is then held by the appropriate body (class, year level etc), either publicly (hands up) or privately (ballot papers). Usually a fixed quota of students is to be elected from a group and this is specified in the Council’s constitution.*

**Positives**

- traditionally democratic;
- can ensure all classes and/or grades are represented;
- can be linked to learning about parliamentary processes;
- often builds on models already existing in primary schools.

**Negatives**

- easily becomes a popularity vote;
- some groups may not wish to elect a representative;
- some groups may have several people interested;
- forming reasonably sized electing groups can result in a large Council.

**Volunteers:**

*The Student Council is advertised and interested students turn up; a commitment may be asked for – students have to turn up for the whole year or membership may vary from meeting to meeting.*

**Positives**

- maximises student interest;
- likely to get a group that understands the function of the Council;
- usually a more manageable group.

**Negatives**

- can be dominated by an in-group or a group with a specific agenda;
- can be un-representative;
- can be subject to passing enthusiasms.

**Application and appointment:**

*Students apply for positions on the Council, usually in writing and giving reasons; a selection panel is then set up (teachers, past Student Council members, administration, outside ‘friend’ etc) and applicants are interviewed (as for a job); appointments are made by the panel.*

**Positives**

- can focus commitment;
- can make sure applications are examined carefully;
- can specify criteria;
- encourages students to keep records of their involvement and learn how to apply for things in a positive way.

**Negatives**

- may choose only already competent, confident and advantaged students (who can present good applications);
- can mean that those already involved select their mates;
- can move control away from students;
- can ignore the benefits from ‘non-conventional’ students.

**Co-option:**

*Students with specific skills or interests are identified by past Student Council members, teachers or the current Student Council and approached; they are invited and/or persuaded to join the Council, either long-term or short-term (and either with or without a formal vote).*

**Positives**

- encourages talented individuals to use their skills in different ways;
- flexible – can deal with short-term appointments;
- broadens the appeal and profile of the Council.

**Negatives**

- can mean only a clique get invited;
- may invite on someone who is destructive to processes;
- can mean people are persuaded to serve unwillingly.
The following is an attempt to suggest some general models. Variations with these exist, and it is possible to put together your own model drawing on bits from each of these.

**Home-Group Based Model (Traditional)**

There is a single group: the Student Council. It is composed of a set number of students drawn from each class, home group or roll group. Usually the class votes annually for representatives (often two, so that a girl and a boy are elected; often also appointing representatives and deputy representatives). Sometimes there are discussions within the class group about the characteristics of good representatives.

The Council then meets regularly (fortnightly, monthly) as one team, makes decisions, usually appoints an Executive (a smaller group drawn from the whole body, which meets in between main meetings to put decisions into action), and organises activities. If there are student representatives on the School Council, they are drawn from the Student Council.

**Positives**

- All classes are represented;
- There is a direct link between representatives and school units, and this facilitates voting/reporting back;
- The structure can encourage home group meetings, discussion and decision-making;
- There are usually regularly timetabled opportunities for discussion with the student body without having to negotiate with individual teachers and classes;
- The majority of staff are more likely to be aware that the Student Council exists and that it is doing something.

**Negatives:**

- As soon as school gets beyond about 400 students, appointing a Council in this way creates a large body, which has difficulty meeting and working together;
- Some classes might not want to have representatives;
- Classes or home groups may not be the natural or best basis for appointment – they may not be focused on students' acting on issues;
- Relatively small numbers of students involved – can lead to elitism and separation from the general student body;
- Can easily lead to a popularity contest within the home-room, or a 'dobbled-in' job for the least popular student to an ineffective body.

**Sub-School Model**

The structure is based in separate sub-school Councils (sub-schools might be 'vertical units' or year-levels or a junior-middle-senior breakdown and the Councils follow this structure eg a Junior School Student Council, or a 'Red Unit Student Council'). There may be a single overall Coordinating Council that links discussion and action between the Councils. A set number of students are drawn from each sub-school (eg a whole year level votes for a group of student representatives from that year). The sub-school Councils meet to discuss issues relevant to that sub-school; they might also occasionally meet as a whole school Council, or a smaller number of representatives from each sub-school form the Coordinating Student Council.

Similar processes of appointing an Executive and student representatives to School Council occur as for the first model.

**Positives**

- All areas of the school are represented;
- Student numbers in each group are smaller and hence meeting processes are easier;
- More students can be involved at different levels;
- Links exist to reporting back (eg at assemblies);
- Senior Student Council members can play important mentoring roles with other students and groups.

**Negatives:**

- Appointment and reporting back can be more distant from students (eg 300 students at a year level voting for students they don’t know);
- Still relatively small numbers of students involved;
- More open to popularity contests and to appointment of only advantaged, literate, competent students;
- Where sub-schools are 'horizontal', can isolate junior students from opportunities to learn from senior students.

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Working Groups Model

A multiplicity of groups are formed by and from the Student Council to create a larger 'Student Forum' structure. Students are drawn from home or class groups or sub-school groups as above, but nominate for and are appointed to specific positions or portfolios. Thus a range of bodies is created by students according to need eg an Activities group, a Canteen group, a Curriculum group, a Fundraising group and so on. All year levels may be represented on these groups, or some may concentrate within some year levels. The working groups may be continuing committees or short-term groups; they may also change from time to time. Working groups may also involve or co-opt other students for expertise and interest.

A coordinating group or Executive also exists, and is simply one of many examples of student participation. The Student Forum (whole structure) may meet alternately in whole session and in working groups.

School Council representatives may be elected directly by the whole student body, may be a specific portfolio within the Student Forum, or may be drawn from the Executive.

Positives:
- Larger numbers of students can be involved;
- The student structure can reflect broader school structures;
- Can spread out the Council over a range of activities and not get bogged down in one type of activity such as social activities or fund-raising;
- It can involve a range of support teachers who work already in these areas;
- It formalises existing activity groups within the school (social service, canteen, sports etc).

Negatives:
- It can be time intensive for students and teachers, particularly in providing support for a range of groups;
- Sub-groups can lose sight of the 'big picture' and their potential place in it;
- Only some students get to make the 'big decisions' of overall coordination and advocacy;
- Can make on-going or long-term projects more difficult to sustain.

As students, we often feel that what we have to say is ignored. I've just finished Year 12, and I fought to be heard all the way through school. The fact of the matter is that everyone feels ignored if you speak alone. The trick is to work together, find other students with like views, convince a staff member to agree - together is where a difference is made. It should never be that a student fights so hard for their voice to be heard that they lose the support of staff. As students fighting for our voices to be heard, my friends and I learnt that you have to work with, ad accept help from, as many sources as possible. The trick is always to stay in charge and keep your goals in mind. Students can achieve anything: the proof is all around us. Student voice means active students, students in charge of their lives, students being heard. It doesn't mean students alone!

Beth Atkinson, ex-SRC student, Sale College, Vic

Interest Group Model

This has similarities to the previous model, but the areas of interest and activity already exist within the school. Instead of using home or class groups or sub-schools as the basis for appointing students, existing involvement areas (where students volunteer for participation) each appoint a representative to form a Student Council. Student representatives to the School Council are appointed by a separate process (eg directly elected from the whole student body).

Again, the existing interest groups continue to meet, alternating with Student Council meetings. Where necessary, larger forums may be held to involve larger numbers directly in big decisions.

Positives:
- It recognises natural action-based structures in the school, and increases student decision-making over directions of these groups;
- It is more likely to lead to student participation in action rather than talk;
- Larger numbers can be involved in the whole structure;
- Can involve a range of staff in supporting areas that they're already involved with.

Negatives:
- Bypasses possibilities for curriculum linkages;
- Can be resource intensive for support;
- Can isolate students who aren't already involved in some activity;
- Groups may concentrate on their own areas (possibly competing for resources) without awareness or attention to larger pictures;
- Can focus on short-term, limited goals rather than on-going needs.
Multi-Level Model

A broader student structure is defined, involving an occasional student Forum (e.g., once a term) - a large body which sets up other structures, hears reports, makes big decisions (like an AGM); sub-school groups and/or working groups are appointed around set tasks (short-term or continuing) and meet regularly as the 'engine room' of the Council; a formal Student Council consisting of representatives from these sub-groups meets frequently to coordinate groups and allocate work. The powers and responsibilities of each group are defined in the Council's constitution.

School Council representatives can be elected separately (and co-opted into this structure), appointed at the Forum meetings, or drawn from the Student Council.

Positives:
- Can involve relatively large numbers of students;
- Can link to existing school curriculum and other structures;
- Can enable students to target action levels for their involvement;
- If some areas break down, other parts of the structure can continue.

Negatives:
- Can be expensive on staff and student time resources;
- Can have some occasional large meetings with attendant difficulties;
- Can become a complex structure that confuses people.

These are just some possible ways of building a Student Council. I think they could apply to both primary and secondary schools - with variations. The best Councils look at the range of options and put together a structure that suits the size, conditions and needs of their school. Connect would be interested to hear of different ways that schools organise their Student Councils, how they work, and how effective they are.

Roger Holdsworth

with advice and comment from Charles Kingston, Cathey Dragasia, Paul Tresidder

Primary Student Representative Council

Leadership in the Classroom
Classroom meetings every other week

Kindergarten Year 1 Year 2 Year 3 Year 4 Year 5 Year 6

S R C
Elect 2 elected reps from each class
2 additional year 6 reps for each class K-2

Elected reps liaise with school decision making bodies

Regular classroom meetings allow all students in the school to be involved in a process of "leadership in the classroom," The SRC provides the channel through which ideas and issues raised in the classroom are passed to the decision making bodies in the school. A two-way communication process is an integral part of this program.

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Berwick Secondary College Student Voice

Forums are the formal meetings of Student Voice, whilst studios are the informal gatherings... Leaders will need to attend one compulsory forum per fortnight. He other week will be an optional negotiated studio (a suitable time to run committee meetings) and a compulsory extended studio... The monthly meeting schedule therefore is – forum, negotiated studio, forum, extended studio... (Student Voice Constitution)

Forum

Forums are the formal meetings. Student Voice Forums will be the formal platform for ideas and issues to be discussed before being taken on by leaders. Forums are compulsory for all Student Voice leaders and the correct process must be followed if a leader is unable to attend a Forum.

Studies

Studies are informal meetings. Student Voice Studios will be the platform where leaders implement their ideas and work to make things happen.

Extended Studios are held after school, once a month. They are compulsory for all Student Voice leaders and productive use of the time is essential. Once the roll is called, and attendance and absences recorded, each leader works alone or in a team (depending on the project on hand). The coordinator is available for guidance and assistance nearby.

Negotiated Studio weeks are held once a month. Student Voice leaders can determine which classes to miss (up to two periods) and arrange to have those sessions off to work on Student Voice projects. Negotiated Studios are encouraged, but not compulsory. Committee Officers may choose to hold committee meetings during those weeks.

Effective Studios require initiative by all leaders, taking on a project and working through the stages to ensure it is successful... The types of activities to be done during a Studio include: making phone calls, designing posters, putting up posters around the school, speaking to administration and staff and the student body, preparing a speech for Year Level Assembly, writing Action Plans, creating a hand-out, counting money etc.

Gladstone Park Secondary College

The social dynamic of the school is very important in deciding about what structures to institute:

In a large school, where most students say a lot but don’t get involved much, with a core group (as there usually is) pushing forward, the Multi-Level model works well.

The Working Groups model would work for schools with strong support from different corners for each different group. This would translate into a strongly supported SRC with lots of people pitching in.

The Sub-School model works where all Year levels are actively involved. Otherwise I personally think it’s better to keep the groups together so that those involved can still carry it forward effectively with enough support from their peers in other year levels.

The home groups model and the multi-level one can be integrated (like Gladstone Park Secondary College is doing). They now elect one representative per class to a Forum and then the Forum elects the SRC. That group then takes on portfolio positions (in theory). A bit of a combination.

In general I see the home groups model (traditional - as you said), working in schools with a strong student leadership tradition. The danger with such SRCS, I guess, is that if the school administration is all that keeps it going, then it could very easily become a token body.

Paul Tresidder

ex-SRC President, Gladstone Park Secondary College, Vic
STUDENT COUNCIL STRUCTURES AND PRACTICE

Some Positive Thoughts

"The world would be a much better place if when people were born they were tickled instead of spanked."

In brief:

- Think positive. Think lateral. Think possible. Most of all, think common sense.
- A Holistic Approach to Representation and Leadership in Your School
- Your constitution - What's it worth?
- Timing is All
- Flexibility, Flexibility, Flexibility

So what's it all mean?

Think positive. Think lateral. Think possible.
Most of all, think common sense.

Developing and sustaining a 'you beaut' student council, student government, student leadership team (or whatever your school prefers to call its representative organisations) is no piece of cake. It takes time. It takes guts. It takes creative thinking.

What structure or project committee worked one year may not work as well - or at all? - the next. What suits one segment of the student body perfectly may exclude or offend another in unexpected ways. What you mean by what you label your projects and desired outcomes may not be what others understand them to be.

When it all boils down to what education, schools and life in a democracy is all about however, it's very much worth doing. Your personal satisfaction, your student leadership group’s achievements and your school’s success as an educational institution are intertwined. Unravelling these completely - or allowing them to get all tied up in unnecessary knots - serves no purpose.

Be positive in your approach to structures that already exist. Be ecstatic if they already operate well. Think laterally about alternative ways of dealing with them if they don’t. Consider that anything (well, almost) is possible if common sense to common goals and problems is used. If structures don’t exist, well, repeat all of these, create them and get on with it.

"Some men see things as they are and say why.
I dream things that never were and I ask, 'Why not?'
George Bernard Shaw

A Holistic Approach to Representation and Leadership In School

"Do not swat a fly upon your friend's head with a hatchet."
- old Zen saying

Ideally, a truly representative and effective student council brings together students, staff and parents, is a catalyst for a whole range of important activities and curriculum and community-oriented projects and is perceived as the most important student leadership group in the school.

In practice, in Australian schools, currently, there is a gigantic variation from state to state, district to district and school to school in how well student councils achieve this ideal. A student council (etc.) is not the only vehicle for representation and leadership in most schools. This is fine. School Captain or Prefect systems, leadership teams, peer support groups, peer tutoring programs, schools in parliament, mock trials, debating teams, sporting teams, special interest clubs, class parliaments, school councils, youth councils, young achiever business groups, history and civics projects within timetabled classes, the syllabus of most subjects... the list goes on.

What your student council structure should reflect is the natural linkages between all of these. Your SRC need not 'take them over' or 'subvert' them to work with them. Equally, people committed to those groups (sometimes it's the dedicated staff member more than the students involved who is reluctant) need the same holistic approach. Keep it simple if need be. But create a structure which is inclusive, not exclusive. One which links all groups to the good of all. You all are, after all, part of the same school and community.

And frame it in a constitution. Reviewed annually.

"Do not go where the path may lead.
Go where there is no path, and make a trail."
Dan Essig
Your constitution – What’s it worth?

Everything. And nothing.
As the flea (bag?) story goes:
"It’s all in the way you look at it. A flea is delighted to learn that his children are going to the dogs."

To lowlight many worst case scenarios encountered, far more than once over many years, consider this:

"The world does not owe you a living.
You owe the world something. You owe it your time and energy and your talents, so that no-one will be at war, or in poverty, or sick or lonely again."
- a juvenile court judge

- the Student Council has constitutionally elected representatives of each year in the school;
- follows a student body and staff (in class time too) supported period of well-publicised nominations, information exchanges and elections that use standard national electoral commission practices and materials adapted to the school situation;
- elections and the first formal Student Council meeting are witnessed by local community council members;
- new members and all new students to the school are given a special welcome lunch by the Student Council... Moreover, new Year 7 students who were active in their primary school’s leadership programs are personally given encouragement and opportunity to stay motivated and contribute at high school level;
- additional positions are created and filled to reflect other leadership and interest groups within the school;
- non-elected volunteers for projects or special assistance are regularly sought (eg "Hey, anyone know anyone who can program this computer to keep our accounts?");
- if such exist, Captains/VCs and/or reps of a larger Prefect system are first and foremost ex-officio and active members of the Student Council. (It is taken for granted that having been on the Student Council at some time is one of the requirements to be selected.) If this system no longer exists, the Student Council President fills that school/community role;
- Elected Student Council representatives from each year volunteer and go through a student endorsed selection process for key staff/student/parent committees in the school, for School Councils where they exist and for any very special school projects that come up in particular years;
- Principal, other staff, parent representatives, and education department officials from outside the school regularly meet with, call on the Council as a whole or its available representatives and respond to written communication directly to the Student Council;
- a mini-team of staff advisers includes well-trained and committed senior students. Such are given time considerations or other assistance to make their jobs worthy of their challenges;
- all students in the school receive recognition on their reports for their contribution to activities;
- ... And, to add pride to this tribute to common sense, recording all the while (in chorus with their teachers and the media) that their involvement in student activities is "the single most significant school experience" leading them to success and satisfaction in their future college, employment and life careers... Don’t take our word for it. Write and ask for the survey results which proved it.

"Take good care of your future because that’s where you’re going to spend the rest of your life.”
Timing is All

“How can people feel so superior
that they can cage time in a clock?”

When you start: Insist and persist in having a decently run workshop (of more than a day) to examine structures and practices from the past and from other schools locally, in your state and in other parts of the world. (Invite people who’ve done something positive in this area to help you.) Begin creating a Student Council constitution which seems to fit your current needs. Aim to have it examined by the whole school community before holding a referendum to approve it.

“The best way to get something done is to begin.”

Every few years or so: Review how your various student leadership and school structures are doing. Make sure your Student Council constitution reflects current practice. And current community expectations. If not, rewrite it. Even for the practice.

“The trouble with doing something right the first time is
that nobody appreciates how difficult it was.”

Annually: Renew your acquaintance with your constitution and the structures and projects you have actually done the year before. Help new significant others to understand it and question the relevance of these this year. Publicise to student body and staff and parent bodies. Work through English, Personal Development, Civics and Citizenship classes (where they exist) seeking wider understanding and feedback on possible changes.

“Become the one you dream you can be.”

Each term: Talk about the progress of any Executive, regular Forum, Committee or ongoing Special Project group. If felt needed, ask for a brief report which reflects on whether the structure of that group is working well or needs some fine tuning.

“I want to be what I was
when I wanted to be what I am.”
-graffito

Each meeting: Review your established meeting procedures as needed. If necessary, decide to hold a special workshop on parliamentary procedure and other good meeting practice to improve a situation which needs help.

“Paul’s Law:
You can’t fall off the floor.”

Each project activity evaluation: In addition to a balance sheet of costs and expenditures and a list of goals set and outcomes achieved, make sure each project subcommittee comments on the structure of their mini-organisation after the project is finished. Or, if it’s a long-term project, at regular intervals. Done regularly (set ‘homework’ for other classes is meant to be done regularly, right?) the comment (like your subject daily homework, right?) should be brief - ie “This committee structure and the people in it worked well. We achieved our goal.”

“Everyone has their own song to sing.”

Each leadership skills workshop: First of all, have them. If your Student Council is not teaching your Student Council curriculum in an organised way, it and the school is not doing its job. Separate workshops, camps, forums, classroom discussion will naturally focus on one thing or another, but assure that each one includes some recognition of your structure and purpose -as formally outlined in your constitution. That is the foundation upon which all your good student council work not only happens successfully, but is recognised and maintained that way even after you and your advisers have departed.

“I live in a very small house
but my windows look out on a very big world.”

Flexibility, Flexibility, Flexibility

- If something works, don’t fix it.
- If something isn’t working, check to see if you’ve turned the switch on.
- If it still doesn’t work, find a student and an adviser (at least one of each but, preferably, as many as it takes) who know how to operate it.
- If it still don’t work, throw it out and create a new one.

“Not to dream more boldly may turn out to be, in view of present realities, simply irresponsible.”

Thus, your student representative group builds a better tomorrow.

Charles Kingston, PASTA, Bathurst, NSW

February-April 2002
BOB GOES TO CAMP!

Thursday 7th February 2002: Day 1
Early on Thursday morning, 23 eager Student Voice leaders attended the 4th Annual Student Voice Camp. After fights over who would sleep on the top bunks, the first activity started: getting to know people. Remembering names was the hardest part of these activities. Then it was straight in to the mind-boggling session on 'How the Student Voice works'. Lunch was very welcome, especially after the very challenging morning session.

Next we spent time learning about ourselves. For half an hour we drew pictures (or should I say tried to draw) and wrote about our past and what we hoped for the future. Every now and then laughs could be heard around the campsite as a result of the pictures drawn. Swimming in the pool was a highlight; that was until we had to get out! In a rush to get executive applications in on time, some were being written through dinner. "As you know Executive applications are due in 20 minutes." Shhhhhhh.

Survivor included activities that created a lot of excitement. One was working out how to get the balloons into the bucket. One group put water into the balloons. The only problems were that they popped easier and you weren't allowed to blow the balloons up until your turn. Next, we were faced with the dilemma of whether or not to eat the food in the eating contest. This could have included eating things like prunes, lemons, coconut rice crackers or rice bubbles. The final activity was to tie lifesavers to string individually. After a very eventful day, it was time to relax and try to get some sleep.

Friday 8th February 2002: Day 2
Following very little sleep the night before, we began the day by having a very interesting conversation about camp food. Both sides were supported although the majority were against the food. Afterwards was learning about the qualities of Bob's backpack: like a rope, a calendar, a diary, a box of cereal and a pen.

Next was the executive election, which was one of the most serious parts of the whole camp. Tension was well and truly hanging over all the nominees, although this did not stop everyone continuing to have a great time. Just before our guest speaker, we learnt about goal setting, which is very important, for an organization like the Student Voice. Our guest speaker Roger Holdsworth taught us that we need to represent the students in what they want to happen and in decision-making.

Lunch was followed by the executive position announcements. There were relieved, upset and surprised looks on some faces when the executives were announced. The executive positions are: President, Executive Officer, Administrative Officer, Finance Officer, Fundraising Officer, Social Events Officer, Public Relations, and Committee Officers.

Tired and thoughtful faces were found around the Focus groups after a long and tiring walk to the Emerald Lake. During this session, the planning of the year's events began. Finally, after the suspense from the whole camp, everyone found out who Bob is. Bob is someone at school who doesn't know who the Student Voice are, let alone what they do. One of the main aims of the Student Voice and part of the job of the Public Relations Officers is to represent the students and report back to them in different ways so that through us they have a voice. We already began to represent the students when a teacher asked us for ideas as to how to improve the litter in the school grounds.

The treasure hunt was the highlight of that day. "I found it, was a popular comment, as we raced around trying to solve the cryptic clues and piece the puzzle together. After a video, we finished the day and went to bed to rest up before one last day of camp.

Saturday 9th February 2002: Day 3
Our First 2002 Student Voice Forum kicked off the day. Everyone was trying to get the hang of the meeting procedure, but besides that, it was a big success. Then we learnt some very valuable information on Time and Stress Management before putting ourselves in Sadie or Celia's shoes to help them solve their problems. There were some funny public speaking talks on shoelaces, school buses, pictures of school buses that had been drawn and dogs and their names - practising the rules of public speaking.

The last activity of the day was to write a letter to ourselves about our personal aims and goals - what we want to achieve as Student Voice leaders. Our letters will be sent to us later in the year. Finally we took a group photo before heading home. Thanks to all the teachers that came and Ms Dragas for organising it.

Janelle Kenny, Year 8, PR Officer
School, district and state SRC networks in NSW provided further opportunities for students to voice their opinions and ideas, develop student welfare projects, discuss students' rights and responsibilities, and promote student participation in the life of the school. As a result, SRCs assisted in the provision of a safe, secure environment and a sense of pride for students.

In 2001 many students in primary and secondary schools had the opportunity, through the school SRC, to encourage equity, fairness and participation in school decision making and to liaise with school and community groups. Primary and secondary schools reported that they were offering a greater variety of leadership opportunities and programs to students.

In 2001 the Department of Education and Training (DET) aimed to strengthen student participation in all levels of decision making within public education, including schools.

The NSW Student Representative Council (NSW SRC) consisted of 22 student leaders, 20 of whom were elected by their peers at district SRC forums. The NSW SRC met five times and, following each meeting, a report was provided to each district SRC for discussion. The report was also sent to each secondary SRC. Members of the NSW SRC undertook liaison roles with the Premier's Youth Advisory Council, the Youth Reference Group of the Commission for Children and Young People and the NSW Youth Ombudsman.

The Minister for Education met three times with this group to discuss issues of importance to students. These included school uniforms, the Teach Your Children Well media campaign and the importance of volunteering. He also launched the departmental resource Just Like Us, which evolved from the State SRC Conference. Copies of this resource were sent to every secondary school SRC for their use in encouraging participation by students who have a disability.

The NSW SRC collaborated with Volunteering NSW in the development of Volunteers Day Off, a unique initiative where students organised events to acknowledge the work of volunteers in their schools. This activity formed part of the Department's contribution to the International Year of the Volunteer. The NSW SRC was successful in addressing its group goals which included the importance of promoting public education and strengthening links between primary and secondary school SRCs.

The 2001 State SRC Conference Working Party consisted of 20 student leaders who were elected by their district SRC peers. This group, with support from student welfare staff, planned and conducted the 2001 State SRC Conference which had the theme of School Spirit – Building Pride.

Dr Alan Laughlin, Deputy Director – General (Schools) and Ms Jan McLelland, Deputy Director – General (Corporate Services) addressed the 130 students from across the state and were warmly received. Mr John Gore, the Chief Education Officer, Human Society and Its Environment spoke specifically of the links between SRCs and Civics and Citizenship Education. He encouraged the students to understand the capacity of the school SRC as a practical forum for learning about democracy. He suggested that they discuss with their principals, ways in which the school SRC could be more dynamic in working with staff and students to build effective student participation in decision making. The student forum at the conference passed recommendations on priority issues to form the basis of action in 2002. These included:

- improved use of electronic communication for student leaders so that good ideas can be shared, and school leaders have a network of support;
- Strengthening links established with the Board of Studies to reinforce the inclusion of student leadership skills within syllabuses, especially in Human Society and Its Environment;
- Increasing links between primary and secondary SRCs to strengthen the continuity of student leadership in the middle years of schooling.

The participants returned to their own districts to develop activities or conferences for their own school SRCs using workshops modelled at the conference. By the end of Term 4, 37 district SRCs had conducted follow up activities.
A specific student leadership strategy for Aboriginal students included the selection of two Aboriginal students from expressions of interest for the NSW SRC and the attendance of 10 Aboriginal students at the State SRC Conference as part of the Student Leadership is for Koori Kids (SLIKK) program. This program was developed in Clarence/Coffs Harbour district. As a result of an increased focus on Aboriginal student leadership, more Aboriginal students are developing the confidence and support to participate in broader opportunities such as school captains, district leadership roles and nomination for state groups such as the Premier’s Youth Advisory Council.

The Department led the way in the Australian Education sector in promoting student leadership in primary schools by the introduction of a Student leadership framework for primary schools. The framework was launched by the Minister and distributed to all government primary schools. The framework links student leadership structures with skills development within the curriculum and is intended to assist schools to strengthen leadership training and opportunities for all students.

The Department also aims to broaden its support for student leadership and Student Representative Councils (SRCs) through identifying the professional support needs of student advisers in schools as the basis for enhanced training.

A needs assessment was conducted in collaboration with the Professional Association of SRC Teacher Advisers (PASTA). The results indicate that SRC teacher advisers value district networks as a source of professional support. Strategies will be developed in 2002 to assist student welfare consultants to provide strengthened support through these networks.

The 2002 NSW SRC has already begun to extend these gains from last year, and the 2002 State SRC Conference Working Party is about to commence planning for this year’s event.

Rod Batkin and Stuart Heame

State Student Networks: Victoria

VSSN: the Victorian Secondary Student Network

Since December and with the start of the new year, the Victorian Secondary Student Network (VSSN) has continued to move forward and develop its identity and structure.

Members of the State Executive have continued to meet throughout the holidays, thanks to the Office for Youth, ensuring that the ball keeps on rolling.

Some of the projects which the State Executive are now concentrating on include:

Constitution: A draft of the constitution has nearly been completed, with the final touches regarding the structure still being written in. The Constitution will be presented to the next State Conference, where it will be voted upon by students from across the state.

Publicity: An information kit about the VSSN is being put together at the present time by the State Executive, and this will go out to all schools, media and councils before the 2002 Conference. The package is set to include information about the history of the VSSN and how it was formed, what events are currently happening and how people can get involved. The VSSN Website has also been developed within the Office for Youth Domain at http://www.youth.vic.gov.au/youth/vssn

State Conference 2002: A group of students is looking into details for the next state conference, such as its location, number of students and what will be discussed. It is expected that the next conference will be a constitutional convention where our constitution will be passed.

Regions

Regions around the State have also been organising meetings in their areas. Some of the things that have been happening include:

Northern Metropolitan: Northern Region is continuing to meet, and is currently working on their structure and the problems that they wish to tackle.

Western Metropolitan: Western Metropolitan Region has been working with their Youth Liaison Officer (YLO) at the Office for Youth to develop a structure and get things rolling in their region. Numerous meetings have been held in Western with plans for more in the near future.

Barwon South West: BSW is currently looking to establish itself after a slow start.

People interested in working at each of the regions should get in contact with the VSSN (below).

If you would like more information about the VSSN, or are interested in becoming involved with this initiative, please contact Phil Harrold at the Office for Youth via e-mail:

harrold.phil.p@edumail.vic.gov.au

Dale Mills
for the VSSN State Executive
Protecting Our Freedom & Democracy

BY JEAN ANN HUNT
National-Louis University

In light of the past couple of months, our work to create and nurture democratic ways of living in schools is even more urgent. On September 11th, most of us felt like we had lost our footing. The events of that day are permanently etched in our collective psyches, causing pain, fear, remorse, confusion and suspicion. The blanket of illusion that had been protecting us from our own foreign policies was torn down and now, for a moment in time, the average US citizen had to face what many others around the world face daily - perhaps even as a result of US policies and actions. Does this mean that the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were excusable - absolutely not. Does this mean we have the right to attack others without seeking alternative methods of achieving justice - of course not. Without an examination of our own complicity or culpability in these events, democracy becomes swept under the rug. But, as a nation, we aren't talking about that. Pick up a newspaper on any given day and look for what you won't find - history lessons before September 11th, coverage of why behind the attacks in New York and Washington DC and, perhaps most importantly, alternatives to dropping bombs and biscuits on an already war torn country. And being told to hug our children, go shopping and get back to normal isn't going to protect our democracy or freedom.

Schools that are organised to practise the habits of democratic life are already doing these things. Students are talking about what it means to say the Pledge of Allegiance and why someone might not want to take part in that activity. They are examining the front pages of newspapers and deconstructing the visual images presented there, making flags and conversing about what that symbol means, and reaching to suspend their personal beliefs and experiences long enough to allow new information to move through them with the possibility that it may change them.

What does protect our democracy is to teach our children the habits of democratic life and to practise these habits ourselves. In the current climate, this means we have to work harder at transforming all of our schools into places that engage our students in dialogue and deliberation. We must create environments that value each voice and foster deep understandings of the role of dissent in a democracy. As with any current or past event, we have to give our students opportunities to write letters expressing their beliefs, study the history of Afghanistan and Islam, and participate in meaningful discussions which delve into the complexities of September 11th. Our students deserve this. It is our job to go beyond flag waving, "united we stand" and "we're the greatest nation in the world" activities.

Teachers in these schools are constantly talking about what to do next, how to respond to the daily news, how to teach issues of civil rights, how to seek out alternative news sources and what all this means for the curriculum. They struggle with disagreements and collectively work towards the common good.

Our children and young adults have the right to question what anyone, including us, would have them accept as truth, to learn how to struggle with hard issues and to practise making decisions using a democratic process. They have the right to learn how to keep democracy alive, and we have a responsibility to teach them.
THE CULTURE OF PEACE:
A Local Community Project

World peace is an issue facing us all - and it's a particularly stark reality given recent world events. It was therefore timely that, last year, peace education activities were introduced across sixteen primary and secondary school settings in the City of Casey local area.

The Culture of Peace Project was being undertaken by the three 7-10 campuses of Eumemmerring College and thirteen of the feeder Primary schools: Hallam, Thomas Mitchell, Southern Cross, Mosaic Park, St Paul Apostle North, Oatlands, Narre Warren North, Hallam Valley, Narre Warren Station, Chalcot Lodge, Maramba, Foutain Gate and James Cook. This project, which was inspired by the UNESCO 'Culture of Peace' initiative, and which received recognition and funding from UNESCO's Associated Schools Project, emphasised students' ideas, feelings and wishes for world peace. The intention of the project was to reflect the combined efforts of approximately 4000 students, 30-40 primary teachers and approximately 80 secondary teachers.

The proposal for this project was a collective response to develop meaningful curriculum links involving all facets of the college community. It arose out of discussions at a meeting of the transition coordinators of the three junior campuses of Eumemmerring College. Eumemmerring College is a multi-campus school in Melbourne, with three junior campuses (Endeavour Hills, Fountain Gate and Glenelgs) and a senior campus at Hallam. Many in the college have worked on individual campus initiatives with our primary school community. The proposal was to develop a college-wide transition curriculum project with our feeder primary schools focusing on middle years of schooling initiatives. The three transition coordinators strongly believed that such a college wide project:

- would provide an opportunity to link curriculum initiatives across years 5 to 9 using a common theme in the local school community; and
- could be used as an avenue to publicly highlight the excellence of programs within the local school community - a highly valuable transition activity.

Choosing an appropriate and relevant theme was important. Based on the success of a pilot project run by the Glenelgs campus and two of the feeder primary schools (Southern Cross and Thomas Mitchell) on the UNESCO theme of 'PEACE' in Term 4 of the year 2000, it was decided to continue to explore the theme of a 'Culture of Peace' but on a larger scale. Through Glenelgs' link with UNESCO's Associated Schools Project, we found out that the year 2001 was declared by UNESCO as the year for 'Dialogue among Nations' and the beginning of the decade for the 'Culture of Peace: Non-violence for Children of the World'.

The project proposal, when put to the Principals Team of Eumemmerring College, won their approval and promise of financial support (based on an estimated budget submitted).

Our application for a UNESCO Associated Schools Project grant during the latter stage of the project was also successful and contributed towards the production of three videotapes: a 9-minute promo (which was screened at the launch), one showcasing the activities at the schools and the celebration evening for UNESCO to use in other schools, and a longer one for each of the individual schools.

Getting the feeder primary schools involved in the project was not too difficult as links had already been established and maintained over the years. At the initial meeting of representatives from all schools involved, the project idea was enthusiastically received by all, though there was a bit of apprehension on the part of some - particularly in terms of how to present it to the staff, and what sort of activities they could undertake. Concerns were raised that teachers may see it as an add-on to their workload and curriculum. The shared experiences of the Glenelgs, Southern Cross and Thomas Mitchell teachers proved very valuable in this instance, and everyone went away from the meeting confident that they would be able to enthuse other members of staff and get everyone on board. A steering committee, with representatives from both primary and secondary schools, was also formed to undertake the responsibilities of planning and organising the launch and celebration.

Both individually and collectively, secondary and primary staff and students were encouraged to develop within the framework of existing programs a 'PEACE' activity. These peace projects were conducted individually, in groups, classes or in joint consultation across year levels - even between secondary and primary cooperatively. The activities had an integrated focus or KLA focus and the outcomes of each activity were shared publicly in the community celebration.

Ideas for the activities were limitless. Many of the ideas were documented and suggested in the education resources available from the UNESCO Associated Schools Project booklet, centring around the themes:

- Peace of Mind;
- Peace in the Family;
- Peace at School;
- Peace in the Community, the Nation and the World;
- Culture of Peace - human rights, non-discrimination, prevention of violence, democracy, cultural rights, racism, tolerance, citizenship, etc;
- The History of Peace.

Using the booklet as our starting point, teachers and students proceeded to look for other useful resources. Before long, we had built up a wealth of resources that was

Connect 133-134:
shared by all participating schools. In our search for these resources, we also found out about peace activities that organisations in other parts of the world were undertaking. This resulted in links being established with some of these organisations to contribute to their efforts. The participating schools collectively developed opportunities for students to consider the many aspects of peace across all learning areas in the school curriculum.

The project culminated at three levels - classroom, school and community - which united to celebrate through displays, performances and a public launch. The program built lessons of peace across all subjects for the middle years students at Eumemmerring College and its feeder primary schools. The folding of paper cranes, and the signing of the United Nations Human Rights Manifesto were examples of a whole school approach adopted by several of the participating schools. At Glenelg, a class of students took on the responsibility of counting up the number of cranes folded by all members of the school community (amounting to over 1000 cranes) and had them posted to the Sadako Memorial in Japan and the United States.

Teaching students to think globally and act locally was also evident in the creation of peace pictures by students at the Glenelg campus. These pictures were our contribution to a worldwide effort to send pictures with messages of peace and friendship to children in war-torn Muslim countries. Students in several English classes also worked in groups to produce pieces of work for a global essay writing contest on peace.

The activities were designed to raise the awareness in the students of the rights and responsibilities in a free and democratic society and promote understanding, tolerance and celebration of cultural diversity. Developing the skills of conflict resolution in school, home, family and the world was intended as a positive outcome of this project that will be reflected at all levels. Students had the opportunity to negotiate with their teachers and have input into the activities they were engaged in. The activities completed were not only for a static display. The rich diversity of activities included dancing, performance of drama, music, building of items such as wind chimes, stress balls interspersed with artwork, peace quilts, poems, writings, stories, research projects, examination of Human Rights, and Powerpoint presentations. Students were actively encouraged to be creative with a view to proudly sharing and showcasing their achievements publicly.

On the evening of October 11th, 2001, the 'Culture of Peace Project', which involved a year of planning and activities in the participating schools, culminated in a community celebration and launch in 'The Shed' at the Glenelg campus of Eumemmerring College. Susan Pascoe, CEO of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, who also had involvement with UNESCO on an educational basis, was invited to be the key speaker at the launch. In attendance were several hundreds of students and parents along with teachers and local politicians. This date - International Refugee Day - had been chosen by the steering committee of the project for the celebration as there are students from refugee backgrounds in many of these schools, and approximately 70 nationalities are represented amongst the 4000 primary and secondary students involved in the project. Little did the organisers realise this chosen date would also be exactly one month from the shattering events of September 11th in Washington and New York. The significance of this was, of course, not lost on the students who had in many of their visual displays juxtaposed the themes of war and peace.

Teachers and students who were unable to attend the launch arrived in large numbers to view the Expo the following day. At the request of our local public libraries, many pieces of the students' work from the Expo were transported to their venues to be displayed for the local community to view.

As Susan Pascoe commented in the CEO's Column of the November 2001 issue of the VCE Bulletin: "the scale of this project was impressive and its chosen theme timely. It represented outstanding educational endeavour... This was integrated learning at its best - not only across KLAS but also across age groups and school sites."

The Hague Agenda for Peace and Justice for the 21st century states: A culture of peace will be achieved when citizens of the world understand global problems, have the skills to resolve conflicts and struggle for justice non-violently, live by international standards of human rights and equity, appreciate cultural diversity, and respect the Earth and each other.

Teachers in the participating schools will declare that not only are we in a position to promote this culture of peace and the benefits of diversity but indeed have the responsibility to assist our students to develop dispositions of tolerance, appreciation of differences, mutual respect and inclusiveness to prepare them for life and work in a very diverse and global community.

For more information, contact:

Eng Lee
Eumemmerring SC - Glenelg Campus
Reena Boulevard, Endeavour Hills 3802
CULTURAL AWARENESS FOR UNDERSTANDING
A COMMUNITY AND EDUCATIONAL PROJECT

The Australian College of Education, The Australian Principals Centre and the Rosenkranz Centre - Bialik College - in strategic alliance with a number and range of community groups and schools - have developed the project "Cultural Awareness in Schools."

For sometime we have been exploring within our work ways in which the program and environment we expose people to impacts on relationships, roles and responsibilities within the community.

Australia is a multicultural society. Our future in the third millennium will be enriched by our ability to accept personal responsibility for increasing cultural awareness and understanding.

The valuing of the unique qualities and contributions of each culture and religion through understanding, positive and mutual interconnectedness and participation will provide sound foundations for our future.

The Project: Cultural Awareness for Understanding - will have two strands:

Strand I Harmony through Understanding - a program for schools
Strand II Culture In Community - a program for the broader community

Harmony Through Understanding:
A Project for Schools

Expected outcomes are: to increase knowledge and understanding of different religions and cultures; to provide opportunities for students of diverse backgrounds to meet and work together in a safe and secure environment; to provide avenues to create a 'ripple' effect to extend the influence of the project to the wider community; to develop a curriculum unit frame with a guiding set of principles, resource lists, discussion topics, questions stems, etc.

Project Outline

Students from schools in all sectors will meet together to work in a variety of programs developed to achieve the above outcomes. Programs will also be designed to equip students with skills such as public speaking, conflict resolution, negotiation and marketing skills.

These programs will include:

- Workshops and discussion groups focussing on a study of different religions, cultures and myths, stereotypes and the power of the media to reinforce or dispel these myths.
- 'Hands-on' activities such as creating a tapestry or mosaic representing the students' diverse backgrounds. This will also provide informal opportunities for students to meet and work together.
- The development of a newsletter, posters and leaflets promoting the Harmony through Understanding concept. The commitment of each religious and cultural group to Australia and the cultural freedom within Australia will be emphasised.

Process

This project will be managed by Karin Morrison, in conjunction with a small education advisory group, together with representatives from participating schools.

Each school will be represented by groups of students and designated staff members. Procedures will put in place to provide students with the skills to assume roles of responsibility in their own schools with the aim that the project continues to have a positive influence in each school community and the capacity to create long-term changes.

This project will run in parallel with 'Cultural Awareness for Understanding', a broader community project. The co-ordinator of the schools program Karin Morrison, and the Co-ordinators of 'Cultural Awareness for Understanding' Pam Russell, President, Australian College of Education, (Victorian Chapter) and Nick Thornton (Executive Director, Australian Principals Centre) will form the Project Secretariat.

Participating Schools:

Bialik College, Christian Brothers College St Kilda, Doveton Secondary College, Eumemmering Secondary College - Glenaeages Campus, Flemington Primary School, Kew High School, King Khalid Islamic College, Mount Hira College, Mount Scopus College, Shepparton High School, Springvale South Primary School, St. Michael's Grammar School, Tyabb Primary School, Wesley College - Glen Waverley Campus, Warracoo Aboriginal College.

The first day of the project was conducted on February 20th, 2002 at the Veneto Club in Bulleen. One hundred and twenty students participated in a range of activities which encouraged them to understand and celebrate similarities and differences. Each student went home with a reflective journal which will be integral to all activities throughout the program.

Pam Russell <russell@mira.net>
PASTA NEWSLETTER
# 27 - March 2002

PASTA is the acronym of the Professional Association of Student Representative Council Teacher/Advisors. Founded in New South Wales, Australia, in February 1995, our Association exists to support in whatever ways possible those who work with and support programs of student participation, representation and leadership.

SEE OUR MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION AND APPLICATION FORM ON THE WEBSITE

PASS THE PASTA

The Year in Review:

For PASTA, 2001 has been one of ups and downs which could be expected when the events of the previous year were all consuming. Wrapping up the 1st International Student Representative Conference was a task in itself, culminating in the publication of the conference report. The Report is available now to all the supporting organisations and others interested in the details. [A financial report and a full list of conference participants is included, with highlights of the opening ceremony, what the US delegation wrote when they got home, comments from delegates and other participants, and Rey Reodica's report of the meeting of ISRC 2000 representatives with Deputy Permanent Ambassador to the United Nations, David Stuart, where recommendations from the ISRC 2000 Youth Forum were presented. What a learning experience!]

The Conference recommendations have been distributed widely in Australia, the US and Canada and are available as a resource for those interested in student leadership. While the events of September 11th at the World Trade Centre in New York changed short term plans, the steering committee still intends to take ISCR to the next Olympic Games in Athens in 2004.

The PASTA North American Tour to Providence High School, Charlotte, North Carolina in June-July 2001 for the 65th National Association of Student Councils Conference (NASC) was again an awesome experience for the Tour Coordinator Ken Page, three advisers and 20 students who attended. Now, for the purposes of NASC, the PASTA delegation is included in Region 7 - with California of course. The welcome is amazing, the hospitality second to none, with schools in New Jersey and Texas billeting our students. A detailed report of this PASTA project was produced and is available from Vice President Charles Kingston.

In the wake of September 11th, the PASTA committee realised the need to undertake an assessment of the situation in the United States and the risk of taking a delegation to the NASC conference in Virginia in 2002. Our advice is that parents of delegates will be asked to sign an indemnity releasing PASTA Inc. from any liability in the event of terrorist activity while residing and travelling in the US. In the US itself, PASTA is advised that security has been tightened at all major airports in the US and is generally better than before September 11th. No additional requirements have been placed upon US students traveling to the conference. The Professional Teachers Council of NSW is in general agreement with this assessment. In the end, however, it is the parents who decide whether or not their child will travel. The PASTA executive greatly appreciates the support and encouragement given by Rocco Marano, Director of Student Activities (NASSP), Mike Nolan from Bordentown Regional High School, New Jersey USA, and Gane Olsen former President of the Canadian Association of Student Activity Advisers in this matter.

Several meetings of PASTA and the NSW DET Welfare Unit personnel were held in September-October, out of which came a consensus that an assessment of the professional support and needs of SRC Teacher Advisers in NSW was needed to re-
focus training opportunities. A questionnaire was designed and distributed to selected teacher advisers and student welfare consultants, and a telephone poll of Principals, other adults and students with experience in SRC, was also conducted. The results of this needs assessment will be used to design and implement professional support workshops for Teacher Advisers and are available on request.

At a meeting of PASTA and the NSW DET Welfare Unit representatives on 7th December 2001, it was very clear that there was agreement on a wide range of matters. A structural difference in the method of approach to NSW schools was identified. NSW DET is concerned with implementation of policy from the top down; PASTA, on the other hand, is concerned with working from the grass roots on student initiatives. It was recognised that a communication gap could have developed and could be overcome by some joint projects. On Saturday March 16th, 2002, PASTA will be working together with the NSW DET Welfare Unit to offer some professional support to SRC Teacher/Advisers in New South Wales. This Professional Support day will be held at the Professional Teacher’s Council Conference Centre, Leichhardt. For more information please contact me directly: bowtech@ozemail.com.au or send a fax to Kogarah High: 02 9553 8316.

Last year PASTA members agreed that where a group of interested SRC Teacher Advisers met together they could form a local/district association which could affiliate with PASTA Inc. Australia. There could be one or 100 such groups in NSW or any other state, all of which would come under the PASTA national umbrella. Subsequently PASTA registered with the Australian Securities and Investment Commission as a National Association. One effect of this was to prevent State Associations using the name PASTA. The second effect was that any local, district or state associations would need to use the constitution of the national organisation and pay subscriptions to the national body. Are there other SRC Teacher Advisers in your area who would like to form a local association? A membership form is included in this section. Why not fill one out today?

Throughout the year, PASTA’s newsletter has been published in Connect, the magazine of supporting student participation. This magazine continues to be sent to financial members of the Association and is a valuable resource. PASTA wishes to thank Editor Roger Holdsworth for supporting PASTA and enabling the Association to promote activities and float some ideas - like this one: how often do your words create multiple understandings or misunderstandings? In 2001, PASTA wrote a vision statement at the request of the Professional Teachers Council of NSW. It was distributed as a flyer to many teachers. It created some reaction because teachers see Student Leadership (or SRC) as extra-curricular and significantly different from the ‘key curriculum areas’ of Mathematics or Science for example. PASTA’s purpose: to promote citizenship as a key curriculum area involving the whole student, lifelong learning and leadership, does not fit the usual understanding of the words ‘key curriculum area’. Perhaps we should be talking about Student Leadership Policy so that student leadership is embedded in every ‘key curriculum area’ in much the same way as other policies are embedded across the curriculum. What do you think?

The year finished with the 5th Annual General Meeting at the Professional Teachers Council on Saturday 9th February, 2002 and with the election of office bearers for the 2002-2003 year. There were no surprises here. This meeting was made more interesting with presentations by some ex-SRC students who have gone into business presenting Student Leadership activities for Secondary School Students.

Jeanne Bow
President, PASTA Inc.

FOR MEMBERSHIP AND SUPPORT DETAILS:
SEE THE PASTA WEBSITE
http://www.hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT THE FOLLOWING:
• PASTA Memberships and Professional Development Activities: bowtech@ozemail.com.au
• OVERSEAS TOURS (for advisers and students): suepage@ozemail.com.au
• CSC AWARDS (Community Service Certificate Program): RalphMurray@bigpond.com.au
• ISRC, International Linkages and Projects: asamson@wesley.usyd.edu.au
• Website and Independent/Systemic Schools: ckingston@interact.net.au

ABN 49 398 096 539
THE HOSTING EXPERIENCE:
A Canadian Viewpoint

In 2000 and 2001, we had the opportunity to visit Canada to take part in an eventful student leadership experience - an SYLC (Student Youth Leadership Camp). Organised by Gane Olsen, the then President of CASAA, it gave us an opportunity to experience a culture different to that we had already experienced in America in 1998 and 1999. A wonderful part of that experience was being able to live with a Canadian family. One of those families was the Nakatsui family. Below is an insight into that experience from the viewpoint of the host family.

From touring Europe at age six, to exploring Japan at sixteen, life has offered me a perspective on the world that ventures outside the borders of my home country. Therefore, as a family of travelers, the concept of inviting overseas visitors into our home came naturally, and the opportunity to host Australians was one we approached with great enthusiasm. After all, what better way to understand a country than to mingle with the locals?

Beyond tidying up the house, organizing bedrooms and popping out for a few groceries, preparation for the arrival of the Aussies was minimal. Upon their arrival, we worked at making them feel at home by chatting with them, giving them a brief tour of the house and neighbourhood and taking note of likes and dislikes. More than anything, the challenge of hosting is the organization of time. It’s a matter of balancing your day-to-day responsibilities with the excitement of two or three new family members.

The week that my family took in three Australians was a memorable one. Without language barriers or large age differences, the time the Aussies had in Edmonton was eventful but relaxed. Our time together was spent enjoying our similarities and relishing in (and learning from) our differences. We had some heart-stopping moments (my host brother teaching himself to do a back-flip on my trampoline), some educational moments (learning each other’s slang), some intriguing moments (coming home to 14 Aussies doing ‘the Pony’ in my backyard), and a lot of laughs. Come to think of it, the only occurrence that left a bad taste in my mouth, so to speak, was my first taste of Vegemite! To this day, I look at that week as only the beginning – the beginning of a network of friendships that would span the globe.

Although one rarely thinks of them at the time, the benefits of acting as a host-family are great. In the case of the Aussies, my family was given insight into a country and a culture that we had yet to experience first-hand. It provided a refreshing change from our daily routines and a pleasant reminder that Edmonton is a great place to call home.

Travel is about experiencing another culture, an alternate landscape and, although it is important to actively pursue these experiences, the solution is not always to abandon home. Sometimes, some of the greatest experiences will come to you.

Kim Nakatsui
Harry Ainlay HS, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

At the time, Kim was a grade 12 student with a history of involvement in Student Leadership. She spent her grade 12 year holding one of the Vice President positions on the Students’ Union and acting as the Student Chair for Ainlay High School’s annual volleyball tournament. December 2000 brought her to Sydney as a member of the Canadian delegation for ISRC. Currently, she finds herself back in Oz, exploring the country for six months, reconnecting with old friends along the way.

February-April 2002
THE INDISPENSABLE TIGER

A powerful old tiger, the leader of the pack, was preparing to go on a hunt. Gathering the other tigers about him, he said, "We must go out in the plains and hunt, for the winter is coming. You young fellows come with me; perhaps you will learn a thing or two."

The young tigers were pleased to hear this, for the old fellow had hitherto shown no interest in tiger development. He usually left them behind when he went hunting and they were tired of doing nothing but keeping order among the cubs and performing other routine tasks. The first day out, the old tiger spotted a herd of elephants.

"Here's your chance, Bernard," he said to one of the younger tigers. "Look at it as a challenge."

But Bernard had no idea how to go about hunting. With a roar he rushed at the elephants who just ran off in all directions.

"It looks as though I'll have to do the job myself," said the leader philosophically.

And so he did.

The next day, the tigers came upon a herd of water buffalo.

"Suppose you take over now, Jerome," said the old tiger.

Jerome, reluctant to ask silly questions but determined to do his best, crept up on the grazing buffalo. He leaped straight at the largest of them, but the big buffalo tossed him to the ground and Jerome was lucky to escape in one piece. Mortified, he crept back to the group.

"No, no, no, NO!" said the old tiger. "What's happening around here? Where is the performance I'm looking for?"

"But you never taught us how to do it!" cried one of the young tigers.

The old tiger was in no mood to listen.

"The rest of you stay where you are," he growled, "and I will do the job myself."

And so he did.

"I can see," said the old tiger as the others gathered admiringly about him, "that none of you is yet ready to take my place."

He sighed, "Much as I hate to say it, I seem to be indispensable."

Time brought little change. The old tiger sometimes took the younger ones along with him on hunts, and occasionally he let one of them try to make a kill. But having received no instruction, they were unequal to the task. And the old tiger still made no effort to teach the others his tricks! He had forgotten that he himself was a product of tiger-to-tiger coaching.

One day, when he had grown quite old, the tiger met a friend, a wise lion he had known for years. Before long, the tiger was launched on his favourite topic of conversation: the lack of initiative in the younger generation.

"Would you believe it?" he asked the lion. "Here I am getting a bit long in the tooth, and I still have to do all the hunting for my pack. There seems to be no one of my stripe around."

"That's odd," said the lion. "I find the younger lions in my pride take well to instruction. Some of them are carrying a good bit of responsibility. In fact," he continued, "I'm thinking about retiring completely next year and letting the younger fellows take over."

"I envy you," said the tiger. "I'd take things easier and relax myself, if only I had a little leadership material around me!"

The old tiger sighed and shook his head. "You can't imagine," he said, "what a burden it is to be indispensable!"

(To be continued in...)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

a. What does indispensable mean?
b. What did the tiger mean when he said, "What a burden it is to be indispensable"?
c. List the tigers in the story. How does each tiger relate to you as a person?
d. What did the lion tell the tiger?
e. Why did the lion seem to be the wiser of the two?
f. How does the whole story relate to people?

(As above story is taken from an article by the American Management Association.)
10 Tips on Running Successful School Dances

1. Hire a professional.
2. Once you have hired someone who knows music and teen dances in your area, you will realize that the music does not make the dance. People make the dance. The more people you have, the better dance you will have. Therefore, do what you can to advertise and promote your event.
3. When the professional arrives, treat them professionally. Since you have hired someone who is qualified, they will not make unreasonable demands of you, and you will not do likewise.
4. Know who is at your dance. If they are visitors to your school, have them produce a student card and sign in. Preferably, have the sign-ins accompanied by someone from your school, and remind students that they are responsible for their visitors.
5. Have very clear rules about acceptable behaviour. Make sure that everyone knows about them and that the rules are enforced.
6. Once people have entered the dance, they are not allowed to leave the area of the dance. Your parking lot can cause more problems than a poor DJ with a lousy sound system.
7. No matter what music you play, you can’t please everyone. The perfect dance would be a Walkman dance. The DJ would stand at the back and hand out the requests. This would guarantee that everyone heard what they wanted to hear when they wanted to hear it.
8. Have your dances on a Wednesday or Thursday night. The DJs are usually cheaper, and problems can be settled the next school day, rather than cooling off over the weekend.
9. Ask someone from your school’s administration to be present at the dance. This will provide you with some support, and it will give them an opportunity to see their students in a different environment.
10. Start and end on time. A good running time is two-and-a-half hours. Even the professionals have a tough time entertaining for four full hours.

What does membership of PASTA offer you?

- Positive support for SRC teacher advisers;
- Practical workshop ideas for use in schools;
- Regular seminars, workshops and conferences at an Association, State and National level at reduced registration rates;
- Regular newsletter and journals including annual subscription to Connect and optional access to NASC’s Leadership for Student Activities;
- Training and development within the SRC area;
- A support network for SRC advisers;
- Access to SRC networks;
- Special resources for students and teachers;
- Opportunities to be involved in discussions on the future of SRCs at all levels;
- Attendance at open meetings of PASTA which are held at the Joint Council Buildings, Corner Marion and Norton Streets, Leichhardt, NSW.

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

Mail subscriptions to:
PASTA Inc., c/- 12 Dyson Drive, Norah Head NSW 2263

February-April 2002
Student Leadership Skills
Workshop Example

Ideally, the leadership curriculum underpinning student representative councils and the like - for which citizenship and civics education can be one catalyst - is an active process. In addition to alternatively timetabled opportunities, it should occur also in many timetabled classrooms. Such activities - appropriately chosen, competently facilitated and regularly reinforced - can be ideal for both pupil/pupil relations and teacher/pupil relations as well as invaluable ways of supplementing the curriculum of many subjects.

Student leaders in organisations such as SRCs, project teams, peer support groups, young achiever groups and the like - as well as students within more traditionally timetabled class structures - should be encouraged to plan and submit reasonably detailed plans of topics that could be developed using workshop processes with their interest group or class. In addition to selection and preparation of a series of activities that can be used in a variety of situations, it is a good idea to also create whole workshop plans that incorporate such within a broader topic. Two, three or a small team of students can then present these, together with their advisers or teachers, as part of a larger workshop or on its own. With more experienced students, they can be challenged to organise and lead such on their own.

The PASTA (Australia) Overseas Tour Committee, together with the 2002 Student International Delegates on our 5th Annual Tour, have developed student based workshop outlines for presentation at the National Association of Student Councils (NASC) 66th Annual Conference in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Each workshop is limited to only one hour. The NASC has a standard workshop submission format. In our submissions, we have incorporated some standard workshop group activity features in all submissions.

The following topics have been approved for student presentation by NASC:

- "Encouraging school spirit by developing community based school projects"
- "Leading the way - student leadership skills to motivate and recreate your SRC"
- "Administration - How to run a dinky-di, true-blue SRC meeting (effectively)"
- "Encouraging school spirit through positive student teacher relationships"
- "Breaking Borders: Improving communication networks around the world"
- "Towards 2004 - ISRC Presents and Futures"

In the following example - workshop #2 on leadership skills - the student presenters aim to focus on developing awareness and practise the usefulness of those very activities suggested to be used, however briefly but appropriately, in the other topic workshops.
Title: "Leading the way - student leadership skills to motivate and recreate your SRC"

Student Presenters and School Information:
(as required by organising body)

Co-Presenters: Workshop volunteers

This workshop appropriate for: Both High School and Middle Level Schools

1. Where and when have you presented:
All students have already submitted extensive applications for this overseas tour and been accepted by our PASTA Executive as having sufficient background and experience in school, district and their respective states activities to conduct workshops at this level.

2. In 25 words or less provide a short description of your workshop as you would like it to appear in the conference program.
Problem-solving/decision-making/goal-setting/action-planning. Through workshops, in classrooms, on the job, student leaders develop, enthuse and act the leadership curriculum.

3. Workshop Outline and Objective (briefly give an outline and state purpose of workshop)
To empower students so they have the confidence and ability to use their student councils to take action and make a difference on issues in their community and beyond.

a. Increase participants' knowledge and skills in:
   - workshop techniques and methods of implementation of leadership training activities;
   - skills in effective problem solving and related goal-setting for SRC members;
   - assisting SRCs to develop effective action planning and evaluation of projects;

b. Enhance awareness of and appreciation for:
   - relevance of student leadership to all curriculum areas;
   - relevant skills for different purposes and times in the year;
   - possible and appropriate workshop formats for differing audiences and situations.

c. Emphasise through doing, the importance of a team approach to these and other activities. The potential for a highly motivated and positively assertive student leadership group to refreshingly infect the rest of the student body is enormous. But it takes skill as well as enthusiasm.

4. Presentation Techniques (specify activities that will be used to meet objectives: eg discussion, role-play, video, transparencies, handouts etc) If possible, provide copies of handouts with this application.

   a. "Opening Eyes and Ears: Getting To Know Ourselves and our Focus Activity #1"
   We share the process followed throughout of 'mirroring, monitoring and modelling' - ie this and all other activities are both to get to know and develop workshop participants as well as provide models of things that can be used in workshops for others at other times. The skills of doing this in joint 'student run/adviser assisting if needed' workshop and class situations are to be not only explained and practised by workshop presenters, but actively modelled by 'volunteered' participants. Other Australian workshops will refer to this model and apply it to the extent relevant for their particular workshop topic focus.

   b. Brainstorming: It is important for students to focus rapidly and creatively on particular ideas, issues or projects. Group brainstorming are also useful as it gives participants the opportunity to then further share these ideas with others. Quick focus brainstorm:

      * What do you think of when you hear the word: aardvark .. gnomes .. bananas .. etc?

      * What comes to your mind when you think of ... (eg America? Canada? Australia? ...)

   c. Modified Nominal Group Technique (NGT):
   The technique and the results related to the focus question of: 'What skills are needed to be a good leader in your school and community?' ... follow on action is to break up the attendees into small groups and give each group a skill that they need to target. They should come up with a strategy/activity to help develop this skill and be prepared to do a fast forward modeling of it to the group as the concluding activity of the workshop.

   d. OHTs and/or Handouts and/or visual models of curriculum, skills and workshop formats as in workshop outline above (item b)

   e. "Opening Distances: Getting To Know Our New Team: Activity #2" (rapid but relevant)

5. Concluding Activity (list activity that will summarise concepts, skills, and theories learned by workshop attendees)
   Fast Forward 'Mirror, monitor and model' - as set up earlier in the workshop.
AS AN OVERWORKED TEACHER, HAVE YOU DONE THESE?

- Procrastinated on ‘extracurricular’ pursuits because of two thousand and one reasons, most of them negative, counterproductive, suspect?
- Pleaded with students (sometimes even to other teachers) to share the load, pull their weight and work cooperatively rather than competitively?
- Pinpointed the lack of resources and collegial support in leadership as reason enough for poor projects, frustration, despair?

AS A PROFESSIONAL ADVISER, ARE YOU DOING THESE?

- Professing to others that what you and the kids do in student activities is at least the educational equal of what is done so well in so many timetabled classrooms.
- Practising what many preach but few do. Write about and share your achievements with colleagues, both within school and amongst wider networks in Australia.
- Persist with finding ways and means of raising the profile of leadership, representation and participation within schools as in the wider community.

AS A POTENTIAL PASTA MEMBER, TRY THESE:

- Pencil or pen in hand, renew or newly fill in your annual membership form (and fee).
- Promote, publicise and record every opportunity for students and colleagues engaging themselves productively in student participation activities. In and out of school.
- Persevere in asking questions and seeking accurate information, resources and empathetic people who can, with your help, enable us all to progress to true professional status.

FEEDBACK TO SCHOOLS

Focus on Curriculum

“Curriculum Links”: PASTA provides regular information to its members, to parents and schools. Some of that material specifically addresses common SRC skills and not so common potential projects which enhance other subjects in the normal school curriculum. Loosely based on the 2001 Overseas Tour daily activities, ‘Curriculum Links’ is, far more importantly, practical material that pinpoints links between any SRC (or other labelled student participation activities) to the whole school and each of the faculties within it.

Want to know how SRCs and other leadership programs enhance the Maths curriculum? Want some ideas for projects that will improve teamwork? And so on. For those of you who wish to fully utilise the potential of student leadership and representation within our schools and help make it an integral part of the whole school, these ideas get you thinking beyond the ‘extra’ in curriculum.

Currently available in previous issues of ‘Connect’ or via email. Soon to be also on PASTA’s Website. Ask for “Tour Schools Report - Part D - Curriculum Links”. Other reports on this year’s and past tours, their history and comments from here, there and everywhere also available on request. Contact PASTA.

The PASTA Newsletter is edited by Ken Page and distributed bi-monthly as a supplement to Connect magazine.
Remembering STC: 20 Years On

Almost exactly 20 years ago, I was part of the development of an innovative Year 12 course in Victorian secondary schools. The STC Course – the Schools Year 12 and Tertiary Entrance Certificate – started in six schools in 1976 and continued through to the late 1980s, by which time it included over 120 schools and had involved over 22,000 students. In 1981, it was first accredited (as a whole course structure) by the Victorian Institute of Secondary Education, as part of the Victorian Higher School Certificate.

Now that we are again considering changes in senior school curriculum, it is useful to remember STC and to look at the essential characteristics that made it so successful.

STC had many aspects:

- it was a school-based course that responded to differing student needs;
- it involved non-competitive, descriptive student assessment;
- it centrally included components of work experience and tertiary course orientation;
- it negotiated entry of students to a wide range of tertiary education courses and areas of employment.

At its core, however, was the vital requirement of student participation in course negotiation and management. This was written into the accredited Course Description (Approved Study Structure V): an accredited process by which students and teachers together structured and implemented the course, year by year, school by school. The article that follows is taken from a 1981 publication by the STC Group, and describes aspects of that participation.

In my classes, for example, we shared an exciting time investigating and constructing our courses, and then learning and assessing growth in new and different ways. It started with a process of us all clarifying our purposes, intentions and hopes. I brought access to previous and similar courses, and ‘academic traditions’; students brought information about their previous experiences, their existing knowledge and questions, their hopes for further study or employment.

We then arranged for the students to investigate course requirements. In some cases, students went to a tertiary institution, sat in on first year classes, met selection officers and asked about requirements; in other cases, work experience in industries clarified job requirements in terms of skills and knowledge. Students arranged these visits and brought this information back to the class. We then constructed courses, looking at commonalities and allowing for diversities – specifying objectives, methods, assessment processes and so on.

These courses were written up and presented to other schools in the group. We visited other schools in a Course Approval Process, questioned and challenged each other, and defended what we had agreed on. To see students arguing with teachers and students from other schools about the appropriateness and relevance of courses, and the reasons why they were developed, was stunning. This ‘ownership’ of the courses also freed us to develop different ways of learning, through investigation, peer teaching, hands-on work, community action and reflection, and so on.

Finally, we worked together to assess what we had learnt, writing self, teacher and peer assessments that came together in a formal folio that described outcomes. Certificates listed subjects that had been satisfactorily completed; tertiary entrance recommendations specifically reported on qualities relevant to tertiary education. The Group (through its individual schools, teachers and students) successfully negotiated with selection panels, faculty by faculty, for consideration of these documents.

It took a lot of time, it was uncertain – but it was exciting and yielded substantially improved outcomes for students in terms of retention, access to further education and course satisfaction.

In looking back on STC, the areas that emerge most strongly for me in that success are:

- the ownership of the courses by the students: students were designing, constructing, implementing and assessing their own learning; they were not struggling to meet ‘external’ requirements set by some central authority – some ‘other’;
- learning was based on investigation of need: students needed to clarify why they were studying this course, what they hoped for from it and what they needed to learn;
- learning was based in real world situations: while we could have done more in this regard, courses recognised learning from application and experience – from doing things that made a difference within students’ communities;
- cooperation: because assessment was non-competitive, students worked together to assist each others’ learning – there was little sense of needing to ‘beat’ others (and hence cheating was minimised).

These, to me, remain the essential aspects of the construction of curriculum at any level – issues of control, participation, relevance and value.

Roger Holdsworth

"Student participation in STC..."
next pages...
Further References

To read further about the STC Course, look at:


Batten, Margaret (1989) Year 12 Students' Expectations and Experiences, ACER Monograph No 33, Melbourne

Blackley, Robin (1983) STC and Tutoring' in Connect 24, December: 15-21

Freeman, Meredith (ed) (1987) One for All: Designing a Universal, Comprehensive and Challenging Senior Curriculum, Curriculum Development Centre, Canberra

Holland, Ann (1983) 'Ex-STC Students' Comments: Work, Unemployment, Studies' in Connect 20, April: 4-6

Jonas, Pam (1990) 'Negotiation Roles - Course Development' in Connect 65-66, October-December: 24-25

Reid, Paul (1980) 'STC Group' in Connect 3, April: 34

Reid, Paul (1981) 'STC Course Approved By VISE' in Connect 9, June: 8


White, Keith (1997) 'Remembering Year 12 Negotiation: STC' in Connect 105, June: 11-13

Also check the web-sites:
http://coppinger.org/literature/89ezone.html

Student Participation in the STC Course

When we say that STC is a school-based Year 12 course, we don't mean that it is a teacher-determined course. The Course Description makes it clear that teachers and students together must determine and operate the course.

While students have a right to be involved in decision-making and management, they also have a responsibility to take this seriously and to participate fully and openly in decisions about their own courses. Why is this important?

First, the STC Course values growth by students in responsibility and independence as important aspects of their education as whole persons. Whether in further study, in employment or in broader aspects of their post-school lives, these are attributes that are important for functioning as individuals and communal persons capable of exercising choice, understanding the consequences of their choices, and being accountable for the outcomes.

Secondly, the Course aims to foster skills and attitudes that enable students to resist exploitation in their lives. It is important that students learn to develop control over their lives, and this control is an important aspect of their learning.

Thirdly, participation is the key to self-motivation in learning. Where external pressures for achievement of arbitrary goals are removed, the motivation to learn must come from within.

Fourthly, in designing the Course, students bring essential information about their backgrounds, their interests and their aspirations for the future. This information is vital to the structure, detail and continuing operation of the Course — and only the students are fully privy to that information.

Fifthly, assessment in the Course does not concentrate only on externally assessable outcomes. The students are able to contribute information on their own growth in understanding.

Finally, it is often necessary for students to present details of their Course, including structure, content and, sometimes, supporting arguments, to employers and tertiary institutions. This can only happen successful if students 'own' the Course, if they understand it and if they have taken part in its construction and management.

What does it mean to say that students are involved in all aspects of the STC Course?

Students must be involved in each of the following areas:

- Course development and the construction and operation of course components, including subjects and units;
- The planning and management of each one's own course of studies, including work experience and/or tertiary preparation;
- Overall course management;
- Assessment;
- Evaluation of the whole course and of course components.
Course Development and Operation

The STC Course Description identifies five stages in the development and operation of courses. The stages are: Pre-Planning; Clarification; Negotiation; Implementation and Presentation; Evaluation and Renegotiation...

Pre-Planning

Students are encouraged to consider details of structure and content before the start of the year. This may begin with discussions between teachers and Year 11 students during the previous year, and might involve reading and discussing current STC course outlines, both from the students’ own school and from other schools.

Uncertainty about final enrolments and the availability of certain STC courses in the following year might limit the effectiveness of these initial discussions. On the other hand, the discussions will help students to make up their own minds about Year 12 and to indicate their intentions earlier, thus helping teachers and the school administration to make plans for the following year.

Involvement of students in pre-planning will make the next steps of Clarification and Negotiation more satisfactory because the students will have an understanding of and more commitment to the initial course outlines being clarified and negotiated.

Clarification

To this stage, students bring essential information about their background studies, their interests, abilities and cultural origins and their aspirations for the future. They expect to have these considered seriously by the whole group and, in turn, have the responsibility to accept the needs of other students and the constraints under which the school operates. It is essential that this step results in all participants having a clear idea of the course requirements and limitations.

It is also important that students understand the nature and operation of the STC Course at this stage. They need to have access to course descriptions and have the responsibility to familiarise themselves with the Course – particularly the aspects relating to the processes of course management and assessment.

Each student should be guided by questions such as:

• What educational experiences do I bring to the Course?
• Why am I undertaking the Course?
• How definite are my aspirations?
• How realistic are my aspirations in terms of prior experiences, abilities, entry requirements and opportunities?
• How can I clarify my aspirations?
• What social and cultural abilities and requirements do I bring to the Course?

Negotiation

During this stage, the needs of the group and of each individual have to be reconciled and strategies for meeting them have to be agreed.

Students should ask themselves questions such as:

• What do I need to know?
• What do I want to find out?
• What facts, skills and experiences will I need?
• What methods and resources will this require?

Discussions on courses will be based on each person’s answers to these questions, and the planning, negotiations, implementation, assessment and evaluation of the courses will constantly refer back to these answers.

Negotiation is then a discussion between participants aimed at determining methods of operation to achieve their stated goals. Negotiations also aim to solve any contradiction which arises between various individual and group needs. Important aspects of negotiation are:

• A willingness to work for a satisfactory common solution;
• An acceptance that diverse needs may require a diversity of approaches;
• An avoidance of imposing constraints unnecessarily on any individual or group.

These may be best achieved by individual or small group discussions prior to whole-group decisions and may result, at times, in the whole group agreeing to individually contracted decisions. The Course Description suggests many steps that groups may take.

All participants must be prepared to work for a solution to the following sorts of questions:

• How are we going to reach our goals?
• What resources will we need?
• How are we going to divide the work?
• How are we going to allow for diversity within the group?
• How are we going to assess the quality of what we have done?
• By what criteria shall we assess this quality?

Implementation

There is no clear boundary between the phases of Negotiation and Implementation, nor with the next step of Evaluation and Renegotiation. Decisions about the implementation of negotiated decisions occur continuously throughout the course. Students are involved in constant consultation about the course directions, and need to look at the degree to which the course is suiting their needs in order to enter into discussions about modifications.

The day-to-day implementation is also a shared task between students and teachers. This might mean
keeping class diaries, taking seminars, sharing responsibility for teaching tasks, finding resources, supporting and encouraging each other in learning, jointly implementing decisions on deadlines, behaviour etc.

The group should consider questions such as:

- Are we all initiating questions and discussion?
- Is there a sharing of demonstrating and teaching among all of us?
- Are a variety of modes of expression of outcomes being used?
- Is the group cooperating to achieve tasks?
- Are we all committed to producing products of quality?

**Evaluation and Renegotiation**

STC students take part in evaluating the operation of each course. This leads immediately to questions of any changes required in order to improve the course and their learning.

The whole group and individual students need to ask to what extent they achieved the original goals negotiated, and what other (unforeseen) outcomes were achieved. They need to ask whether the original course goals are still appropriate, in the light of their actual achievements, failures and their developing interests and competence. Initially they must ask what alterations, if any, need to be made to the course. New directions and undertakings must be re-negotiated, so that the processes of negotiation and implementation and subsequent stages in the development and operation of each course are renewed regularly throughout the period of operation of the course.

**A Student’s Course of Studies**

Each student is responsible for decisions about his or her own course of studies. By this is meant the total program undertaken by the student in Year 12, including work experience and other activities.

**Planning and Management**

The overall structure and the components of each student’s course of studies depend on several factors including the student’s interests, abilities and ambitions; pre-requisites for work or further studies that the student is interested in after Year 12; the staffing and resources available in the school.

These matters must be discussed during the pre-planning stage referred to above, along with the possible directions and content of particular course components.

In these discussions, personal goal-setting for students becomes essential. Students consider such questions as:

- What do I want to get out of a Year 12 course?
- How might this best be achieved?

Students have a continuing role in the management of their courses of studies throughout the year. This includes ensuring that their original goals continue to be met, or that suitable changes have been made in all course components in response to changed goals.

**Work Experience and Tertiary Visits**

Work experience and tertiary visits are integrated parts of the STC Course intended to illuminate the purpose and relevance of the other course work. In consultation with the teacher, students are able to plan and manage these aspects of their course so that they contribute most effectively to their overall goals for the year.

The process of organizing and assessing work experience or tertiary visits is as important as the events themselves. Students select their programs on the basis of their own needs. They may know little about a career or an institution for which they are planning, and the experience is intended to provide more information. They may know a lot about a career and be using the experience to provide comparisons and alternatives. The basis for choice is usually discussed with a teacher beforehand.

The students are encouraged to make their own contacts, having first informed the careers counselor of their intentions. Learning who to contact, what to say, and how to organise the appointments are lessons in themselves for many students.

Work experience may occur over one or a few weeks and may be with one or more employers. School assignments that are missed may be made up, but since the experience is part of the course, this decision is made by consultation between student and teacher. Tertiary visits usually occupy whole days over a few weeks but do not often occupy large blocks of time.

These activities develop the independent decision-making skills and initiative of the students and relate their work at school to their present and future commitments in the wider community.

**Overall Course Management**

At the school level, all students and teachers involved with STC form the school’s Year 12 Committee. This is the basic decision-making body for Year 12 in the school, and elects delegates to STC Council. The Year 12 Committee is required to meet at least once a term, though in practice less formal meetings of STC teachers and students occur more frequently, for example weekly.

Students participate as equal members, actively taking part in group management. The emphasis is on developing a sense of responsibility and power within each student to be an active contributor to the group. Some schools may find this difficult to achieve given total group size, but even large groups benefit by developing a sense of cohesion and identity.

All meetings within the STC Group are open to participation by students. Students may be school delegates to the STC Council, they may attend subject meetings and in-service days, and the course approval structure deliberately involves them in the formal presentation of the school’s course.

30
Assessment

Students take part in assessing their own progress and that of their fellow students. Conducted on a regular basis, this sort of assessment may lead to changes in the course, in teaching methods or in learning activities in order to improve the students' learning. Regular, cooperative assessment may lead to the development of new goals for students and new learning strategies. This is sometimes called formative assessment.

A variety of methods exist to involve students in assessment (see the STC Course Description) and these depend on the nature of the course component, the negotiated aims and objectives and the particular group. Goals, criteria and methods of assessment need to be clearly worked out by all concerned.

Assessments made during the year are recorded at regular intervals (which occur at least once or twice per term). These assessments should include student self-assessment, group discussion of assessment where appropriate, and teacher assessment. The record may be made by the student and the teacher writing a joint assessment, or by writing separate assessments, and by other records being kept of each student's work.

These records are used at the end of each course component to write a final assessment that summans the achievements and learning of the student in that component. This assessment should say something about the student's development, notable improvements and the use made of learning opportunities in that component. The final report should be an agreed statement by both teacher and student. Failing this, the student has the responsibility to produce a self-assessment to be considered jointly with the teacher assessment.

Evaluation

Each student seeks something different in the STC Course, and the value of the Course turns on a constant reappraisal being made of how effectively the whole Course and each component meets the needs of each group of students.

Students must be able to speak up about their needs and expectations and must be able to discuss these fully with their teachers and fellow students. These discussions must be regular and must show results. The results will be either renewed commitments to the agreed goals, directions and content of each course, or the modification and redevelopment of these goals and course content.

This process is written into the STC Course Description as an essential component of the development and operation of each course. The role played by students is outlined above in the section on Course Development and Operation.

Some Things That Limit Student Participation

All that process is very well, but the thought of carrying it out 'perfectly' with a group of students inexperienced in decision-making can be daunting. It must be realised that important limitations exist.

On the one hand, students' prior experience might seriously limit their ability to participate in course development and management. That is to be expected. But if it is to be accepted, that is sad. The STC Course expects the development of student participation as a course objective. Each course must build in methods to achieve this and thus look to growth in participation as the year progresses.

The limitations will be particularly true in new subject areas, where the unfamiliarity may restrict course development. Students have a particular responsibility to be open to change and development.

On the other hand, the situation in the school might limit the degree to which students may be involved in all aspects of course construction and management. For example, school constraints on subject choice may limit the ability of students to be involved in this area of decision-making. It is important that these constraints are recognised and discussed and that all participants are involved in seeking a development towards fuller participation. All moves should aim to include students rather than to exclude them from decisions about the STC Course.

Roger Holdsworth and Paul Reid
from The STC Book (The Schools Year 12 and Tertiary Entrance Certificate), 1981
Consulting Pupils about

A large British Network project (part of the UK’s Economic and Social Research Council’s Teaching and Learning Research Program) is investigating ‘pupil consultation’. Schools across the UK are working with research teams on six projects (plus one meta-study) over two years.

The overall project aims:

- To integrate a theory of teaching, learning and attainment with a theory of pupil consultation and participation;
- To understand and document the process whereby giving attention to pupil perspective and participation in schools can enhance pupil engagement and achievement;
- To understand and document the conditions in schools in which pupil perspective and participation can be used to enhance pupil engagement and achievement;
- To support teachers who want to develop ways of enhancing pupil engagement and achievement through consulting pupils and increasing opportunities for participation;
- To ensure that the growing interest in pupil consultation is grounded in worthwhile and defensible principles and practices.

The projects are:

1. How teachers respond to pupil ideas on improving teaching and learning in different subjects;
2. Ways of consulting pupils about teaching and learning and evaluating the impact;
3. Pupil perspectives and participation: starting and sustaining the process;
4. The potential of pupils to act as (co-)researchers into the process of teaching and learning;
5. How the conditions of learning in school and classroom affect the identity and participation of different groups of pupils;
6. Breaking new ground: innovative school initiatives involving pupil consultation and participation;

The following articles are reprinted (with permission) from the Network project’s newsletters (which are on-line at the site below). Project coordinator is Jean Ruddock; Network coordinator is Nick Brown; Network secretary is Nichola Dally. (Researchers include: Donald McIntyre, David Peddar, John McBeath, Kate Myers, Helen Demetriou, Michael Fielding, Sara Bragg, Madeline Arnot, Diane Reay, Beth Wang, and Julia Flutter.)

For further information, contact:
e-mail: nd241@cam.ac.uk

http://www.consultingpupils.co.uk/

Consulting Young People in Schools
Jean Ruddock and Julia Flutter
Homerton College, Cambridge

The argument for consulting pupils and some of the issues

Schools have changed less over the last twenty years or so than young people have changed and many young people struggle to reconcile the often complex relationships and responsibilities of their life out of school with their life in school: in school many young people claim that they continue to be ‘treated like children’ and they can become increasingly disengaged. Moreover, some develop, quite early in their school careers, a negative sense of themselves as learners and feel that the system is rejecting them. One pupil said, ‘School is a good place but I don’t fit’.

Consulting young people is one way of responding to both these situations. Being consulted can help pupils feel that they are respected as individuals and as a body within the school, that they belong, and that they are being treated in an adult way. Pupils who are at risk of disengaging may come back on board if they think that they matter to the school. Schools where pupils are consulted are likely to be places which have built a strong sense of inclusive membership, where differences among pupils are accepted, and where opportunities for dialogue and support are made available for pupils who find learning a struggle.

But consultation has to be genuine and pupils need to be sure that teachers are really interested in what they have to say, that their views will be given careful consideration, and that they will also receive feedback on what they have said and some explanation of any decisions taken as a result of the consultation.

We would make a distinction between classroom research where pupils are asked about their experiences of learning in a subject so that a teacher can improve his or her practice, and consultations about broader policy issues in school. It seems appropriate to discuss the purposes and outcomes of both kinds of enquiry with pupils.

Traditionally schools have consulted pupils - often via a school council - about a predictable set of topics (uniform, school meals, and lockers). Over the last few years, however, both the range of topics and the manner of consultation have been extended.

Support for pupil consultation has come from different sources: from recent work on citizenship in
Teaching and Learning

schools; from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989; in particular article 12) and from the school improvement movement which offers a common sense rationale: if we want to improve pupils’ achievements and commitment then we may need to take our agenda for change, at least in part, from what they can tell us about lessons and learning.

Where consultation is new for the school, teachers can feel uneasy about:

- talking with pupils in a way that changes the traditional power relationships;
- whether pupils will offer their real views or ‘please the teacher’ views.

Some teachers, uneasy about the idea of consulting pupils, have said that, in their experience, pupils have very little to say that is worth hearing about learning and teaching in the school. Where teachers hold such views, genuine consultation will be difficult to manage. But there are other concerns that can more easily be dealt with. For instance, teachers may feel that there is little time to consult pupils; they may be uncertain about the process of consultation, and about how to record and analyse responses. Here discussion with others who have found consultation productive will be helpful. This may offer some immediate guidance.

Overview of issues and approaches

The argument for involving and consulting young people:

- their maturity and desire to be treated in an adult way;
- importance of feeling ‘respected’ and listened to in school, as individuals and as a group;
- the sense of membership and inclusion that consultation can communicate, especially for young people who feel marginalised.

Principles that should guide the consultation:

- that the desire to hear what young people have to say is genuine;
- that the topic is not trivial;
- that the purpose of the consultation is explained to the young people;
- that young people know what will happen to the data and are confident that expressing a sincerely held opinion, or describing a feeling or an experience, will not disadvantage them;
- that feedback is offered to those who have been consulted;
- that action taken is explained and where necessary justified so that young people understand the wider context of concerns, alongside their own input, that shape decisions.

The topics that pupils might be consulted about:

Schools we have worked with have consulted pupils about:

- aspects of classroom learning, for example:
  - what gets in the way of their learning in class and what helps them to learn;
  - what are the qualities of a good teacher;
  - what makes a good lesson;
  - how they see feedback and how they use it to improve their work;
  - which friends they work well with in class;
  - whether they know what working hard and working harder mean in different subjects;
  - why boys seem to do less well than girls in some subjects, e.g. English.

- school policies and structures, for example:
  - what pupils think of the merits/rewards system and how it might be improved;
  - what pupils think of the school rules and sanctions and whether there are any grounds for modifying them;
  - what the school might do, or do more of, to help pupils who find it difficult to catch up and keep up;
  - aspects of school that pupils would like more information about or more opportunity to discuss, whether with teachers or with older pupils;
  - how pupils see years 3 and 8 (identified as years when performance can dip).

- relationships with teachers, pupils and the community:
  - to what extent bullying happens, what form it takes and what might be done to try to diminish it;
  - ideas for special events that would encourage parents to come into the school;
  - ideas for special events or activities that would strengthen links between the school and its community;
  - how opportunities for dialogue about learning, with teachers and/or with older pupils, might be structured.
The frequency of consultation:

Pupils might be consulted:

- **regularly:**
  - at classroom level, eg at the end of a block of work;
  - at school level through the regular meetings of the school (ie student council);
  - through a ‘head’s consultation’ with each form once a year.
- **occasionally:**
  - through a one-off referendum, eg about uniform;
  - in relation to a particular event, eg planning a parents’ evening for year 8, or, as in one school, planning a staff development day for the teachers in the school.

Ways of consulting:

The approach will vary according to the scale of the enquiry which could be school-wide or be relevant to a particular class, form, year cohort or other group.

- The consultation could be carried out by:
  - teachers;
  - researchers or local advisers working with the school;
  - in some settings and for some topics it could be managed by pupils taking a research role and formally consulting other pupils.

- The data could be gathered through:
  - questionnaires requiring ticks or short responses;
  - diary or learning log entries;
  - ‘focus group’ discussions;
  - individual or small-group interviews.

Recording the evidence:

It is our experience that while useful data can come from seeing the weight of opinion on a particular issue in questionnaire responses, the richest data - the data that give teachers the greatest insight - come from interviews or carefully handled group discussion, especially where the interview or discussion can be recorded in full notes or on a tape-recorder.

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Where is your school on the ladder?

Although the link between pupil consultation and pupil participation is an obvious one, in practice the processes may not be operating in parallel. A school may consult pupils about an aspect of classroom learning (for example as a straightforward data-gathering exercise) without offering pupils feedback or giving them an opportunity to contribute and participate in developing new strategies. Our ladder illustrates different levels of participation, starting from the lowest base of ‘pupils not consulted’ to ‘pupils as fully active participants and co-researchers’ at the highest rung.

We would like to hear your views and ideas and those of your pupils about the ladder of pupil participation and ask you to respond to these questions:

1. At what position on the ladder do you see your school at the moment?
2. Do you want your school to move to a higher rung on the ladder and how might you achieve this?
3. What problems and obstacles might you encounter in trying to enhance pupil participation?

4. **pupils as fully active participants and co-researchers**
   - pupils and teachers jointly initiate enquiry; pupils play an active role in decision making; together with teachers, they jointly plan action in the light of data and review the impact of the intervention

3. **pupils as researchers**
   - pupils are involved in enquiry and have an active role in decision making

2. **pupils as active participants**
   - teachers initiate enquiry and interpret the data, but pupils are taking some role in decision-making

1. **listening to pupils**
   - pupils are a source of data teachers respond to student data, but pupils are not involved in discussion of data; there may be no feedback to pupils teachers act on the data

0. **pupils not consulted - non participation**

Please send your replies to:

Nick Brown
The Network
Newsletter Editor
Homerton College
Cambridge
CB2 2PH

or email nd241@cam.ac.uk

34 Connect 133-134:
Project 4: Students as Researchers

Ratton is an 11-16 school in Eastbourne which has been working on Project 4 - the Students as Researchers project - since January 2001. Elaine Buchanan, Staff Development Co-ordinator and Deputy Head at Ratton writes here about the project:

We chose year 8 students as our researchers as this year group had been identified as the "lost" group between the excitement of year 7 and the focus provided by exams in year 9. We also liked the idea of investing in developing expertise with one of the younger year groups. Eighteen year 8 students who displayed good interpersonal skills, were popular with their peer group and had shown themselves to be reliable and committed in past work were chosen by staff. Two INSET sessions, one to students and one to staff, were held on the purposes and principles of the "Student Voice" project. Students, accompanied by three teachers, attended a one-day training course at Sussex University on conducting research. Going to the university was exciting for the students, none of whom had been to a university campus before. The training raised key issues such as conducting interviews, constructing meaningful questionnaires and focusing the research. It was impressive to watch the students responding to the demands of the day, as the learning and discussion opportunities allowed them to display their potential. As one outcome, students identified a range of research possibilities based upon their experience of classroom teaching and learning.

On return to the school, students formed three groups and worked with their teachers to refine their research questions - on what makes a good teacher and a good lesson and on mixed ability versus setting. The work was explained to teachers in staff meetings and to students in assemblies. As we had involved many staff from the outset, it was easier for students to carry out their research by observing lessons; staff did not see this as a threat. The outcomes are currently being analysed.

Students have now met with our new headteacher to discuss their initial findings. He is very keen that their work should continue and will be using their findings in the school development planning process. They have also conveyed their findings to their peer group in a year assembly (receiving warm applause for their work) and to parents at awards evenings. They have managed well in winning support for their work partly by keeping others so well informed.

We hope to continue with the project at Ratton School by encouraging the students to cascade their expertise to new year 8 students. At Ratton, we have a student council, but up until now students have not had a voice in the area of curriculum development. The work carried out by year 8 has shown that the students as the "receivers" of our teaching are an underused resource. Our students have shown themselves to be capable of conducting research with integrity and commitment and this has resulted in their views being seen as important and respected.

Conducting this work has also developed the students on an individual basis. The skills acquired as a result of being involved in the project will complement and contribute to their learning in many other subjects.

Chris Reene, a science teacher and Year 8 tutor at Ratton, adds:

The concept of using students to research aspects of their school is a wonderfully refreshing idea. After all, they are the best ones to raise concerns and highlight issues that are important to them about their working and social environment. The project has given ownership and empowerment to the students and a voice in the running of their school. They have collected data through questionnaires, teacher interviews and lesson observations, and we hope that the findings can be used by both students and staff to improve learning and teaching across the school.

This is what I find so exciting; this research can make a positive difference to everyone. It's not about students picking holes in teachers, it's about achieving together.

"I want to know if what we found out is actually good enough. I want to show it to the teachers and see if we can get an improvement and see if they take what we found out and start doing it in their lessons?" Rachel, year 8

"Any research around their learning is going to increase their understanding of their learning and of course ours. It's the consumer insight, which we don't normally get in any systematic way, and children do see themselves as a consumer force now." David Linsell, Principal

February-April 2002
POWER TO THE LITTLE PEOPLE!

The Junior School Council has been running for many years at Wantirna South Primary School. It includes two representatives from each class, from Years 2 to 6. JSC meets once a fortnight, and weekly if needed due to activities that we are working on. The students participate in fundraising activities and report to School Council on a variety of concerns around the school, mostly buildings and grounds issues, like broken taps, etc. This year, we want to redevelop the JSC to enable students to be more powerful communicators, decision makers and organisers in their roles as councillors. There are two JSC facilitators, Karli Stacey and Christine Finighan, both members of the teaching staff.

One of our ongoing jobs this year will be to develop a Junior School Council Charter that expresses what we stand for and what we want to achieve through JSC. This will be presented to School Council in order to achieve its full support.

Our first meeting

Our first lunchtime meeting was very energetic as students brainstormed a list of the major areas in which JSC could make a difference. Under each major area, we listed activities that would help us achieve our goals. Ideas were flowing thick and fast, although mostly from Year 4 and up. I learned from that meeting that we need to explore 'buddying' a Year 5 or 6 student with a Year 2 or 3 student for support and training. We need to ensure that they have a 'voice' and can express their points of view, interests and concerns.

Each student was given a folder in which minutes, organisational notes and jobs will be placed over the year. Students each take their turn in writing and distributing minutes. This year we expect that JSC reps will have a specific class meeting time in their classroom, so that they can report their concerns to JSC and report back JSC news to their class.

All the students at the meeting agreed that JSC should improve school for themselves and for other students. It was important to many of the students that school should be improved for students of the future as well. I thought that was fantastic future oriented thinking! Not forgetting that all said JSC should be FUN! FUN! FUN!

Here’s our list-

1. **Fundraising**
   - Ice Cream Day
   - Pyjama Day - Yr Prep -2
   - Disco - Yr 3 to 6
   - Trivia Lunchtime
   - Subway Meatball Lunch
   - Market Day - classes set up stalls in courtyard and kids bring pocket money to buy goodies at lunchtime.

2. **Communicating and Publishing**
   - Email Class News - Classes to take turns sending emails regarding what’s happening in their classroom. As this hasn’t happened before, the students are very excited about it.
   - JSC - Emailing whole school with timetable of events and other JSC news.
   - Reporting once a fortnight in the school newsletter - include a puzzle or fun page for kids at school, perhaps a competition occasionally.
   - Reporting to School Council once a month - Students, beginning with the President and Vice President take turns presenting our minutes and any related information.

3. **Social Welfare**
   - INSIDE SCHOOL: Year 6 students to develop a poster series to explain social skills using digital camera and students across all grades. Eg How to tell if someone is sad, How to take turns, etc.
   - OUTSIDE SCHOOL: Supporting an orphanage in Cambodia. Our Year 6 students have contact with an orphanage overseas and these students thought it would be great if the whole school could find a way to support these children. A speaker is coming on 8 March and all the students have many questions about how we can help.

4. **Buildings & Grounds**
   - Monthly checks around the school will be carried out by JSC to keep up-to-date with any concerns, problems or things that need fixing. Students have special knowledge about their schoolyard!

**What JSC means to some of our senior students**

I am in Junior School Council this year. I wanted to be in it to help us achieve good fundraising. Some of the things I think we could buy are: soccer nets and footy pads for the goal posts. The fundraising activities I am most interested in are having a Drive-In on the school oval and a disco for grades 3, 4, 5 and 6. Instead of the disco running from 7-8, I think it should from 8-9 pm. I’m really glad I’m on JSC.

*Jake S. Year 6*

I wanted to be in the JSC community so that I could be part of the group that makes the school better. I think we can achieve a lot, because we are a great group of people. I really want to help with the Trivia Lunchtime, Disco, Pyjama Day and Ice Cream Day.

*Teagan J. Year 6*
I wanted to be in JSC because I wanted to help the school reach new goals by more ideas and I would enjoy the experience. I made it! I am interested in helping to set up the email across the school. Every grade could take turns emailing each other over the term with news about what's happening in their room I would like to have a chat room as well.

Nick G. Year 6

I am in JSC this year so that I can achieve lots of goals for our school. Things like soccer nets and footy pads would be good. We will be doing lots of fundraising to buy them.

Andrew C. Year 6

I want to be in JSC because all throughout the year I will be able to bring lots of ideas to make our school better. I think the pyjama day for the little kids would be a great idea - they will have a great time. For the disco it would be good to have a DJ, but I don't think we need to go to the trouble of hiring one, because we could just use a student or teacher. I also like the idea of a drive-in at the school.

Lauren P. Year 6

I have always really wanted to be a JSC council member from Grade 2. This is the first time I have ever got in! I wanted to be in JSC because I wanted to help the school in any way I could. Now that I am a Junior School Councillor I really think that the idea of a Trivia lunchtime is a great idea. I am also looking forward to the disco! But mostly, I'm trying to make this school a better place for us and for kids in the years to come.

Emily R. Year 5

I wanted to be in JSC because I can do lots of things for the school. Ever since Grade 2, I have wanted to be in JSC. Now I have the chance, I am willing to do my best. I hope our school can do really well with our help. I want our school to achieve the drive-in on the oval, the disco and pyjama day for the little ones. Also Ice Cream Day!

Sarah H. Year 5

Finally

It is fantastic that so many of our students want to be actively involved in improving their school and Junior School Council gives them an authentic opportunity in which to do so. As a teacher, I value the way in which JSC provides a forum where students can see themselves as making a difference. On JSC, students work together to make changes, organise events and develop new practices within the school. They experience the sense of belonging that comes from playing a valued and recognised role in building their school community. Students learn not just a set of useful skills, but they also experience the development of identity, in the process of powerful citizenship. Power to the little people!

ACT Discovering Democracy Student Participation-
Active Citizenship Conference

The Discovering Democracy Professional Development Project is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training. The ACT's Independent, Catholic and Government school sectors have collaborated to provide professional development for all teachers and to promote the use of the Discovering Democracy materials.

This year one of the professional development activities in the ACT is a 'centrepiece' conference on Student Participation and Active Citizenship, with the focus being: 'What does student participation mean to local communities?' and 'Developing effective local, national and international citizens.'

Teachers and students from ACT Government and Non Government schools will attend the conference. Although primarily a professional development conference for teachers, the day will include the participation of students. They will be talking about what their involvement means for them; the ways in which they have felt their own voices heard (and not heard) throughout their school and wider experience.

They will be considering how they can participate and have a say at school and in the wider community, and how to improve their participation.

The keynote speaker Ken Wyatt, Director Aboriginal Education, WA. will challenge our ideas on student participation in his address 'Letting go, allow the freedom.'

Workshops will provide exciting new ideas for both teachers and students.

Conference Details:
ACT Student Participation -
Active Citizenship Conference
How does student participation affect local communities?
Developing effective local, national and international citizens.
Parliament House, Canberra
Friday 17 May 2002; 9.00 am - 5.00 pm
For more information contact:
Katherine Schoo Ph: 02 62604955
Email: kschoo@ais.act.edu.au
The idea of establishing a Student Foundation at the Grange College seemed an ideal solution - by consolidating the endless amounts of requests from organisations to assist in their fundraising activities. As a college, we boast a proud fundraising history; activities have always been well supported by the student body and community. Although all fundraising requests have been worthwhile, the Student Action Team quickly realised the sheer number of requests made it impossible to commit to all. Sorting through all the weekly mail, deciding which activities we would take part in, proved rather complicated. Many seemed to overlap. All members of the Student Action Team shared different views on what they perceived to be significant. One thing was certain: it was impossible to say yes to all. Therefore, the concept of establishing a mission statement offered a new approach to the way we, the Student Action Team, intended to make a difference in the community.

Through The Education Foundation, which administers the ruMAD? Program, we were extremely privileged to have David Zygier and Claire Brunner spend an entire day with us, going through various workshops and activities to assist us in forming a foundation. We learnt about other foundations, and about each other. We discovered that we shared common values and developed a greater understanding of global, national and local issues. We were then left with an enormous task of writing up our very own mission statement. After several meetings, long discussions and at times disagreements this is what we came up with:

We have now begun the new school year with a clear vision of what our fundraising goals are. We sort though our mail with ease. We discuss each request for fundraising and decide whether it fits our mission statement. We respond to all organisations that ask us to join in their fundraising activities, outlining our foundation and the process we have chosen to pursue. We look forward to their response and feedback. Our Mission statement will be revised at the end of the year.

We are currently planning our fundraising activities for the year and have already successfully raised just under two hundred dollars by having a sausage sizzle at our annual swimming carnival. We look forward to distributing our funds in the latter part of the year. Let’s hope we have a successful year.

For more information regarding our student foundation, please contact Mr Frank Vetere, our Student Leadership and Participation Co-ordinator at the Grange on: (03) 9748 9166 or on e-mail: vetere.frank.v@edumail.vic.gov.au

For more information about incorporating the ruMAD? Program into your school curriculum, and MAD DAY (Friday, 22nd March, 2002) contact the Program Coordinator at The Education Foundation: Justine Negus (03) 9665 5906, or visit the ruMAD? web site with lots of MAD info and freely available teaching materials at:

www.rumad.org.au

Frank Vetere and the Grange Student Action Team

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

The Grange P-12 College Student Action Team, November 2001
Penrith District SRC (NSW)
Primary Schools Conference

In November last year (2001), Penrith District SRC (NSW) held its Primary Schools Conference. This is an annual event, where two Year 5 students from every primary school in the district are invited to learn about SRCs, the contributions they make to a school, and the benefits that all students can gain from participating in their school's SRC. The students were chosen from Year 5 so that they have sufficient time to pass on their skills to their SRC.

As well as learning about the SRC, the students also learnt invaluable communication, public speaking, problem solving and organising skills. The conference was held as a series of workshops run entirely by high school members of the District SRC. Primary students were divided into colour groups and rotated through the workshops which included 'bullying', 'public speaking' and 'organisational skills'.

The day was opened by the District Superintendent, Mr David Phipps, who spoke of the valued contributions that SRCs make to their school communities, as well as the personal benefits that can be gained from participating in SRCs. The conference concluded with the finals of the public speaking competition, where finalists were asked to give an impromptu speech on what an SRC means to them and what they had gained from the conference.

The conference was held partly to fulfill one of the NSW SRC's goals of creating better links between primary and secondary school SRCs. Feedback from the conference delegates was positive, with all students gaining invaluable skills. The District SRC hopes that these skills will be taken back to the students' schools and passed on to fellow SRC members. District SRC members also felt that the day was helpful for themselves, as it gave them an opportunity to pass on leadership skills they have gained through the SRC process.

Anthony Samson
Penrith District SRC President
PO Box 82, St Clair NSW 2759

Resource Materials on Active Citizenship

Democracy Starts Here:
Junior School Councils at Work
This 48-page book was produced by teachers and students from a group of schools in the north of Melbourne in 1996. Stories from 10 primary schools describe the operation and focus of their Junior School Councils. Then each school provides a brief answer to key practical questions.

An invaluable resource for developing active citizenship in primary schools!
$7 a copy (posted); $12 for 2 copies
- from Connect - see back page

Back issues of Connect
Each issue of Connect contains stories about active citizenship in the classroom and in school governance. These stories of Junior School Councils (JSCs), Student Representative Councils (SRCs), classroom approaches and projects - all illustrate practical ideas for recognising and developing the active citizenship of young people.

Back copies of Connect are available (see back page): $4 for a single issue or $6 for a double issue.

An index to the contents of back issues is also available ($3).
Youth Participation in the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award Scheme

The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award is Australia’s leading youth development program. The Award operates in over 100 countries and, to date, over 4 million young people have participated. Established first in the UK in 1956, and commencing operation in Australia in 1963, the Award has involved the participation of over 210,000 young Australians. Each level of the Award (Bronze, Silver and Gold) consists of four sections (plus a residential section at the Gold level): skill, service, physical recreation and expedition, with the standard increasing at each level (for example the amount of time spent on each level for the service section is 15, 30 and 60 hours respectively spread over a minimum amount of months). The minimum entry ages are 14, 15 and 16 years for the three levels, with the Award needing to be completed by the age of 25. The majority of participants are introduced to the Award through their school where a teacher typically administers it.

The Award is administered at the national level by a Board, which then licences state offices within a federal system. At the state level, the Award is run either by a state committee that is elected by members of the association or by a Board appointed by the appropriate Minister (for those states where the award office lies within a Government department). This body then appoints an Executive Officer who is responsible for the management of the Award. This federal system has led to a variety of different youth participation models being currently used, from guaranteed positions on state boards and advisory committees, through to systems that utilise the structure of the award to gain feedback (the Award is typically run at a level below the state award office by coordinators, although there are independent participants who liaise directly with the office).

The International Council that runs the Award at the international level recently introduced guidelines for the representation of young people in the management of the award program. As a response to this, the Award in Australia formed the National Youth Participation Working Party (NYPWP) in July 2000. The NYPWP consists of six members under the age of 25, representing six of the eight States and Territories. It has been charged with investigating the current position of and need for youth participation, as well as assessing different participation models and recommending an appropriate strategy.

The Award, unlike organisations such as the scouting movement, is in a unique position due to its laissez-faire structure; participants are effectively the managers of their program, having complete control over what activities they do to fulfill the Award sections. This structure leads to the interesting situation where the State and National governing bodies’ responsibilities are limited mostly to the administration of the Award, and decisions are seldom made that will have a direct effect on participants within the Award. The lack of structure also leads to the vast majority of participants having little knowledge of the structure or management of the Award, mainly as most of their contact is through their award coordinator or the state award office.

There are several options currently being examined by the NYPWP at both National and state level:
1. A youth advisory committee;
2. Direct participation on a Board/Committee;
3. Using the current Award structure; and
4. Retaining the status quo.

All these strategies have associated advantages and disadvantages. A youth advisory committee at the national level may prove to be prohibitively expensive if frequent meetings are required, especially if participants from the more isolated states are included. The direct participation model, which is currently operating in several states, may lead to tokenism where young people are only included due to the requirement for them. There is also difficulty being encountered in recruiting members for the positions, with several guaranteed positions being currently unfilled. Whether this is due to the formal structure of the meetings or young people feeling that they cannot make a useful contribution due to a lack of knowledge when dealing with the issues involved, is yet to be established. A way to avoid tokenism within the committee/board structure is for the Executive Officer to directly recruit young people who are identified as having an appropriate level of maturity and expertise and who can make a contribution to the management of the award. This might avoid the inevitable feeling of tokenism that is associated with guaranteed places.

This model also leads to difficulties at the national level as this leaves one or two young people with a significant amount of power in situations that may be beyond their expertise and knowledge, as well as being open to abuse by those with their own agenda. Using the current award structure and gaining feedback from participants through their coordinators or directly to the award office, appears to be the most effective system, with a wide variety of viewpoints being gained and each participant being able to contribute. This is also the most cost-effective and time-effective model. The option that should never be discounted is retaining the status quo. Is there really a need for youth participation? Will anything be gained through it? If gains are to be made, are they commensurate with the costs involved?

A further difficulty arises from attempting to apply the desired model, as states are resourced in significantly different ways. Some states may have the time and facilities to be able to foster youth participation and ensure its success, while others, operated by a single person, may suffer a significant detrimental effect from the diversion of their limited resources to attempting to foster youth participation. There are also restrictions in implementing guaranteed positions on state/committee boards with many being incorporated associations.

Although youth participation has been identified as having the potential to be beneficial to the Award, it may not be feasible, both economically and practically, to introduce a set model across all states. If not applied carefully, it may result in tokenism. Finding a balance between the needs, benefits and costs of introducing youth participation is not a simple problem. The award has been vital in the development of young people as well as making a significant contribution to the community (over 3,150,000 hours of community service have been rendered) and youth participation must be carefully integrated to ensure its continued success.

Timothy Dean and Kate Stone
Anglicare and Decision-making:

Catering for the Community is an innovative Anglicare Education and Training program available to young people in Melbourne's Eastern Region. The program targets young people who would benefit from an alternative education structure and curriculum. The program offers personal development workshops relevant to the group, a Certificate 1 in Hospitality, hands-on hospitality experience and peer support training. In addition to this, the program has a strong emphasis on student participation and making learning fun.

Young people who have completed the program are invited back to the program in the role of peer facilitator. Program staff have been trained by the Peer Support Foundation of Victoria. Peer facilitators go through an application process, are given a role description, provided with additional skills and are supported to develop and utilise their leadership abilities to enhance their and other young peoples' experience and learning with the program.

Around mid 2001, the Manager of Anglicare's Eastern Youth Services approached a youth worker from the Catering program to discuss the possibility of having some young peoples' feedback into the Anglicare strategic planning process. As a result a research project was initiated to get some feedback.

Before developing a project proposal, the idea was discussed with the peer facilitators who felt that it would be good for young people to have a say in the strategic planning process. Their willingness to become involved was also confirmed. The young people involved contributed their ideas to the original proposal and approved a draft before it was taken back to the Manager.

The proposal included an introduction, aims, objectives, methodology and limitations. This was useful as it gave the project clear propose. It was also a useful tool for evaluating outcomes and provided key stakeholders with additional information. The aims and objectives are as follows:

**Aim**

- To consult with young people on Anglicare's strategic planning process to ensure young people have a say on future policy directions for young people within the organisation.

**Objectives**

- To involve young people in decision-making processes that affect their lives.
- To provide young people the opportunity to explore and discuss issues affecting young people in order to develop viable solutions.
- To support young people to gain additional skills in order to plan and implement a broad research project to gain a broader perspective of young people's views.

**The Survey**

The next step in the process involved formulating and drafting a survey that would get the required information about Anglicare services for young people. This was done using butchers' paper, textas and young people's ideas. Peer facilitators were asked to make it youth friendly and to pilot the survey on the Catering students.

The pilot indicated that the survey needed to be in a different font and needed a picture. It also became clear that when distributing the survey it also needed to be explained to the young people that it had two pages.

The Peer Facilitators decided to distribute the survey at their school (Heathmont Secondary College) to year 9 and 10 students. The students spoke to relevant teachers at the school and the worker involved followed this up and attained appropriate permission.

Peer facilitators, with the support of program staff, went to all the classes one morning and distributed the surveys. A total of 234 surveys were filled out. The responses to the survey were mostly genuine, as peer facilitators explained the purpose of the survey to the classes and what the information was going to be used for. Although the peer facilitators collated all the surveys, due to time restrictions the worker involved typed up the final report.

After discussions with the peer facilitators and the catering students about what young people wrote on the surveys, the worker included recommendations by young people. The report was then handed to management to use as a part of the strategic planning process. This was then distributed to different areas in the organisation.

**Recommendations**

The recommendations as a result of the peer research project were as follows:

1. Young people are capable of knowing what they need. Anglicare should endeavor to involve young people in decision-making processes.
2. This survey has highlighted a need for better promotion of Anglicare services. Young people want to know what is available to them in their community.
3. Before launching an advertising campaign, consult young people to discuss the effectiveness with young people.
4. Peer Facilitators encourage Anglicare to utilise young people when consulting with young people.
5. That this information is utilised by appropriate people in the organisation.
6. Young people have identified the following issues as major issues for young people: depression, suicide, drugs, lack of activities, need for drop in centres, accommodation, homelessness, employment and lack of service promotion. This needs to be explored in more depth.

It is always important to acknowledge young people’s or anyone’s positive contribution to a process. At the end of the semester, the peer facilitators were awarded with a certificate and gift voucher and this was presented at the graduation presentation by the Manager of Eastern Youth Services with parents in attendance. Their school also acknowledged their efforts at a general assembly.

At the end of the project it became clear the original aim and objectives of it were mostly achieved. It wasn't always easy. No additional funds or resources were allocated to the project, which meant there was no additional time to work on the project. The young people involved gave up a day of their school holidays to work on the project.

The worker involved felt that the second objective could have been better met. Although young people came up with viable suggestions, the responses weren’t comprehensive. In order for young people to develop viable solutions to issues, they need to be provided with relevant information and time in a group context to explore the issues in depth. Overall program objectives did not allow for this to happen.

Discussions with the peer facilitators indicated that this was a worthwhile process for them. They learned about research, meeting procedures, leadership, group dynamics, and public speaking, and contributed to the voices of young people being included in a strategic planning process. The information from the project proved to be significant.

For further information please contact Maureen Fischer on 9890 6322 or email ctc@anglicarevic.org.au
News and Reviews

Youth in Decision-Making

Youth in Decision-Making: A Study on the Impacts of Youth on Adults and Organisations has been released by the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, a Division of the National 4-H Council and the University of Wisconsin, Madison. The study is an in-depth examination of data collected from 19 young people and 29 adults from 15 organisations across the USA. A key finding is that involving young people in organisational and community decision-making has powerful and positive effects on adults and organisations. The report can be obtained from the 'Download Resources' section of the At the Table web-site: http://www.attthetable.org The site also contains a huge range of resources for promoting youth governance. (At the Table is a project of the Innovation Center, and it's worth following the links back to the Innovation Center home site as well.)

Sue James
from Starlink, Issue 43; January 2002

School-Community Resource

The Education Foundation is a donor-funded, non-government, charitable organisation that aims to stimulate new thinking about public education in Australia.

We are currently developing a resource called The Online School-Community Partnerships Resource. This internet resource will focus on showcasing innovative models of school-community partnerships as a powerful way of engaging both the local and the wider community in public education.

We would be grateful for any recommendations of appropriate information that could be considered for inclusion in this resource. This information could be in the form of:

- particulars of actual school-community programs that are taking place, or the contact details of someone you know who is undertaking or has undertaken a program of this nature;
- a research or conference paper which addresses the rationale for school-community partnerships;
- details of any other information channels by which the Education Foundation could communicate the initial 'call out', for information to include in the resource;
- any recommendations of other internet sites that could be valuable links to this resource.

Although the Education Foundation is based in Victoria, the focus of the Online Resource will be national. We envisage a mid-year launch of the Online School-Community Partnerships Resource.

I would be happy to discuss this project in more detail with anyone who is interested.

Justine Negus
Project Coordinator
Education Foundation
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E-mail: justine.negus@educationfoundation.org.au

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

Roger Holdsworth

"Student governments are communities with characteristics similar to the broader communities in which most of us live. Political, social, and economic decisions are constantly being made regarding schools that have a direct impact on the members of that community - students, faculty, administration, and other staff. One of the most important purposes of education is to prepare young people to become active and informed citizens of the communities in which they live. It is essential that students be given meaningful opportunities to participate in the governance of the school community."

from Guidelines and Principles for Student Government, National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), USA, 2000

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Local and Overseas Publications Received

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

**Australian:**

- **Approach** (Banyule Youth Services, Vic) Issue 12
- **Curriculum Perspectives** (ACSA, Deakin West, ACT) Vol 21 No 4, November 2001
- **Education Links** (Centre for Popular Education, UTS, NSW) No 63, Summer 2001/2002
- **Network News** (Network of Community Activities, Surry Hills, NSW) December 2001
- **Professional Voice** (AEU, Vic) Vol 1 Issue 3 December 2001
- **Rights Now** (National Children’s and Youth Law Centre, NSW) December 2001
- **Starlink** (Hoppers Crossing, Vic) Issue 43, Jan 2002
- **VICSEG Annual Report** (Victorian Cooperative on Children’s Services for Ethnic Groups, Vic)
- **YACSAround** (YACSA, SA) 5/01 and 6/01; Oct/Nov 2001 and Dec 2001/January 2002
- **YACSA Annual Report** (YACSA, SA)
- **Yikes** (YACVic, Melbourne, Vic) Vol 1, Ed 10; January 2002
- **Youth Studies Australia** (Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies, Tas) Vol 20 No 4, Dec 2001

**International:**

- **Democracy and Education** (IDE, Athens, Ohio, USA) Vol 14 No 2, 2001
- **Education Now** (Bramcote Hills, Nottingham, UK) Issue 34, Winter 2001
- **Education Revolution** (AERO, New York, USA) #33, Winter 2002
- **Leadership** (NASSP, USA) Vol 30 Nos 4, 5, 6, 7; December 2001, January, February, March 2002
- **National Coalition News** (NCACS, Ann Arbor, USA) Vol 27, No 2; Winter 2001
- **Options in Learning** (ALLPIE, USA) No 18, Winter 2001
- **Southern Exposure** (Institute for Southern Studies, Durham, NC, USA) Vol 29

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**Documents**

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

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

**Code** | **Description/Pages/Cost**
--- | ---
504 | You’re a Peer What?! (Tony Phillips, Kathleen Stacey and Jai Milner; from *Youth Studies Australia* Vol 20 no 4, 2001) (8 pp; $1.00)
505 | The Importance of Participation by All Young People in Every Community - a Western Region Youth Committee Position Paper (Western RYC, Vic; 2001) (12 pp; $1.20)
506 | Achieving Praxis in Youth Partnership Accountability (Kathleen Stacey; from *Journal of Youth Studies*, Vol 4 No 2, 2001) (23 pp; $2.30)
507 | What about Bob? (training materials from Berwick Secondary College 4th Annual Student Voice Induction Camp, Vic; February 2002) (95 pp; $9.50)

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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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