Number 115: February 1999

Connect
supporting student participation

Fifth National Student Participation Conference
NASPAC V:
7-9 April 1999
Hobart

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& Incorporating the PASTA Newsletter #10

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Connect, 12 Brooke Street, Northcote 3070 Victoria Australia
Will we see you in Tasmania? This issue of Connect provides a final reminder of the importance of NASPACY - the Fifth National Student Participation Conference. Not just for students for all who are active and involved in student participation approaches. There are important things to discuss.

I've been thinking recently about some of the 'characteristics' of active citizenship - its form and 'substance'. The 'form' of citizenship encompasses people's involvement in the structures by which decisions are made on issues relevant to them. In the broader context, we are active citizens through the informed exercise of representative voting and through participation in community and social action that influences decisions. The equivalent in a school is the opportunity for students to meet, discuss issues, elect and direct representatives, as well as the representation of students in the school's decision-making structures.

Articles in this issue raise important questions about the effectiveness of structures and about the very basis of student participation that is implied or limited by such structures. Is, for example, a focus on the leadership abilities of a few students, inherently anti-participatory?

But active citizenship is surely more than exercising either representational or participatory roles in formal decision-making. The 'substance' of being an active citizen is that one has and exercises a valuable and valued role that contributes to a community. Connect has previously argued that the extended student role of young people frequently provides them with no significant productive role that goes beyond the teacher or the classroom. It holds them in limbo, deferring their role as active citizens.

It's also recognised that, within the broad categorisation of young people as 'students', there is differential treatment and regard for both the 'form' and 'substance' of citizenship. Some young people are permitted more active and significant roles in which they are valued; others - frequently those already marginalised, less successful, more alienated - are further locked away from the exercise of important, responsible, effective roles in their community.

The link between the 'form' and the 'substance' of active citizenship is also vital. How do we ensure that decisions about the development of 'significant', 'productive', 'valued' roles for young people are made with these students and are not another form of imposed requirement that they are 'obliged' to accept?

What are we teaching students about active citizenship by the decision-making roles we allow them, and by the purpose of the tasks we provide for them? What are the alternatives for schools? Connect's challenge is to develop, share and discuss such ideas. Let's talk, read, write about practices and possibilities.

Roger Holdsworth
PARTICIPANTS
Those attending NASPAC V will be students, teachers, administrators, consultants, parents and others interested and involved in the diversity of student participation in Australian schools.

ORGANISERS
NASPAC V is organised by students, teachers and consultants from Tasmanian Government and non-Government schools, with support from Connect and PASTA. Registration forms from the address below.

Reminder!!!
From the organising committee:
We have had a very encouraging response to date. Registration Forms are indicating that students and teachers from a variety of public and private schools, plus people from government agencies and other organisations are coming to the conference and are eager to share their ideas. We are looking forward to a wide range of participants.

We want YOU to come to the conference to learn, to construct and develop a plan which you will take away from the conference and act upon. We are looking at the conference as a workshop, which you may learn from and enjoy. The program includes many exciting activities. It will be a time to meet new people and learn new things, while being in the centre of one of Australia's most historical and scenic cities: Hobart, Tasmania.

Looking forward to seeing you soon! Register NOW!!

Special Accommodation Offer: $35 bed and breakfast at the TAFE Residency for students - convenient and great value.

Kelly West, Secretary

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATION OFFER!
BARGAIN!
$35 bed and breakfast. Comfortable living, hotel-style rooms with TV and other features. Please notify the organisers on the Registration Form if you're interested.

COST
Full registration fee: $50.

LOCATION
St Michael's Collegiate School
218 Macquarie St., Hobart

For Program Details and Registration Forms, contact:
Kelly West, Secretary, NASPAC V Committee
PO Box 47, Rosny Tas 7018
Email: <westies@southcom.com.au>

February 1999
Rethinking SRCs and Leadership

Angela's Story

During our action research for the 'Alienation to Encouragement' project, we conducted many interviews with students about their transition from primary school to secondary school. Our aim was to get the students' perspectives about our transition programs, orientation days etc, which we thought were excellent. We really wanted to find out which of our programs 'engaged' students and which were 'alienating', so we could make some small adjustments to the programs. We were not looking for any information about the formal participation of secondary students in decision making. The Student Representative Council (SRC) is an unquestioned structure in most secondary schools in Australia. Our action research was not concerned with what was seen to be a very workable way of representing students' opinions.

Wow: did we get a bit between the eyes! I interviewed Angela, then in her second year of high school - an articulate, above average student, who had never been in any kind of trouble, one of the secondary students who is at the school, but not noticed for anything in particular.

Angela was from one of our small local primary schools. My first question to Angela was about her experiences in the first year of secondary school, and how our programs had helped/hindered her to settle into high school. She gave the usual evaluation: visits to secondary schools were good; our talks at her primary school gave her a lot of information etc.

My second question to her was about what made her happy in secondary school and what made her sad. I was writing whilst listening and happily taking notes on fairly standard responses. Then Angela talked about what made her sad. She started to raise the volume of her voice, and with great emotion told me a story of the deskilling of her leadership, the anger and alienation she felt about the lack of opportunity to use her leadership skills. All because secondary schools 'elect' only 10-15 students to the only leadership body for students: the SRC.

Angela told how in primary school they had class meetings where every student participated and you could practise and develop your leadership skills. Your participation wasn't based on being popular or the best in the class: everyone had a go.

You could pick what level of participation you wanted, what you felt comfortable with, but everyone had the opportunity and everyone participated at some level.

I stopped writing and listened intently. Angela continued. She had participated at the highest level: she had helped organise various student presentations, she met with the Principal regularly, and the students were involved in some decisions about their work in the classroom. Angela painted a picture of a student using her skills to the fullest, learning about leadership and participating fully in her school.

"What happened when I came to secondary school?" she angrily asked me. Not waiting for my reply, she launched into a story of a student alienated by secondary structures. A deep, hurtful alienation that was powerful in its hurt and emotion.

She told me how we elected 12 students to the SRC: the students voted - wow! What about the other 400+ students: what about their leadership skills? And how could she possibly get elected to the SRC? She was from a small primary school and not many students knew her. And why should you have to be known? "What does 'known' mean?" she asked. "Popular, pretty ... what? What happens to the rest of us? You don't have class meetings in secondary school; the SRC seems more concerned about where to place the Coke machine. The SRC reps just come to our classroom and say: 'what do you think of this? ... vote yes or no ... OK ... thanks.' That's the SRC! Even if it was more representative than this, why is it only for the select few? Why?"

No answer from me.

Angela said: "I loved participating in my primary school, but I feel I have lost those skills in secondary school. I do my work, I don't get into trouble, but I'm not really part of the school. I'm not one of the chosen 12."

The tears rolled down her face ... and mine. This is alienation that the research never talks about. It was right here in front of me. She challenged me to check it out with other students, and to ask them about their feelings of alienation.

I did. The following year, with the aid of a national grant, we conducted an intensive Action Research project about leadership and participation in the early years of secondary school. The conclusions were:

- 98% of secondary students felt like Angela: their voices didn't matter; they weren't heard;
- The students made a plea for a new look at student participation. They thought the SRC was elitist, out of date. All student voices should be heard;
- Everyone should have the opportunity to participate at a level of leadership appropriate to their skills, with the opportunity to move in and out of the structures set up to represent them.

I can only say that we at Paralowie School have been, and still are, on the most wonderful journey of releasing our students from their hidden alienation and that we are benefitting enormously from listening to all student voices, not just a select few.

The journey is not complete. We are still evaluating our new look student-teacher designed Student Forum, but I hope I never hear Angela's story again.

Gael Little
Paralowie R-12 School,
Whites Road, Paralowie SA 5108

More next issue: your responses and views are invited ...

Connect 115:
Students Evaluating Teachers!

Studies of teacher behaviour, performance and effectiveness have tended to concentrate on data obtained from trained observers, questionnaires and surveys (see Dusek, 1985 for an overview). Steele (1971) argued that the teacher is a poor source from whom to obtain information about what was actually occurring in the classroom, and Monk (1983) took the 'radical' step of suggesting that the focus of research should move from identifying the teacher as the sole significant figure in the classroom, to include the other classroom participants: the students. Although a vast amount of research has been done on obtaining student perceptions of their classroom environment (see Fraser, 1986 for an overview), little research has examined the student perceptions of teacher behaviours (Weinstein, 1989).

In this article, I want to provide an overview of some studies on this important area, and particularly suggest that formal encouragement and collection of student perceptions would be valuable for trainee teachers.

When students are asked about their feelings towards school, they generally acknowledge an overall wellbeing associated with school, but many are 'disenchanted with the mismatch' between their expectations and the organisational structures. Their main concerns are teacher-student relationships, discipline strategies and not having a 'voice' (Gray et al, 1984). This 'mismatch' of expectations is compounded when students are treated as an entity separate from the educational process, rather than part of the relationship. Teachers are always under the watchful gaze of their students, and how students perceive their teachers influences their perceptions on their teacher-student interactions. Student-teacher relationships are vital to students' positive attitudes to education (Tatar and Horenzyk, 1996), therefore educators need to allow students to voice how they are perceiving these relationships.

Student Perceptions of Teaching

Research shows that students form very clear perceptions of their teachers and that they can give very insightful accounts of their teachers' performance (Whitfield, 1976; Meighan, 1978). Moskowitz and Hayman (1974) were concerned with beginning teachers being unprepared to deal with the difficulties that they faced in the classroom. They proposed that the best way to prepare new teachers, was to identify what were 'desirable' teaching behaviours. They achieved this by asking students, who were in their last week of school, to identify their best teacher. The principals also submitted a short list of 'best' teachers and the residual group was identified as the 'typical' teacher. Comparisons were made of the three groups: beginning, typical and 'best' teachers.

Perceptual psychologists believe that people behave in the world in direct correlation to their perceptions; if behaviour is a function of personal meaning, then perception must become the centre of the teacher learning situation (Whitfield, 1976, p. 348).

...what pupils do, say and believe is a consequence of how they perceive the world and the events. (Students) who are in close contact with their teacher over a considerable period of time may be more reliable judges of such a teacher's more dominant and permanent teaching characteristics, than the trained observers sampling small snippets of a teacher's overall behaviour. (Wilkinson, 1989: p 124)

More importantly, the research highlighted that the best judge of teachers who were actually teaching the students turned out to be the students themselves. A similar Australian study by Abbott-Chapman et al (1990) set out to identify the qualities and characteristics of the effective teacher by obtaining the names of previous school teachers deemed effective by first year University students. These 'effectively perceived' teachers were then studied to determine what qualities they shared.

A cross cultural study (Entwistle et al, 1989) proposed a set of scales that could be used by schools to judge the way they were perceived by their students. The study concentrated on the level of interaction between students and teachers. Interestingly the two culturally different samples were extremely similar in their definition of what makes a 'good' teacher. The researchers noted that an inventory of students' perceptions could prove valuable for schools (who were interested in their image in the community), because students' perceptions greatly influenced parents' perceptions of the school's effectiveness.

A more recent study by Tatar and Horenzyk (1996) noted that culturally different students showed different expectations of teachers. Tatar and Horenzyk examined immigrant and host students' expectations of teachers and concluded that the:

goodness of fit both between teacher and pupil expectations of teachers, and between pupils expectations and the degree to which they perceive teachers as meeting those expectations, will be a highly predictive of pupil motivation and attitude to school (Tatar and Horenzyk, 1996: p 297).
Therefore, to improve the newcomer’s academic adjustment, they suggested that the students’ perceptions should be taken into account.

Research by Bahad (1990) highlighted the benefits of examining how teacher behaviour is perceived and interpreted by students. He compared student perceptions of their teachers’ differential behaviour with the teachers’ perception of themselves. He also examined the effects of an experimental intervention, where the teachers received feedback on the gaps between their own and their students’ perceptions of their behaviour. He found that students and teachers agreed that the lower achiever received more learning support and less pressure than the higher achieving student. However, the students’ reports differed from the teachers’, in that they reported that the higher achiever received more emotional support. When the teachers were presented with the feedback information, the teachers who were open and receptive to the feedback, set about creating a more balanced distribution of emotional support, but unfortunately teachers who appeared to be more resistant to the feedback, showed no change in the post-test measurement.

Research by Vaughn et al (1995) concentrated on the instructional preferences of young people with special needs. They found that higher performing students recognised that many of their classmates had special needs, and that it was necessary for the teacher to make adaptations so that all the students could learn. However, low achieving students preferred non-adaptive teaching methods, as they did not want to be seen as a receiving special help. The researcher recognised that by obtaining student instructional preferences they could improve teacher effectiveness.

Other studies have found high correlations between student perceptions of teacher behaviour and affective outcomes such as appreciation of the lesson and motivation for the subject matter (Fraser 1986; Brekelmans et al, 1990).

**Student Perceptions of Classroom Management**

Lovegrove et al (1985) identified that, within the large amount of literature on classroom discipline, very little had been taken into account student perceptions and preferences. Their assumption was that if student preferences were taken into account in the current search by teachers for appropriate classroom management techniques, the level of problematic behaviour would decrease.

Le Richie (1995) continued this method of obtaining student perceptions of teachers’ classroom management techniques. She suggested that teachers could reduce stress by using students’ perceptions of classroom management and discipline procedures as valuable indicators of what is actually occurring. Le Richie asked students to identify the three most effective, and three least effective, ways teachers disciplined students.

By utilizing this simple technique of asking students what is effective for them, teachers can tailor their management skills to suit a particular class. It will also give students ownership of their behaviour, and a voice in the management of the classroom.

Educational psychologists have also used student perceptions effectively. For example Raymond (1987) used student perceptions as an intervention in a class of disruptive students. She based her intervention on Wragg’s (1982) notion of involving students in changing their behaviour rather than trying to teach the teacher alternative methods to deal with problematic students. She noted that by presenting the empirical evidence to the school, the headmaster gained a better understanding of what the students thought of the school and it created an atmosphere where teachers were able to exchange ideas on methods of control and coping strategies with their peers.

Substantiating Raymond’s work, Swinsto (1990) found that the use of the perception questionnaire dramatically altered the attitudes of student and teachers. The teachers generally viewed the class in a negative light but, after reviewing the student perceptions reports, the teachers were quite surprised and encouraged by the responses. The students expressed the view that they would like to spend more time working and less time ‘mucking about’. It also provided the students with an opportunity to express their own feelings in a ‘balanced, controlled and confidential manner’, and they were encouraged by the extent that their ideas and opinions were incorporated into the changes in classroom procedure.

From the above studies, it is evident that student perceptions do allow students to actively participate and improving relationships and environments in the educational setting.

**Students As Trainee Teacher Evaluators**

Effective teachers constantly reflect on and evaluate how they perceive their lessons and programs progressing. In training to be effective teachers, trainee teachers are also encouraged to keep diaries of their personal reflections and evaluations of their school experience (Bird et al, 1993). Trainee teachers’ performance is also evaluated, although a number of trainee teachers put forward objections to having this assessment based on a few visits by a member of the academic faculty (Klap, 1999, work in progress). In support of this, Freiberg and Waxman (1988) claim that supervisors’ and cooperating teachers’ feedback is limited in quality and quantity. They argue that student feedback should be a necessary part of trainee teacher evaluation. Ironically, the students, who spend the most time with, and who are most affected by the trainee teacher, are rarely asked their opinion or assessment of the trainee teacher’s performance.

Veldman and Peck (1967) showed that student ratings of trainee teachers related positively to the grade they received for their teaching. Denton et al (1977) found that students’ perceptions provided reliable descriptions of trainee teachers’ skills.

**Student Perception Scales**

One way of obtaining formal information from students about teachers or trainee teachers, is to use an existing ‘student perception scale’. Such a scale is relatively inexpensive to administer, can be administered at a convenient or relevant time during the class, can be standardised and can be designed so as to maintain anonymity. The results provide a formal product from students’ observations of the teacher on many occasions and under normal conditions, and they can pick up a wealth of data in a very short time (Freiberg and Waxman, 1988).

Some possible scales include (more details are available on request):
• Veldman and Peck (1967) Pupil Observation Survey (POSR)

The POSR measures teacher characteristics from the students’ point of view and has formed the basis of a number of student perception scales (see Denton et al, 1977). The authors were keen to point out that their scale should not be used in isolation and that student evaluations should be one facet of a comprehensive battery of assessments, as they provide valuable information from a ‘unique point of the view’.

• Denton et al (1977) Student Perception of Student Teacher Competence Scale

The scale is based on a review of published scales of student perceptions of teachers. The authors suggest that the scale provides a reliable description of a trainee teacher’s skills, obtained from the ‘collective perceptions of learners’. They suggest that the results be used by supervisors either as a perception check of the trainee teacher’s classroom ability or more actively to achieve a decision about the candidate’s professional competence.

• Waxman and Eash (1983) Our Class and It’s Work (OCIW)

The OCIW is a questionnaire that assesses students’ perceptions of their teacher’s didactic instruction, enthusiasm, feedback, use of instructional time, provision of opportunity to learn, pacing, structuring comments and task orientation. It can assess students’ perceptions of prospective teachers’ instructional skills and strategies, the learning environment and their attitudes towards teaching.

• Wilkinson (1989) Science Student Perception Questionnaire (SSPQ)

The SSPQ provides science teachers (particularly those in training) with feedback on their teaching behaviours and personality as perceived by their students. The scale can also be used to provide relevant information on a student teacher’s strengths and weaknesses. Wilkinson’s results lend support to the use of student ratings as a component in the evaluation of teaching effectiveness.

Conclusion

The idea of using student perceptions as a component of assessment at the trainee teacher level will empower trainee teachers to become more reflective about their teaching and give them a wider range of resources to call upon when they begin teaching (Freiberg and Waxman, 1988). It will also introduce them to reliable methods of receiving and interpreting student feedback (Levy and Webbels, 1992). Student perception scales will also give trainee teachers confidence to regularly use student perceptions, and not see them as a threat to their status. If teachers and students each understand how the other perceives classroom behaviours, the student-teacher relationship will be improved.

Teachers in the 90s are trained in self and peer observation, and are encouraged to use objective data on their actual classroom behaviours to identify and change detrimental interactions (Witty and DeBaryshe, 1994). However, changes in teacher self-awareness may not have the intended effect unless students notice that change has occurred, and interpret the meaning of the change in a positive light. The easiest way to ensure that this change is seen to have occurred is to ask the students: how do you perceive me?

By giving students’ perceptions of teachers a voice, we are incorporating their opinions into the improvement of teacher-student relations and teacher education. By meeting the needs of students, we will also be improving the quality of teacher service and student learning outcomes.

Johanne Klap

Postgraduate Student, Faculty of Education, The University of Melbourne
<j.klap@pgrad.unimelb.edu.au>

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The Organizing Bureau of European School Student Unions is the European platform of national school students' organisations and unions. OBESSU was founded in April 1975 in Dublin, Ireland and has member and observer organisations in more than 25 different European countries. All member-organisations are independent representative and democratic school student associations, run by and for school students in secondary general and vocational education.

**Objectives**

OBESSU has objectives to:

- promote greater solidarity, co-operation and mutual understanding between all the youth of Europe, and particularly between school students and their respective national organisations;
- put an end to all discrimination and injustice within the educational systems of European countries;
- uphold and improve the quality and accessibility of and the democracy in education in Europe;
- work in co-operation with all European school student organisations and structures towards genuine, all-European school student co-operation;
- represent the interests and views of school students towards the European educational institutions and structures;
- develop greater understanding among people to enable the creation of a peaceful and secure environment to facilitate the development of each individual.

**Activities**

The main activities of OBESSU aim at exchanging information, experience and knowledge between the national school student organisations involved. OBESSU aims to initiate discussions on new trends in and innovative ideas about secondary education in Europe. Furthermore, OBESSU conducts research in different fields of concern. As the coordinating body of national school student organisations, OBESSU is the 'spokesbody' of its members at European level, especially vis-à-vis European institutions and organisations in the field of education and youth.

OBESSU is working in a number of activity-fields. It organises activities to promote the improvement of school student participation in decision-making processes in the education systems, as well as to develop and improve the democratic awareness of all those involved in school education.
OBESSU is promoting the issue of school student involvement at European level, amongst others by means of an active representation within and towards structures such as the European Youth Forum, the European Commission, the Council of Europe and other structures, for example of teachers, school heads and parents.

Furthermore, OBESSU has worked intensively on a number of educational themes and problem areas, such as the issue of access to education, school guidance and counselling, the availability of high quality vocational education and the involvement of school students in the evaluation and improvement of quality in school education.

OBESSU promotes the establishment and involvement of new representative structures of school students in countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Furthermore, the organisation supports the establishment of school student structures in those countries in Southern and Western Europe where such representation does not exist.

Structure

OBESSU is a European non-governmental youth organisation with member and observer organisations from all over Europe. The most important decision-making body within OBESSU is the General Assembly, which consists of all the member organisations. The General Assembly elects a board and decides upon the OBESSU work program and budget, as well as on the resolutions and policies that are developed during seminars and conferences or initiated by the Board.

The five members of the Board originate from different European countries. The board is charged with the day-to-day management of the association, the representation of OBESSU towards other structures and institutions and is responsible for the execution of the work and activity programs.

European School Student Information Centre

OBESSU established in 1994 a secretariat in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The OBESSU secretariat is the co-ordination and information centre of the association. It is run by the secretary-general, who prepares, co-ordinates and executes the activity program under supervision of the board. In 1995, the development of a School Student Information Centre (ESSIC) started. This centre gathers and disseminates information about secondary education in Europe and the position of school students in it. The secretariat annex ESSIC publishes a newsletter (ESSIC-News), and takes care of the production and dissemination of reports, publications, leaflets and other materials representing the work and opinions of OBESSU.

Publications are available on issues such as racism, intolerance and xenophobia in schools, East-West co-operation, evaluation of quality, guidance, and the rights of students in vocational education and training. The European School Student Rights Charter contains a number of basic elements for effective participation of school students and the improvement of their position in school.

The OBESSU magazine is called On the Blackboard, and contains information about the activities of the organisation, developments in the field of youth and education at European and national level and information and activities from the member and observer associations.

Contact

Information can also be obtained via the OBESSU Web pages on the Internet: http://www.obessu.org

Secretariat

European School Student Information Centre (ESSIC)
Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 21-II
NL-1012 RC Amsterdam
The Netherlands
Tel: +31.(0)20.623.47.13 Fax: +31.(0)20.625.58.14
e-mail: obessu@obessu.org
Internet: http://www.obessu.org
This was one of the main questions raised during the OBESSU (see previous article) seminar on ‘student involvement in evaluating quality in secondary education’. The seminar, which took place in Amsterdam in June of 1997, brought together almost 45 representatives of school student associations from all over Europe.

For a whole week the delegates, with an average age of 18, discussed whether school students are able and critical enough to evaluate their own school and education. Not only did the participants discuss the question of what quality education is, and whether the quality of school education needs to be evaluated at all, but also what their role and the role of others involved in school should be and what conditions should be respected when an evaluation takes place.

At the last day of the seminar, the preliminary results were presented to and discussed during a forum debate involving representatives of the European secondary schoolheads’ organisation, the European parents’ association, the largest teachers’ trade union in Europe and the European Commission. All of these representatives stressed the importance of evaluation of quality, be it for different reasons. They also supported the claim of school students that they should be involved in evaluations.

The theme of the seminar was not easy and the discussion quite abstract. But nevertheless, the participants managed to come up with very useful results, which can be found in (an) issue of the Q-Files.

Background

The idea for the project on evaluation was born in the summer of 1996. OBESSU was brainstorming on the future and relevance of school student work in Europe. Within a few weeks, the new draft work program for the years 1997 and 1998 had to be presented. The new program had to continue the successful activities from the past, while new issues needed to be addressed.

For some years, OBESSU had seen steady growth in its activities. It was now generally felt that OBESSU should make a ‘jump’ forward. For some years, issues such as school student rights, participation, the quality of teaching, the access to education and European cooperation between school student unions had been the main focus in our work. Now the time had come for OBESSU to provide more of a coherent framework in its work that would combine successful activities from the past and new ideas for the future. Our work should not only analyse existing situations in education and define what the school students’ interests should be in those cases, but our work should also bring new issues to the agenda of policy makers and politicians.

As a European association of national school student organisations, it is our aim that school students play an active role at both school level, but also at national and European level when the future and content of education is concerned. This has always been the basis of our ideas behind “participation and democracy”.

We think that school students are very capable to give valuable input and feedback at different levels of the education system, either in a structured, organised way or simply by means of discussions in the classrooms. Where schools have introduced possibilities for school students to give feedback on the performance of the teaching and school organisation, the results are positive and help teachers and school management to improve their work, while it provides the students with the feeling that their opinion is taken seriously. It is therefore not surprising that for OBESSU the involvement of students in (the evaluation of) the educational process is a key element of quality.
Project on Evaluation of Quality

Against the background as presented above, OBESSU decided to set up a project aimed at defining the school students' role and involvement in evaluating quality in schools. This project was expected to have three major benefits.

First of all, it would allow us to define what quality in education actually means to us. Secondly, it would enable us to develop clear answers to the question why students need to be involved in the evaluation of quality in schools. It would allow us to define what we see as key criteria for good quality and how we could measure these in schools. Finally, it would make it possible to determine who could be important partners both in schools, as well as at national and European level to work together with, in order to realise two of our major aims: involvement and high quality education.

Reasons why school students need to be involved in evaluation of quality

The role of school students (and parents) in the debates on what quality in education is or should be, is often non-existent. This makes education one of the last areas in society where the debate on its functioning is organised without the involvement of its users. This is in contradiction with business life, where companies try to find out what consumers think of their products. Public services have also become more and more sensitive to what their users think.

Where school students are seldom asked for their input and perceptions about their day-to-day education, parents usually have better chances of being heard, but are often met with hesitation and sometimes even mistrust from teachers who do not like to see parents 'mixing' themselves in the teaching profession. These teachers consider themselves to be the professionals and as such they think they know best about what they are doing. In their view, parents and school students have no important role to play in the educational processes, if any at all.

For OBESSU and its members, the current situation is unacceptable. The same policy-makers, teachers and experts that consider school students as subjects rather than partners in education, point out again and again that good education, obtaining diplomas, the acquisition of knowledge and skills to improve one's level of employability and personal development are key elements for people to be successful in professional life, but also to be able to adapt and participate in society as a whole. Against that background, it is almost unthinkable that young people do not have anything to say about the quality of the educational services they are offered and the conditions they have to work with and under, especially since for most school students, education is not a choice but an obligation, compelling them to go to school day after day for a considerable number of years.

In present day society, where knowledge and skills, diplomas and personal development have become crucial elements for individual young people to become successful in their personal and private life, it is no longer acceptable that they have no influence or can not suggest that education is offered to them day by day for a great number of years.

OBESSU believes that in a modern society, education should adapt to changes, improve its standards of quality and promote a culture of democracy, openness and tolerance. This does not only concern the subject matter in curricula, but also the organisation and structure of schools, the social interaction between people in schools and the level of participation of an cooperation by these people.

Many education systems are still based upon old traditional concepts, which might have worked in the past, but which are no longer adequate today. We believe that this has to change. An increasing number of young people drop out of school and in many cases the education system stimulates passiveness more than that it offers a challenging and interesting environment to work in.

During the Amsterdam seminar, the OBESSU participants found the following reasons for claiming that school students need to be involved in evaluation of quality in their schools:

- school students are the direct target group of education and the reason why schools exist. This fact gives them a 'stakeholder' position: they have key interests in this matter;
- school students are very able and capable to give a critical analysis of the education that is offered to them, provided that they feel that they are being taken seriously and that the results of the evaluation are used properly;
- a proper evaluation process should focus on all elements that make quality or that influence quality. In that regard, a comprehensive evaluation has to be as inclusive and as broad as possible. The experiences and perceptions (feelings/expectations) of school students are essential elements in this process;
- evaluation of the school and its education by its students provides both teaching staff and school management valuable feedback on their work;

February 1999
seriously will lead to a stronger feeling of empowerment and 'belonging' in and to society.

Although the case for school student involvement in evaluation of quality seems to be obvious, it is not. A lot of teachers, but also parents and head-teachers think that school students are not capable of participating in evaluations. Teachers sometimes feel 'attacked' and expect nothing but negative feedback from their students. Head-teachers hesitate because they expect a large administrative and organisational burden for their school. They also realise that direct feedback from school students about the quality of education might have consequences for the image of the school and it will demand a more active approach to, for example, teachers that perform below standard. This, so they fear, may cause unrest in school.

Parents sometimes think that they know better than their children what is going on in school. Some parents have their own perspective and expectations of good education, which is not necessarily relevant or possible for their child. Furthermore, sometimes the interests of school students and that of their parents is contradictory. In some countries, such as the UK and Ireland but also Belgium, the participation and input of school students is not accepted at all. In these countries, parents speak for their children. If any participation of students exists at all, it usually takes place in a pre-set and prescriptive format, at which the students themselves have no influence whatsoever.

In short, school students need to be involved because they are the direct subject of evaluation and because they can provide the 'professionals' with direct feedback about their work.

Furthermore, involvement leads to the raising of democratic awareness and participation.

Resolution
School Students' Participation in Evaluation of Quality in Secondary Education

The member and observer organisations of the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU), gathered in session from the 7th to the 13th of June 1997 in Amsterdam, the Netherlands:

Considering the fact that on the verge of a new century, our society and our education systems as part of it, will have to find new answers to new questions, initiate innovative responses through new approaches;

Realising that in such a context a high quality education system is of the greatest importance for the personal development of the full potential of knowledge and skills of each individual;

Strongly believing that a high level of quality in education depends on at least three elementary components, namely:

- a high level of participation of all social partners in decision-making structures and democratic procedures;
- a broad and diverse education with high standards of quality in teaching;
- an accessible education system offering equal opportunities for all;

Realising that a process of continuous evaluation of the quality of education is indispensable in order to ensure this high level of quality;

Hereby declare that

a) school students want to be involved in the evaluation of their education. They can give direct feedback about the effectiveness and quality of their teachers and teaching methods. They are very able to objectively assess the quality of the social and physical environment in schools;

b) School students must be fully involved in the evaluation and improvement of the quality of their education and school environment;

c) evaluation of quality with the aim to assess the standard of education should be accompanied by clear and binding guidelines concerning the involvement of social actors in schools when the initiation, execution, interpretation of results and the follow-up of an evaluation is concerned;

d) in each school institution, a system of quality-assessment and quality-care should be developed and implemented;

e) evaluation of quality in schools is the responsibility of the educational authorities and school management. They should support and promote a system of continuous evaluation of their education involving all actors concerned;

Hereby declare that

a) they will actively promote steps to raise the awareness and involvement of school students at school level in the evaluation of the quality of their education;

b) they will work together at both bi- and multilateral level to improve each others' knowledge and experience with evaluation of quality;

And call upon

- the Council of Europe and the European Commission to further their support for the promotion of school student involvement in the evaluation of quality in secondary education;

- the governments of the National States of Europe to develop and support the establishment of legislation concerning the evaluation of quality in secondary education and emphasise the importance of school student participation in that process;

- the affiliate organisations and executives of European federations of teachers, school-heads and parents and other organisations as appropriate, to cooperate with and support the involvement of school students and their organisations in the evaluation of quality at all levels of Secondary Education.
PASTA NEWSLETTER
# 10 - February 1999

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 IN THIS ISSUE

PASS THE PASTA

Welcome back to what has already been a hectic new year for our PASTA Committee and the SRC movement in Australia. The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and the National Association of Student Activity Advisers (NASAA) in the USA have accepted our invitation to join our 2000 International SRC Conference Steering Committee and so have ensured the overwhelming success of our exciting new Olympiad of Citizenship to be hosted in Sydney and on the Central Coast after the Olympics, from the 3rd to the 7th October, 2000. The USA members of this committee represent delegates from both the USA East and West Coast to ensure full participation and support for this First International SRC Conference.

The members of this USA committee are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rocco Marano</td>
<td>Director, NASAA Head Office, Reston, Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Finnemeyer</td>
<td>Executive Director, Pennsylvania Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berry Finnemeyer</td>
<td>Secretary, Pennsylvania Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy Moen</td>
<td>Executive Director, Oregon Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Peter Cahn</td>
<td>Executive Director, California Association</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The NASAA have joined us as Co-sponsors of this and future International SRC Conferences which will be held every four years in the host city of the Olympics (Athens in 2004). NASAA have also kindly extended to PASTA an open invitation to attend and to address their 1999 National and State Activity Adviser Conferences. This is another first and is not only a great honour but is a clear gesture of support for PASTA and its many highly innovative projects which NASAA are keen to see taken up in the USA.

The National and State Activity Adviser Fly-In Conferences are the showpiece of the USA Student Leadership calendar and PASTA will have the opportunity to promote both our 2000 SRC International Conference and our CSC Awards Citizenship Credentialling Project to SRC activists across the whole of the USA. Through the sponsorship of the Central Coast Campus of the University of Newcastle and the support of its Director and Pro-Vice Chancellor Les Eastcott, I have been afforded the opportunity to represent PASTA and present papers and workshops at several of this years' 1999 Activity Adviser Workshop Conferences.

I have just recently returned from attending the National Activity Advisers Conference in Honolulu where I was introduced to those attending as a member of the NASAA official party. I was overwhelmed by both the hospitality of our Hawaiian hosts and their enthusiastic reception of both the 2000 International SRC Conference initiative and our CSC Awards Project. This level of world interest and wonderful support for the SRC movement in Australia will provide exciting new opportunities to further help to focus our political and educational leaders on what needs to be done to further the cause of student participation, leadership and representation within Australia.

Ralph Murray
Mr McBride (The Entrance) [5.20 p.m.]: I advise the House of a creative community initiative that was developed by an indefatigable community and youth worker and local Berkeley Vale High School teacher, Ralph Murray. Ralph has a distinguished community service track record, with a particular emphasis on youth and youth leadership, that spans decades. In co-operation with the central coast campus of the University of Newcastle and the Professional Association of Student Representative Council Teachers Advisers - PASTA - Ralph has developed three projects, of which the most important to date is the community service certificate awards project. I emphasise that the project originated on the central coast and will be driven by infrastructure developed on the central coast.

The project supports and promotes youth leadership and active citizenship. Over time the project will be self-funding and has State, national and international significance. The CSC awards, a citizen training program, accredit all active citizenship and voluntary community service. The awards promote active citizenship and voluntaryism amongst our youth and general citizen population, encourage student involvement in community activities, encourage the pursuit of merit and equity, provide an accreditation and reward system for the community and provide an opportunity for the unemployed and long-term unemployed to have their community contributions accredited and included as part of their employment curriculum vitae.

The CSC awards are based on an integrated accreditation system that logs all community service performed by a citizen. This unique concept recognises, logs, accumulates and accredits community service by an individual. If a citizen is a member of a number of community-based organisations, each organisation records the service of the individual. But until now there was not a mechanism to aggregate these community contributions. Under the CSC awards program, the service in each area would attract a number of hours of community service, based on a universal value system, which is recorded in a passbook that is held by the citizen and certified by the accredited organisation. The hours are also recorded in the accredited organisation's log book as a cross-reference. The system is similar to a bank account - the community service is lodged, similar to money being deposited in a bank, and the citizen retains a record in a passbook.

Awards are determined by accumulated hours of active community service. All voluntary community service, as well as involvement in a wide variety of other activities that make a positive contribution to the wider community, is allocated an hourly value. Examples of community service are blood donation, unpaid work and training, unpaid tutoring, coaching, managing of both cultural and sporting activities, all voluntary charity and church work and membership of committees. Often the membership of committees is not recognised as a community service. But, as all honourable members know, organisations could not operate without committees.

The accumulated service is broken up into four award levels: 400 hours of community service attracts a CSC award; 1,000 hours attracts a bronze medal; 5,000 hours attracts a silver medal; and 10,000 -hours attracts a gold medal. It is envisaged that the awards will be included as part of all future local government and Australia Day celebrations. As a member of Parliament I am acutely aware of the inestimable contribution of volunteers to the welfare and progress of communities in my electorate. In fact, as honourable members would recognise, without their contribution our communities would collapse. It is also important that the Unemployed and long-term unemployed have their community service recognised and accredited so that it can be used as a reference in an application for a job.

The awards are a fabulous concept which can totally revitalise community service. All honourable members are aware of the community contribution that is made by volunteers in our society. We are also aware that the contribution by volunteers is continuing to diminish. I congratulate Ralph Murray, the originator of this concept, and Les Eastcott, Pro Vice Chancellor of the Ourimbah campus of the University of Newcastle. I encourage the Government to consider the provision of seed funding to further the establishment of the CSC program throughout the State.
Greg Arrow and Anna Samson  
Conference Co-Chairpersons

Technology

Though certainly not the theme of the Conference, technology will be an integral component of the running of the 2000 International SRC Conference - from the vital aspects of security, to its obvious use in communication, to the behind-the-scenes aspects of catering and the like.

As Technical Adviser, I see my job and the job of the Technical Subcommittee as being to set up and maintain the technological aspects of the Conference. This involves working not just at the time to set up the equipment, but also working now to acquire the technology and to be aware of what options are available.

Communications will be the most visible application of technology. Internet connections will be provided in venues to allow for e-mail and net-conferencing; important staff would require pagers, two-way radios or even mobile phones. Provision for sending and receiving faxes, phone messages etc will also be required.

The most important benefit for all you delegates to the Conference will be that mummy and daddy can keep in touch with you. Oh yea! Well, at least you can report in, especially to all your family, friends and to the organisation that you represent. Every day? Yes - via the Internet. Our Committee will help you if needed. (If we haven’t mastered the millennium bug by October 2000, the Sydney International SRC Conference will provide carrier pigeons for you - as well as candles for your host families!)

The other applications of technology we will be working on include:

• Registration: a database of attendees will be set up and used in many areas of the conference (eg security, catering, first-day check-in);

• Security: photo identifications (IDs) will be issued (requiring printing) but these will contain a security code to allow for entry into various areas of the Conference. Options for storing the code include micro-chip (smart card), magnetic strip or barcode.

• Catering: various uses for technology here, including ordering, stock control and regulation.

• Program: timetabling and allocation of rooms for workshops etc - the list goes on.

All Work and No Play

During the year 2000, people from around the world will converge on Sydney to participate in the activities associated with our hosting of the Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games. While Sydney, and much of Australia for that matter, is already known for its cosmopolitan constitution and atmosphere, this will no doubt be enhanced by exponential growth in the number of international tourists present in the Olympic City in the years preceding and including 2000.

It is envisaged that a microcosm of the above scene will be created at the 1st International SRC Conference to be held in the intervening period between the Games. While the world’s finest athletes will be among one hundred and fifteen thousand people gathered at the new Olympic Stadium at Homebush, approximately one thousand of the world’s finest young people and their advisers - representatives of student groups and schools far and wide - will also assemble to discuss concerns facing them in the new millennium. During this time the Land Down Under will be taken to the Top of the World.

However, the Conference will not be ‘all work and no play’. The Programming Committee is seeking to integrate a number of fun activities into the Conference Program to increase the enjoyment and thereby augment the learning experiences of participants and advisors.

Delegates will embark on a tour of the Homebush Olympic site. Highlights will include a visit to the Aquatic Centre and main stadium. Here delegates will experience some of the magical feeling inherent in the ‘Olympic spirit’. In accordance with the theme of the first day, ‘Celebrating Our Cultural Heritage’, it is hoped that an international buffet dinner will be held, allowing delegates to sample cuisine from a variety of different nations. They will also have the opportunity to experience Australia’s unique indigenous culture through a music and dance performance and present items reflective of their own culture.

Participants will visit Old Sydney Town, a replica of convict Australia as it was between 1780 and 1810. They will see soldiers on parade and convicts tried and punished as colonial justice takes its course - perhaps even on them! Delegates can browse through authentic stores of the period and ride a horse or bullock-drawn wagon. On the same day, participants will also get close to Australia’s unique animals at the Reptile and Wildlife Sanctuary.

Advisers will have the opportunity to go on a scenic wine tasting tour in the Hunter Valley which supports over fifty wineries. On the journey they will try some wines which have international acclaim and others which are enjoyed for their individual boutique style. Alternatively (or in addition after the Conference), they can
Greg Arrow: continued from page 15 ...

**How Can You Be Involved?**

We are looking for keen people to assist our use of technology in all areas, including the communication aspects. Just fill in the form on the back of this SRC 2000 Bulletin to let us know your interest.

All-in-all, technology is a vital part of the running of any conference. This, the very first SRC International Conference, is no exception. In fact, with your help, we are certain it will be exceptional.

Hope to see you there.

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**Anna Sanson: continued from page 15 ...**

choose to visit the legendary Blue Mountains and gaze transfixed at the famous Three Sisters in Katoomba.

A student social will be held at the campus of the University of Newcastle, Central Coast at Ourimbah, located north of Sydney. This campus along with Sydney University, are the two main venues and the universities themselves are key sponsors of the Conference. An Adviser Ball will also be held. These activities will help delegates to get to know one another better in a more relaxed setting as well as assist in the fostering of camaraderie among participants.

Both students and advisers will be given special treatment getting to and from the Central Coast by a huge river cat boat, enjoying Sydney Harbour at its utmost as they go out the famous Sydney Heads and up the beautiful coastline.

In addition to the activities organised by the Conference Committees, students' host families will no doubt engage their guests in a number of Sydney's other attractions. Sydney's famous Opera House, a trip to the top of the Harbour Bridge for stunning views (and nerves), Darling Harbour with the Maritime Museum, Aquarium and the huge IMAX cinema, Australia's Wonderland, Taronga Zoo, the Powerhouse Museum, Featherdale Wildlife Park as well as concerts, plays, and beaches are just some of the world-renowned sites on offer.

Although I have concentrated here on the entertainment and tourist aspects of the Conference, this is not to say that the event will be a glorified tour of Sydney. The activities outlined above are ultimately incidental to the nitty-gritty work of the Conference - the practical, relevant, challenging issues we all want to discuss, learn and act upon. But who's to say we can't have fun while we're making the world a better place.

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**SRCs AROUND THE WORLD**

IN B. Contributions towards articles about student and adviser representative structures and activities in other parts of the world and states of Australia are eagerly being sought. All contributions will be credited. This resource material will be part of the publications available to participants at the 1st SRC International Conference in Sydney. Please send your material or your article to PASTA or Connect as soon as possible.

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**What is CASAA?**

**Mission and Goals**

The mission is to promote and develop student leadership and activities within Canadian high schools. Goals of the Association include:

* to facilitate the professional growth of Student Activity Advisors by helping to equip them with the resources, ideas, and support to become effective trainers of student leaders
* to encourage across Canada the sharing and exchange of ideas pertaining to student activities
* to support the organization and growth of provincial associations of Student Activity Advisors
* to promote actively the concept of student leadership

---

**The Association's Governing Structure**

The Association is run by a Board of Directors which consists of a four-member Executive, a director from each province and territory of Canada, a director-at-large to represent the francophone community, an Executive Director and a publication and communication representative. The Board of Directors holds two meetings a year, once during the annual Canadian Student Leadership Conference (CSLC) and during the spring.

**History**

In 1983, the students and staff of Yorkton Regional High School, Saskatchewan, were invited to host the annual provincial leadership conference of 1985. A year later, the Premier of Saskatchewan, the Hon. Grant Devine, challenged the Yorkton students to turn the 1985 provincial conference into a national conference. This would be one of Saskatchewan's contributions to the 1985 International Year of Youth project. The challenge
was accepted by the students and staff of Yorkton Regional High School and the 1985 conference was held in Yorkton. Over eight hundred students and student advisors attended the conference.

The Canadian Association of Student Activity Advisors has been addressing the leadership needs of high school students and student council advisors since 1983. The advisors at the Yorkton conference voted unanimously to support the idea of an annual leadership conference across the nation. Provinces and Northwest Territory/Yukon would be invited to host these conferences. Through the interest, effort, and commitment of these advisors, the Canadian Association of Student Government Advisors was born.

The second conference was hosted by Salisbury Composite High School, Sherwood Park, Alberta in August 1986. The advisors worked on developing a constitution and elected the first executive of the Association. There has been continued interest, support and growth over the years.

In 1990, at the Burnaby Conference, the name of the organization was changed to the Canadian Association of Student Activity Advisors to reflect most accurately the membership of the organization. Not all members are student council advisors; on the contrary, many are responsible for overseeing other student activities in their schools.

In the first decade, the Association saw the creation of provincial student leadership organizations with similar goals and objectives as that of the national organization. In most provinces and in The Yukon and The Northwest Territories, annual student leadership conferences are held.

In recent years, we have also witnessed the number of schools developing and offering leadership courses (credit and non-credit) to high school students. These courses have helped individual participants to become more knowledgeable and stronger in providing leadership in their respective schools. Both the national and provincial organisations have helped, and continue to help, to equip individual student leaders with the necessary tools to enable them to be effective leaders.

The association also provides help for those counsellors who are seeking assistance, ideas, and the like so that they can become more effective in their responsibilities. One of the programs that has been developed in some provinces is the weekend "fly-in" conferences for advisors. This brings together counsellors from across the province to come together for a weekend to share and learn about student leadership.

More educators are beginning to realize the importance of co-curricular activities in their schools. Good co-curricular activities in a school make for a happier, more productive, more caring, more respectful student body. The Association continues to grow in numbers and provides a very valuable resource to students and staff across the nation.

In its relatively short existence, the Canadian Association of Student Activity Advisors has hosted annual conferences for students and advisors throughout many parts of Canada. Called Canadian Student Leadership Conferences, or CSLC for short, the next one is planned for Welland, Ontario with Winnipeg, Manitoba the site for the 2000 Conference. These are normally held in September.

The CASAA website is a new addition to this Association's attempts to communicate and share resources with advisors across Canada - and now the world. This site contains previews of CASAA resources, a question and answer forum, a share shop for activities and many other ways to communicate with students and advisors from across the globe.

For more information about Student Council and Adviser's Associations generally contact FASTA. To contact CASAA directly, check the following.

Website: www.sentex.net/~casaa
CASAA email: casaa@sentex.net

Publications & Communications
Director: Dave Conlon
Glenview Park Secondary
55 McKay St.
Cambridge Ontario N1R 4G6

Executive Director:
George Takashima
821 9th Ave. N
Lethbridge, Alberta T1H 1E8

A DANISH MODEL FOR STUDENT ACTION

Michael Skott, School Captain of Cherrybrook HS NSW in 1995, attended schools in Indonesia, Italy, Denmark and New Zealand before coming to Australia. He reflects here on the student representative structures in Denmark. At Cherrybrook, in the northern suburbs of Sydney, Michael had then been working to use this positive international example to make that Australian high school's SRC more effective.

See page 28
THE SRC INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIAD NEEDS YOU

The 1st INTERNATIONAL SRC CONFERENCE (in SYDNEY AUSTRALIA: 3 - 7/8 OCTOBER 2000) will be the outstanding success it should be with YOUR help. All sorts of people - of all ages - with all sorts of skills and interests are needed to make it happen.

The ‘Steering Committee’ is no longer. Now there are many different groups working on many different aspects of putting this together. THEY NEED YOU.

The contacts, research and information to tell us all what is happening in student representation ‘Around the World’ is only just beginning. THIS TASK NEEDS YOU.

The finer details of the program, the people to speak and lead activities, the topics for workshops & debates & the ideas for displays & technology are being discussed. WE WANT BOTH IDEAS AND DOER PEOPLE.

Photocopy these pages and distribute them amongst your friends and colleagues. Consider how you best can contribute beforehand as well as at the Conference. Tick one or more of the following areas. Then send it ASAP to:

SRC 2000 INTERNATIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE
1 GLADSTONE STREET
BATHURST NSW
AUSTRALIA 2795
Phone: (02) 63322603
Fax: (02) 63322302
E-mail: ckingston@interact.net.au

I WANT TO BE THERE AS:
- a student representative of my group
- an adult representative of my group
  (my group is: )
- a sponsor
- a presenter
- an entertainer
- an SRC 2000 Committee member
- an adviser to the Conference

I WE WANT TO HELP ORGANISE:
- Publicity
- Communications
- Fund-Raising
- Accounting
- Catering
- Accommodation
- Transport
- Travel Opportunities
- Venues
- International Rooms
- Security Matters
- Health Matters
- Programming
- Entertainment
- Exchange Students
- Registration
- Technology
- Adviser's Functions
- Decorations
- Other
  (Please Specify)

OUR GROUP CAN HELP RAISE SOME MONEY BY:
- Talking to businesses
- Working with other schools
- Speaking to service clubs
- Seeking government grants
- Organising a raffle
- Organising other activities
- Doing some paid work
- Other (What sort?)

I / WE WANT TO HELP PRESENT SOMETHING ON:
- Day 1: The Global Context
- Day 2: Cultural Heritage
- Day 3: Youth Social Issues
- Day 4: Environment
- Day 5: Media & Political Process
- Day 5/6: Getting Things Done
- 2001: National Student Parliament
- OTHER
  (What issues or actions?)

I'LL DO RESEARCH ON:
- Representation in general
- Federation & the Constitution
- Activities in other countries
  (Which country/area: )
- Activities in my state
- One of the Conference themes
  (Which one: )
- OTHER

WE REALLY WANT TO BE IN PRINT:
- Translating material
- Writing an article
- Making some posters
- Creating some graphics
- Producing some photos
- Designing programs
- Drawing some maps
- OTHER

I/WE WOULD LIKE TO INVITE OTHERS FROM:
- other countries
  (which? )
- other states (who? )
- other schools
- community groups
- professional organisations
- media

MY/OUR CONTACT DETAILS ARE:

Name(s):
Position:
School/Organisation:
Representative Group:
Mailing Address:
Phone:
Fax:
E-mail:

18 Connect 115: PASTA Newsletter - Supplement
PROPOSE, PLAN, PRESENT
POSITIVE PROJECTS &
PROFOUND PERCEPTIONS
... or - less coy ...

THINK, CONSULT & WRITE so that
you can SPEAK, CONSULT & ACT
in October 2000 and beyond

The October 1998 edition of the SRC 2000
Bulletin touched on the themes and issues for
this 1st International SRC Conference. To refresh
your memory, they were:
Day 1: A Global World: The International
Context For All
Day 2: Cultural Heritage: The Cultural Context
for Youth
Day 3: Society in Permanent Transition-Social
Issues Affecting Youth
Day 4: Environment: The Space We Live In
Day 5: Youth In Action: Building A Better Today

In the April edition there will be a formal
call for presentations in all these area. The
Conference Organisers urge you to start
thinking now about what you can contribute to
SRC 2000.

Consult widely about issues of concern to
you, whether you be a student or an adviser.
Think specifically about projects that deal
positively with these issues.

Then be ready to tell us what you’d like to
do at the Conference - apart from meeting and
eating and seeing and all the other good people
and things Anna has outlined for you this time.
Formats are open-ended at this stage. You are
invited to present a workshop, stage a
performance, mount an exhibit. You may prefer
to be part of a debate, contribute to conference
papers or scrapbooks, do or show us how to do
some community service, contribute to action
by being a roving reporter or be part of a panel.

The important thing NOW is to THINK
and CONSULT so you are ready when the
opportunity knocks. In fact, don’t wait for April.
Go to the back page of the Bulletin NOW and
tell us what you’re thinking of doing.

This mini-message is brought to you by one of the
advisers on the organising committee who fully realises
that October 2000 is not very far away. Don’t wait. Get
started now.

February 1999

Itinerary for the
1999 USA SRC Tour

We are at last able to offer the itinerary for the
second PASTA tour to the USA for SRC Students
and advisers. While the basic trip remains similar
to last year, this year we are able to offer some
time on the East coast thanks to the generosity
of Mike Nolan and the people of Bordentown
High School, New Jersey. Mike is one of the
many advisers that I met at the Derby
Conference, and he has kindly arranged (with
the agreement and support of his Principal and
District Superintendent) to host our group for
five days at his school.

The full itinerary is as follows:

23.6.99 Depart Sydney Airport
23.6.99 Arrive Minneapolis, Minnesota
26.6.99 63rd Annual SRC Conference begins
27.6.99 SRC Conference
28.6.99 SRC Conference
29.6.99 SRC Conference
30.6.99 SRC Conference ends
1.7.99 Depart Minneapolis for Lake Superior
2.7.99 Travel to Green Bay on Lake Michigan
3.7.99 Leave Green Bay for Chicago
4.7.99 Tour of Chicago
5.7.99 Leave Chicago for St Louis
6.7.99 Leave St Louis for NLC Camps
7.7.99 NLC Camp
8.7.99 NLC Camp
9.7.99 NLC Camp
10.7.99 NLC Camp
11.7.99 NLC Camps end - fly to Philadelphia
12.7.99 Bordentown
13.7.99 Tour of Washington
14.7.99 Tour of Philadelphia
15.7.99 Swimming in the Atlantic ocean
16.7.99 Tour of New York
17.7.99 Tour ends, fly to LA then Hawaii
18.7.99 Hawaiian stopover begins
20.7.99 Depart Hawaii
22.7.99 Arrive at Sydney International Airport

Note: if you are interested in this or future
tours, contact Ken Page (Ph: 02 4396 6485 or
email: suepage@ozemail.com.au) for details.
Remember, the 2000 USA SRC tour is to San
Francisco.
I wish to apply to join/renew my membership for the year ending 30th June, 199__

Title ________________________ Given Names ________________________

Family or Institutional Name ________________________

Home/Postal Address ________________________

School/Business Address ________________________

Phone Number
Home ________________________ Work ________________________

Fax ________________________ E-mail ________________________

Employing Authority

☐ NSW Department of School Education

☐ Other (please specify) ________________________

Area of Particular Interest

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary ☐ Tertiary

Membership (includes subscription to Connect magazine)

☐ Ordinary $50 ☐ Student $25 ☐ Overseas $50

☐ Institutions $80 ☐ Concessional $25 ☐ Corporations $100

• I enclose a cheque for $_______ made payable to PASTA Inc.

OR

• Please debit my credit card for the amount of $_______

Credit Card ☐ Bankcard ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa

________________________________________

Please check your credit card number before sending this form

Signature ________________________ Expiry Date ____________

What does membership of PASTA offer you?

• Positive support for SRC teacher advisers

• Practical workshop ideas for use in schools

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

• Regular newsletters and journals

• 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.

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

Mail subscriptions to:

PASTA Inc.,
C/o Joint Council of NSW PTAs
PO Box 577
LEICHHARDT
NSW 2040
A DANISH MODEL FOR STUDENT ACTION

Michael Skott was School Captain of Cherrybrook High School, NSW in 1995. In August of that year he was one of nine different secondary student leaders from around NSW who spoke at the 2nd International Principal’s Conference at Darling Harbour.

Michael’s topic was “An International Perspective - Effective Executive Structures”. He was well qualified to speak on such a subject, having attended schools in Indonesia, Italy, Denmark and New Zealand before coming to Australia. In these extracts from his speech, he reflects on the student representative structures in his native Denmark. At Cherrybrook, in the northern suburbs of Sydney, Michael had then been working to use this positive international example to make that Australian High School’s SRC more effective.

...In Denmark I attended a public school. Here I was on the SRC for 4 years... I was also on the SRC Board, or Executive...

“In New Zealand I attended a college in Auckland. The contrast between the New Zealand and the Danish school structure was quite a shock. The NZ school had prefects who basically only organised dances and valentine roses... The few things that were done were all done by seniors. We as juniors had absolutely no say...

“We moved to Sydney, and within 6 months I found myself as School Captain... I was so new to this country that I had no idea of exactly what was required of us as student leaders. The system... was only a one-layered SRC structure, with two chairpersons, a secretary, two advising members of staff, and a forum of 30 students. This meant that we decided on issues together and did everything as one big group. Or so it was supposed to work. What actually happened was the bulk of work ended up being done by the prefects.

“You have a high number of students who will actively take part in discussions but not much else. You ask them to go and see a teacher and they will tell you: yes we will do that; but do you think they do it? No! ... I found it was simply too big and inefficient an organisation to work with...

“The Danish SRC structure... is one which consists of two tiers. There is an EXECUTIVE and a FORUM. The Executive is a small group which makes all the main decisions. This group evaluates issues and researches them, does the organising of major events, and delegates tasks to the members of the Forum. The Executive should consist of approximately eight people, as the smaller it is the more efficient it becomes. (eg two School Captains, two Vice Captains and four students who have been voted in from the Forum)...”

“The Executive plan all the activities, and do the main organising. When help is needed, members of the Executive can employ members of the Forum to do work. An example would be to promote the activities at the multicultural day to a particular year group.

“The FORUM consists of the Executive plus four to six members from each Year 7-12. The main objective of the Forum is to put forward ideas and discuss these and to vote on different issues.

“When the Forum meets, they should be discussing matters arising and the Executive should at these meetings get a general feel of what the student body want... Voting on major issues should take place here to ensure that a right decision is made. The Forum should put forward ideas and discuss these. The issues which the Forum find suitable for further pursuit will then be taken up at the next Executive meeting. Here the issue will be discussed in depth and further researched. If the issue is still valid at the following Forum meeting, a member of the Executive will then present a short report on the findings... then voted on. This should ensure that any decision taken is not just made because it sounds like a good idea, but rather a decision in which the consequences are all taken into consideration...

“(This model) is more efficient... you will have results within two to three weeks as the research will be more in depth and done by students who are genuinely interested in achieving results... there is also an advantage of being able to have a bigger Forum without making the organisation too cumbersome. A bigger Forum correlates to more ideas and a greater amount of input, in the form of representation of most minorities and opinions within the school. The Forum then becomes a voice of the students where teachers also can attend as guests... can float ideas regarding teaching methods... promote interaction between teachers and students to together come up with new, better ways of interactively teaching a subject, hence making the subject more interesting for both the teacher and students involved... can also put forward questions regarding social issues... ”

Michael Skott

Michael attempted to implement this two-tiered system at Cherrybrook now nearly four years ago. We would be interested in knowing if other schools around the country or the world - public or private - have successful examples of similar structures.

February 1998
Training Junior School Council Members: Part 3

Training Day Activities: Main Themes

The last two issues of Connect reprinted information originally developed in 1989-90 (and published in Connect 61) about training activities for Junior School Council members. Part 1 concentrated on the nature and value of games, while Part 2 outlined some structured sharing approaches. In this final section, workshops that address some Main Themes are described.

Good and Bad Representatives

Students were initially asked to consider what a good and bad representative was like. They brainstormed some ideas quickly. Inter-school small groups were then given sets of cards on which some descriptions of student representative behaviour were written:

- Carlos takes notes in discussions.
- Fadi always asks what the class wants before he goes to JSC.
- Francesca never has a copy of the minutes of the last meeting.
- Greg is a bossy chairperson.
- Richard takes time to explain things carefully if people don’t understand.
- Sam listens carefully.
- If Barbara doesn’t agree with an idea she always lets you know.
- Dharshini is very patient and listens carefully to what the prep children have to say.
- Meagan asks lots of silly questions.
- Bruce only speaks when he’s asked to.
- Toula is all talk, no action.
- Georgina always lets you know what she thinks.
- Walter makes sure he only goes to every second JSC meeting, so that he won’t get bored.
- Omar encourages other kids to discuss their ideas.
- When Harley is chairperson, he always sticks to the agenda and doesn’t allow anything else to be discussed.
- Bobby likes to show off.
- Paris writes a JSC report for the newsletter.
- Amanda makes jokes during the meetings.
- Cameron likes to discuss ideas with John while the meeting is going on.

and so on.

The groups had to discuss each card and decide whether it described a ‘good’ or a ‘bad’ representative and why. The groups were also given blank cards and asked to write a further series of statements describing a good or a bad representative.

When the whole group reconvened, large figures marked ‘good representative’ and ‘bad representative’ had been posted at either end of the room. Going round the groups in turn, students were encouraged to pin a card on either figure and, where it wasn’t obvious, explain why they had said they were ‘good’ or ‘bad’. In some cases, students said they couldn’t classify the description as one or the other: they understood why a representative might behave like that, or saw good and bad aspects of the one statement, or ‘it depended’ - and so they set up a third ‘neither good nor bad’ category.

During a break, students pinned up all the other cards (the ones we didn’t have time to read out) in the appropriate place, and this display remained for the rest of the training day. Several schools wrote down the lists under ‘good’ and ‘bad’ headings.

Meeting Procedures

Video

An early activity was to show the video ‘Seen and Heard’ (Victorian PEP, 1985). Even though made with and set in a secondary school, students easily understood the procedures illustrated and followed up the screening with an active discussion on how to bring about change within a school.

Discussion

We started the session on meeting procedures with a straight discussion of information. Students were in school-based groups with their teacher. All participants had discussion notes in their booklet on topics of ‘Meetings That Work’ and ‘Making It Happen’.

This information was discussed for about half an hour (between two activity sessions) and was followed up at the next training day by a more active approach - for which these notes were made available again.
Meetings That Work

A meeting is when you get together to share information and to decide and plan things.

A meeting needs rules so that everyone understands what is happening and so that people work together. You can make these rules up. Make them suit what you want, like:

- only one person can speak at a time;
- you have to ask the chairperson for permission to speak;
- everyone listens when a person talks;
- when a decision is made, it's a decision of the whole group, even if you didn't agree with it or vote for it.

Agenda

An agenda is a list of what you want to talk about at the meeting. It has headings like:

- attendance (who is there)
- apologies (who said they couldn't be there)
- minutes of the last meeting (so you all know what was decided last time)
- correspondence (letters received)
- reports (from any group or from representatives)
- general business (anything else people want to talk about - but then write the name of the topic down)
- next meeting (when? where?)

Jobs

There are particular jobs to do in meetings:

- **chairperson:**
  - makes sure the meeting keeps going;
  - introduces the agenda items, one at a time;
  - makes sure everyone has a chance to speak;
  - calls for votes and decides on the result.

- **secretary:**
  - writes down what happens (the minutes);
  - reminds members about the next meeting;
  - writes letters for the Council.

- **treasurer:**
  - keeps a record of the Council's money;
  - tells the Council if they can afford to do something.

- **everyone:**
  - turns up on time; asks the Chairperson for permission to speak;
  - keeps to the agenda and doesn't bring up side issues;
  - suggests decisions that could be made;
  - listens to everyone's views and thinks about them;
  - shares in making decisions; shares the work!

Motion

A motion is a clear way of deciding something. Try to keep it to one idea and write it down so everyone knows exactly what is being suggested. Keep it simple.

You need at least two people to agree on a motion before you can even talk about it. They say why they think it's a good idea or why they think it's a bad idea - usually arguing like this: for, against, for, against ...

At the end of the discussion, the Chairperson can take a vote to see if most people agree with the motion or not. Or maybe the Chairperson just needs to check that everyone agrees.

After the meeting, make up an action sheet to show what was decided and who will do the things that were decided. It can also show when they will be finished.

Group Leaders’ Notes

This session is an introduction to how meetings are run and how action is planned.

It would be useful to start by asking members of your group about how their JSC meetings run at the moment. Who chairs? Who takes notes? What do you need to take notes? (to be able to write?) Perhaps there will be some stories about what can go wrong in a badly run meeting.

Do their meetings have rules? What are some examples?

The information sheet 'Meetings That Work' could be introduced here and read through, stopping at points to make sure everyone understands or to see if people can tell stories about the points.

**Practice:** try making up an agenda for one JSC meeting.

**Practice:** have a quick debate - someone makes up a motion - you could chair.

In the second half, introduce the 'Making It Happen' sheet by pointing out that it is important to do more than talk about things - doing is essential.

Get suggestions for some made-up topic to talk about: perhaps it's something that is facing a JSC. Suppose you have made a decision - now you have to act on it. What do you do?

Introduce the action planner on the sheet. Try filling it in together for the chosen example. What are the steps that would have to happen to make the action that was decided on, happen?

What do we need? Identify the three different types of resources. If time: introduce the idea of lobbying for support - the last two lines hint at this: you could expand on it.

**Time:** 15 minutes for each sheet - half an hour in all!

RESOURCES

What do we need to make something happen? What do we have already? These are our resources:

- physical resources (things)
- financial resources (money)
- human resources (people)

Work out who can support you, visit them, convince them of what you want to do, and ask for their help.

Making It Happen!

Your Junior School Council can have lots of great ideas, but they don't mean much unless you work out how you will make them happen!

**PLAN**

An action planner is a useful piece of paper - it's a way of writing down the main steps to get something done. Here is one example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of our plan:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What we want to do:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The steps are: 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and so on ...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Who will do these steps?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When they will be done:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What we will need:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who will help us:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How we will know what happened:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

February 1998

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Role-Play of a Meeting

For the training day following this, a role play was developed by the School Community Development Officers and consultants for a follow-up session on meeting procedures.

The play was intended to provide material for discussion of good and bad meeting procedures. The play was acted out initially by the consultants, pretty much as written here (but with some enthusiastic improvisation). Students then broke into small groups to write lists of the good and bad things they had seen happening. These were reported back and accumulated on a board.

The play was then repeated, but with students calling out ‘STOP’ when bad practices were seen and suggesting changes in behaviour. This was hard to do, so students were gradually called in to replace or advise characters and change their roles. The ‘Conclusion’ was written as a possible outline for an alternative end to the session.

This was then followed by a discussion in small groups about meeting procedures and rules, and then by a discussion of action plans.

Students ranged from grade 3 to grade 6. In one session, it was their first training day; in another, it was their third.

There’s nothing absolutely fixed about the approach; at a late stage, the network tried a ‘fishbowl’ in which some students prepared a meeting and role-played it, with the rest watching and able (eventually) to stop the meeting, make suggestions and replace ‘actors’. (More details of this are in Democracy Starts Here - available from Connect, see the order form on the back page.)

"Mucking About at the Meeting"

Characters: Chairperson, Secretary, Interrupter, Bossy, Bumbler, Good JSC Rep, Latecomer, Guest Speaker.

The audience has a set of minutes from the last meeting and an agenda for this meeting:

1. Welcome
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of last meeting
4. Business Arising
5. Correspondence
6. General Business:
   a) Competitive Sport: guest
   b) School Camps
   c) Other business
7. Next meeting

Everyone’s talking and mucking about:

GOOD REP: But my grade (and the other grade 2/3) all said they wanted a school camp down by the beach.

BOSSY: The grade 2/3! What would they know? They probably just want to go swimming all the time!

BUMBLER (to guest): What does your class think?

GUEST: I’m not a teacher. I’ve been invited here to talk about competitive sport.

BUMBLER: Oh, that’s good. If we had better swimmers we could probably win the swimming sports.

SECRETARY: Should I write that in the minutes?

BOSSY: Haven’t you been writing all this down? We’ve decided that all school camps should be at my Aunt’s farm. Write that down!

(LATECOMER enters with noisy apologies, but makes no other contribution to the rest of the meeting.)

CHAIR: Order! Order! Today we’re also talking about ‘Competitive Sport’.

GOOD REP: Didn’t we say something about that at the last meeting? It should be in the minutes.

CHAIR: That’s right. We’ve got the minutes of the last meeting... here... somewhere... Has everyone got a copy?

BUMBLER: Coffee? Coffee? No thanks. But could I have an orange juice? And a piece of chocolate cake?

GOOD REP: Here it is! The minutes of the last meeting have recorded a motion which says: ‘That the JSC invite a guest speaker to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of Competitive Sport.’

INTERRUPTER: That car nearly knocked Angela right off her feet! Great big red Commodore it was! But she’s alright. She’s at school today.

SECRETARY: Should I put that in the minutes?

GOOD REP: Isn’t that why we have minutes? To keep a record of what’s going on at the meetings?

SECRETARY: Oh well... I dunno. I just write down whatever I can remember. You know: a little bit here... a little bit there...

BOSSY: Well, have you written down that all future school camps will be held at my Aunt’s horse-riding farm in Shepparton? Go on... write it down!

CHAIR: Did we really decide that? Who put the motion?

BOSSY: Oh, alright then! I move that we go to my Aunt’s farm for our school camps. Alright? OK? Carried... I win.

(The meeting has descended into complete chaos at this point, with everyone talking together, about completely different subjects.)

BUMBLER: So, are we going to hold the school sports at your Aunt’s farm?

INTERRUPTER: My father drives a red Commodore, but he wasn’t anywhere near that school crossing. He works in the city!

SECRETARY: Should I write that in the minutes?

BUMBLER: Were we going to have a coffee or orange juice or something?

BOSSY: Horse-riding is absolutely the best sport!

GOOD REP: I can’t stand it any more! Meetings are a complete waste of time! (storms out of room)
The Good Meeting

At the end of this first run-through, the students are divided into small groups and asked to brainstorm around ‘Good Meeting Procedures versus Bad Meeting Procedures’ - they have to decide why the play represented poor meeting practice and where they will interrupt the replay.

The previous meeting is then replayed, much as it is written. However the audience is encouraged to interrupt and make suggestions about how things should be proceeding. Ideally, students will step into the meeting, become part of it and alter the direction being taken.

Conclusion

In order that the play can be drawn to a conclusion, someone should be aware of a possible scenario:

CHAIR: If the Council agrees, I’d like to suggest that we change the order of the Agenda. First of all, let’s deal with the question of school camps. Bossy, do you have a motion you’d like to put to the meeting?

BOSSY: I move that all school camps be held at my Aunt’s farm. Let’s vote!

CHAIR: Don’t you want to discuss it?

GOOD REP: It would be cheaper at the beach.

INTERRUPTER: It’s too far to drive to Shepparton.

BOSSY: Come on. Let’s vote!

(Great confusion; the vote is lost.)

CHAIR: The vote is lost. I suggest we really need more information and we should discuss this again next week. For that:

1. Bossy: will you provide us with details of how much its costs at your Aunt’s farm;
2. Good Rep: will you find out about one or two beach camps?
3. Any other suggestions?

Now, let’s move to the next item on the Agenda: ‘Competitive Sport’, and welcome our guest speaker.

(originally from Connect 59)

Surveys

The session on ‘how to conduct surveys’ grew out of an earlier training day in which the video Seen and Heard was shown. Students and teachers indicated an interest to learn how to survey students (and others) on school issues. The following was a first attempt to meet that request; of all these activities, this one probably still needs most modification.

Students worked in school-based groups with their support teacher, on the expectation that much of this material would need to be followed up back at school. Each group was given some general notes in their booklet on ‘Finding Out Information’ (see opposite) and the teacher read through these notes with the group. (It was expected that some of the material on ‘Ways to Show Results’ would only be dealt with at school.)

The groups were each given a different topic and asked to choose an approach to finding out information about views on this topic:

- What food should be sold at the canteen? Perhaps make a list of possible food.
- It is proposed that a football club be invited to the school to offer a football clinic. Should this happen? Only one club should be invited. If so, which one?
- There can only be one school camp this year. Which grade level should be allowed to go?
- Someone has proposed that a recycling depot be set up in the school. What items should be recycled: paper, glass, plastic, metals?
- The school is thinking about teaching a language, but which one? Greek, Italian, Japanese, French and Spanish have all been suggested.

Each group then discussed how they would find out information: what question/s they would ask, the form of the question/s etc. Students were to work in pairs and then accumulate individual results at the end, to look at their group’s results. They had 15 minutes to design and write up a simple survey form; 10 minutes was allowed for copying these forms; 20 minutes to undertake the survey. The people to be asked included the other students, teachers and consultants. We had also arranged that other consultants and personnel in the Support Centre (where the session was held) would be available to be surveyed if appropriate. The groups then reassembled to combine and present results: 20 minutes.

The particular value of the exercise was in exposing (for students as well as ourselves) other considerations involved in carrying out surveys: How do you ensure that a person isn’t asked several times by different students in the one group? What happens if the questions aren’t exactly the same? What do we mean by ‘leading questions’? Topics like these emerged naturally from discussing the exercise. The whole topic needed more time than we were able to give it.
Finding Out Information

We need to find out information to help us make better decisions and to help us convince others about what should happen. What do students think should happen? How about parents, teachers etc? How many support this ... or that ...?

There are many ways of finding out this information. The best way depends on:

- what you want to know;
- how you have to convince others;
- how much time you have;
- how many people you have to find out information from.

If there's a fairly small number of people, the best way to find anything out is just to talk with them and write down what they say.

With more people, where you have only a little time, there are several different types of 'surveys' - see below. You can use these to find out information from everyone.

With lots of people, where you don't even have enough time to give each person a survey, you can choose some of the people (a sample). But be careful you don't just choose your friends. The easiest way is to make a list of everyone possible (perhaps the school roll) and then pick every tenth person on the list and ask them.

But be careful! It is easy to make the survey come out to show anything you want, by picking the wrong questions, by picking just one group to answer questions, by having the questions suggest an answer etc.

Some Ways To Do Surveys

Some rules first:

1. Think carefully about what you really want to find out.
2. The question should be simple: only one idea in a question.
3. The question should be direct and clear: use language everyone understands.
4. Make sure the survey is easy to fill in: clearly set out.
5. Keep the survey short: not too many questions.
6. Test the questions cut on some people before you start: does everyone understand all the questions? Do they mean what you want them to mean? Can you use the answers you get?
7. Before you start, think about how you will show the results afterwards.

Some Types of Surveys (there are lots more!):

A. Open-Ended Questions

The person gives an answer to a question in their own words.
Example: "What did you like best about the meeting?"
+: easy to write questions; people can say what they really think;
-: takes more time to answer; some people have difficulty writing or deciding what they want; hard to record the answers and to add them up.

B: Sentence Completion

The person completes a sentence that you give them.
Example: "In this JSC meeting, I was pleased by ..."
+ and -: same as for A.

C: Checklist

The person is asked to tick the things agreed with.
Example: "In the meeting, I have:
[ ] taken the minutes
[ ] chaired a meeting
[ ] moved a motion ... etc"
+: easy to answer; easy to add up;
-: people have to choose from just the things you put down on the list.

D. Ranking

The person is asked to put some things in order from first to last. Example: "Choose which sport you want to play - from 1 to 4:
[ ] basketball
[ ] running
[ ] cricket
[ ] archery ... etc"
+: easy to answer; easy to add up;
-: similar to C.

E. Agree-Disagree or Likert Scale

This can help you to show how much people agree or disagree with a statement. There are several different ways to do it:
2-choices: true-false; right-wrong; yes-no; agree-disagree; etc;
3-choices: true-uncertain-false; yes-uncertain-no; often-sometimes-never; etc;
5-choices: strongly agree-agree-uncertain-disagree-strongly disagree; always-often-sometimes-seldom-never; almost-some-few-none; always-usually-sometimes-not often-never; etc.

Example:
"The Principal is a nice person: [ ] SA [ ] A [ ] U [ ] D [ ] SD"
+ and -: similar to C.

It was a good not having the Principal here!
Ways to Show Results

1. You can write down what people say, putting similar statements together or using headings (types A and B);

2. You can make a chart showing how many people chose each answer (types C, D and E):
   a) straight numbers of people:
      
      |     | SA | A | U | D | SD |
      |-----|----|----|----|----|----|
      | students |  15 |  8 |  3 |  9 |  4 |
      | parents   |  8  | 12 |  9 |  1 |  1 |
      | teachers  |  2  |  2 |  9 |  2 |  8 |

   b) give the choices a score eg 5 for strongly agree, 4 for agree, 3 for uncertain etc, and then add up these scores:
      
      students: 138
      parents: 118
      teachers: 57
      
      Then each total should be divided by how many people were surveyed in each group:
      
      students: 138/39 = 3.5
      parents: 118/31 = 3.8
      teachers: 57/23 = 2.5
      
      This can show where each group is along a line.
   c) as a percentage:
      
      |     | SA | A | U | D | SD |
      |-----|----|----|----|----|----|
      | students | 38% | 21% | 8% | 23% | 10% |
      | parents   | 26% | 39% | 29% | 3%  | 3%  |
      | teachers  | 9%  | 9%  | 39% | 9%  | 35% |

Meeting and Introducing Representatives

In the final training day for 1989, several 'representatives' from different areas were invited to form a panel. There was: a representative from a Federal MP's office; a State MP; the local Mayor; a parent representative on a Primary School Council; a student representative from an SRC at a nearby secondary school (who was also a representative on the regional student network). Rather than merely name these representatives and have them speak, five smaller inter-school groups of students ('buzz groups') were formed and each met with a representative first and asked that person questions about their role. We had provided starter questions from which the buzz groups soon diverged:

- What is your job now?
- How did you get the job? (were you elected or appointed?)
- Do you work full-time or part-time as a representative?
- Are you paid to do the job?
- Is it hard?
- Why is your job important?
- Did you always want to do the job?
- Did you have Junior School Council when you went to school?

Each group was also asked to choose someone to introduce the guest speaker to the whole group.

After 10 minutes, the guests formed the panel and were individually introduced by a student from their buzz group, who told the whole group what sorts of things the representative did. The guest then spoke briefly about 'being a good representative'. After all guests had been introduced and had spoken, there was a brief general question time.

(A further account of this exercise is found in the description of this training day by students from Gougerville Primary School in Connect 60, December 1989.)

The 'Who's The Representative?' Game

This activity was a follow-on from the above. The whole group sat in a semi-circle around a large board to which were pinned photographs of representatives of Federal, State and Local Government, as well as international figures. In the centre of the semi-circle were two piles of labels, face down. A student was chosen to pick a label from the first pile: names of the representatives. The student then had to pin the label under the appropriate photo. If the student couldn't identify the representative, or someone else in the group...
felt that the label had been incorrectly placed, they could challenge and put it elsewhere. The student then chose the next student to choose a label and so on; towards the end, some earlier challenges became resolved as the remaining photos became fewer.

If time, the second pile of labels contained role statements for the representatives, to be similarly matched with photographs and names.

The students were then all given a sheet containing photocopies and the names and roles of the representatives; these were to be taken back to school to be matched up as a revision exercise.

Evaluation

Each training day concluded with an opportunity for students and teachers to provide a formal evaluation of the day and of their future needs. These evaluation sheets were included in the day’s booklet, and were either completed individually or in school-based groups (with a single response being handed in). Some examples of evaluation questions were:

A. • I found today …
   • Today could have been improved if …

B. 1. What things have you liked about today’s program?
   2. What things could have been better?
   3. What things did you find hard to understand?
   4. What action will you take when you get back to school to ‘make it all happen’?

C. Students:
   1. How many of these programs have you attended this year?
   2. Can you describe how they have developed? What’s the link?
   3. What have you enjoyed most?
   4. Any suggestions for next year?

Teachers:
   1. Have these training days been helpful to you? How?
   2. Have you faced issues we have not dealt with?
   3. Will you be the teacher representative next year?
   4. What issues should we tackle next year?
USING STUDENT VOICE

A colleague and I are putting together an article for professionals in the areas of health, recreation, physical education, physical activity, sport, and personal development, in which we are trying to address the fact that there has been so little work done in listening to students' voices. We have found very little research where their 'voices' have been actually used, although have noted some in places like Student Representative Councils, and in some English classes, particularly in schools adopting the 'middle schooling' principles and concepts (and using Beane's approach). I am also familiar with Connect, Roger Holdsworth's contributions, Marg Batten's (and others') work, and aware of the much larger quantities of research relevant to North America.

I have heard there are some great things happening although have no details (eg Student Action Teams to investigate community safety related issues as part of the curriculum). If you can suggest any other possible areas where student voice has been addressed in Australia I would love to hear what you know.

We are actually more interested in voices (and I am aware of the arguments with terminology as per Giroux etc but happy to hear yours!) as in what students have to 'say' (verbally, written, body language etc, ie communicate) and how we have learnt from that... if anyone has. The diversity and range of voices, and indeed the politics and power of it all is great, I know.

Lisa Hunter
Department of Human Movement Studies
The University of Queensland
Brisbane Qld 4072 Australia
Tel (07) 33656989 or (07) 33656240
Fax (07) 33656877
lhunter@hms.uq.edu.au

STUDENT PARTICIPATION
E-MAIL DISCUSSION GROUP

To join: Send an e-mail to:
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... make announcements ...
... ask questions ... share
information and resources ...

Conferences:
'Youth Action in the New Millenium'
Training Conference
1-3 May 1999

'Community Helping Young People'
19-21 May 1999
both at: Kondari Resort,
Hervey Bay, Queensland

Contact:
Tony McGuire, Youthcare Hervey Bay Inc
PO Box 485 Pialba, Hervey Bay Qld 4655
Ph: (07) 4125 5798; Fax: (07) 4125 5308
E-mail: epan@health.qld.gov.au

Australian Curriculum Studies Association
Biennial Conference
September 29 - October 2, 1999
Perth, WA

Theme: Framing the Future
Issues: • Technology • Collaborative learning
• Values and active citizenship • Assessment
Contact: ACSA, PO Box 331, Deakin West ACT 2600

February 1998
Taking Children Seriously

This workshop, which is being organised by the Childhood and Youth Policy Research Unit at the University of Western Sydney Macarthur, is designed to bring together Australian academics, policy-makers and practitioners working in the area referred to as ‘the new sociology of childhood’ or ‘the new childhood studies’.

The workshop will focus on:

- the research of two internationally recognised academics working in the area of the new sociology of childhood (Dr Berry Mayall, London University; Dr Leena Alonen, University of Jyvaskyla, Finland);
- the work of some Australian researchers in the area;
- the applicability of this research, which positions children centrally as social actors, to policy and practice in relation to children.

A National Workshop
12 and 13 July 1999

Papers are invited – deadline 28 February there will also be other opportunities to participate in discussions and in a session in which researchers policy-makers and practitioners whose work focuses on children’s participation, will be able to speak about their work.

Contact:
Jan Mason (Professor of Social Work)
Convenor, Childhood and Youth Policy Research Unit
University of Western Sydney Macarthur
PO Box 555, Campbeltown NSW 2560
Ph: (02) 9772 6255; Fax: (02) 9773 0019
Email: Jan.Mason@uws.edu.au

"HOW DO YOUR CHILDREN GROW?"

by Clare Cole

On 27th June 1998, Mary Delahunty launched ‘How Do Your Children Grow?’ by Clare Cole, who is a founding member of the Alternative Education Resource Group. This book is a wonderful recollection of Clare’s experience of educating her two daughters, Megan and Holly, at home. It includes a detailed comparison with the curriculum of the local state primary school to which the girls would have been zoned to attend, had they not been home educated. You will find Clare’s book to be a fantastic source of ideas for activities and projects to initiate with your children whether they are educated at school or at home.

Clare began the book in 1984, then let it lie idle for many years while she was enjoying the experience of watching her children grow and learn. Her home-educating experience began with a belief that her children’s learning experiences could and should be an extension of their home and family life. This belief was reinforced time and time again as she watched them move through childhood and adolescence. She trusted that children could learn from a secure home base, at their own pace, and without compulsion, experts or outside institutions. Her purpose in offering home as a learning base was not to shield or hide the girls from reality, but to equip and prepare them for it.

Megan completed one term at John Gardiner Secondary College (year 10) when she was 16, prior to gaining entrance to the Melbourne College of Textiles on the strength of her portfolio and home learning background. Holly decided to go to high school when she was 12. In 1996, she completed her VCE at John Gardiner Secondary College with a TER of 96.5 and was awarded the VCE Premier’s Award and a scholarship.

Megan’s and Holly’s home-learning background gave them the opportunity to ‘learn how to learn’ the things they chose. It also provided them with all the skills they needed to move out into secondary and tertiary institutions, the workforce, and to be responsible for their own lives. Isn’t that what education is about? They enjoy life, continue to be creative, are responsible for their own actions and are capable of meeting their study and work goals. Clare continues to have a wonderful relationship with both her daughters and hopes that sharing her experience of what home-education was like for them will give other parents encouragement to explore all options when deciding on how they want their children to learn.

Many people do not realise that home education is a legal and viable alternative to mainstream education in all states of Australia, although each state has different legislation. Home education is a different way of life, which enables families to spend more time together.

Home educators do not necessarily heed the generally accepted standards, evaluations and goals of education, and their personal goals are not always quantifiable. Thus people choose to home educate for a variety of reasons:

- to facilitate a natural and pleasant learning environment, which is a continuation of that commonly provided by families in the formative pre-school years;
- to encourage participation in the real world, which allows our children to discover their life’s work;
- to provide time for our children to develop their ‘Consuming’ interests without necessitating a harried lifestyle;
Local and Overseas Publications Received

Connect receives many publications directly or indirectly relevant to youth and student participation. We can't lend or sell these, but if you want to look at or use them, contact us on:
(03) 9489 9052 or (03) 9344 9637

OTHER PUBLICATIONS:

Australian:

Curriculum Perspectives (ACSA, ACT) Vol 18 No 4, November 1998
Network News (Surry Hills, NSW) December 1998
Other Ways (AERG, Chirnside Park, Vic) #78, Dec 1998
Rights Now (NCYLC, NSW) December 1998
Starlinc (Melbourne, Vic) Issues 32, 33; November 1998, January 1999
Youth Studies Australia (ACYS, Tas) Vol 17 No 4, December 1998

Overseas:

Communication Research Trends (Centre for the Study of Communication and Culture, St Louis, USA) Vol 18, No 1, 1998
Education Now (Nottingham, UK) #22, Winter 1998
Leadership (NASSP-DSA, USA) Vol 27, Nos 4, 5, December 1998, January 1999
Lib Ed (Bristol, UK) No 29, Autumn 1998
National Coalition News (National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools, New Mexico, USA) Vol 23 No 3, Winter 1999

Documents

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

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

Code Description/Pages/Cost

452 The Q Files: School student involvement in evaluation of Quality! (OBESSU) August 1998
(32 pp; $3.20)

453 European School Student Rights Charter (OBESSU) 1998
(23 pp; $2.30)

454 A World of Difference - A school for all! Draw the Line! Stop Racism, Intolerance and Xenophobia in schools (OBESSU pamphlet) August 1998
(2 pp; $0.50)

455 Information Sheets/Notes from Student Leadership Forum: Karingal Schools' Network (Karingal Park Secondary College, Vic) November 1998
(8 pp; $1.00)

Friends of Connect

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

Supporting Subscriber ($50 pa):
Peter Carey Lower Sandy Bay (Tas)
Dr Helen Hayes Ballarat (Vic)

"How do your children grow?" ... continued from p 30

- to provide time for fantasy and reflection;
- to learn with children and enjoy their discoveries and achievements;
- to avoid unnecessary conformity and stereotyping;
- to provide more positive and varied socialisation than is possible in the school system;
- to provide a better or more time-efficient academic grounding;
- to provide for 'mastery' learning - measuring one's own progress and achieving a competence level, thus eliminating the emphasis on competition, and providing a solid basis for future learning.

From Clare Cole, PO Box 2045, Camberwell West, Vic 3124.

For more information about home education, please send a SSAE to AERG, PO Box 71, Chirnside Park Vic 3116

Lindy Fergeus and Levina Snow

STUDENT PARTICIPATION SUPPORT MATERIALS AVAILABLE

See the back page of this issue of Connect
Copy or use this form to subscribe to Connect and to order materials from Connect:

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

Miscellaneous Resources:
- Students and Work - 1985 Connect reprint booklet #5 ($5) $ ............
- Democratic Decision Making in Schools - Victorian PEP (1987) ($3) $ ............
- Democracy Starts Here! Junior School Councils at Work (1996) ($7) $ ............

Foxfire Resources:
- Sometimes a Shining Moment (Wigginton) ($25) $ ............
- Foxfire 9 (Doubleday Anchor) ($25) $ ............
- Foxfire: 25 Years (Doubleday) ($25) $ ............
- A Foxfire Christmas (Doubleday hardcover) ($25) $ ............
- Shining Moments - Foxfire video (1 hour) (loan for 1 week: $5) $ ............

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

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