Coping with diversions ... or just following up issues!

In this issue:

- NASPAC V: Hobart - April 14-16, 1999
- The Voice of Youth: Talkback Classroom & 3TD-FM
- Oz to US 1998 - World to Oz 2000
- Training JSC Members: Part 1: Playing Games
- Revitalizing SRCs: ACT Workshop
- Doing the Student Participation Two-Step
- Resources: Youth 98; Kidpower, Young Women & Leadership etc.

& Incorporating the PASTA Newsletter #8
This Issue

This issue of Connect starts with the first call for your participation in NASPAC V - the National Student Participation Conference Hobart, April 14th-16th, 1999. Students and teachers in Tasmania are already planning for an exciting day and evening where people - students, teachers, others who are interested and involved in student participation can get together to talk about initiatives and possibilities in governance and other groups.

One possible approach was being publicized in this week's column as Connect went to press. The Victorian Department of Education's Student Action Teams Project - with the VicSafe Community Safety and Crime Prevention strategy - aims to support "young people (undertake) ... action-based research and development and provide opportunities to play a role in local problem-solving initiatives ... encourage and empower young people in schools and other groups to develop project teams and partnerships with teachers, local government, police and members of other agencies to help create safer communities" (The deadline for applications from schools closes before this issue of Connect will be published, so schools and individuals interested to find out more should contact Graeme Guy on 03 9637 2354.)

I was also reflecting on student roles in setting directions for the future of their communities during a recent country education conference: here we saw all these people vitally concerned about education and community directions in rural Australia - where were the young people as participants in the debates and community direction-setting? Jonathon Sher was present and attention focused on potent role for schools as "engine-rooms" to focus and drive community development and direction-setting - as an incubator for the creation of local enterprise (as in the US-based REAL projects) or in health and safety issues, or in community issues of cultural diversity, welfare, resourceing and services.

Yet, as others such as Peter Kenyon have pointed out, young people are too often excluded from that vision - until they 'grow up'. We need communities that are inclusive of young people that value them, that give them valuable things to do, that recognise their skills, that treat them as competent citizens. And that actively include them in community decision-making and vision-setting.

To this end, I urge you to look at the Declaration framed by AYPAC (see pages 28-29 of this issue) which talks of an 'inclusive society'.

Roger Holdsworth

Front Cover

Cartoon from Bronwyn Halls, JSC Training Workshops 1990. A cryptic comment also hinting at: 'looking over our shoulder', 'looking backwards', 'going up the wall' ...?

Connect

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NEXT ISSUE: #114 - December 1998
Deadline for material: end of November
Invitation and First Call for Participation

NASPAC V

FIFTH NATIONAL STUDENT PARTICIPATION CONFERENCE

14-16 April, 1999
St Michael's Collegiate School, Hobart, Tasmania

Theme:
* How to Initiate Change for Effective Student Participation, Now and for Our Future*

If you're asking:

"Why go to Tassie when we've already got a 'good SRC'?"

"Why go to Tassie when we're doing great things in our school and have a good and broad understanding of what 'effective student participation' means?"

Our response is:

"You're the person we're looking for because you may not yet understand what student participation can mean!"

"Please come and share your understanding and success with everyone else."

NASPAC V will be the type of experience where you will think back on it and say to yourself:
"Yes, that's where it all began!"
At NASPAC V ...

You will explore the principles that determine effective long-term change and share success with schools from around Australia. You will assess your current situation, identify areas of common concern and work with others to find solutions. You will be challenged! However, you will have fun networking and make friends for life.

We have thought long and hard about what you might want from NASPAC V. We have planned lots of fun but we want you to leave with a plan incorporating goals for change and an action plan for implementation.

You may still be thinking: well, what if we did have effective student participation? What would it achieve? What does it mean for me personally?

Think about this: It would give you a real voice, not simply one that echoes through the corridors and falls on deaf ears. Effective student participation would give you power to make people listen. You would see a partnership developing between students and staff. Together you could tackle the issues of curriculum relevancy, exams, stress, youth suicide, tokenism and more, with a confidence that change could really happen. You would be given respect and develop a belief in yourself that you could make a difference.

The Program

NASPAC V will provide plenty of opportunities for you to workshop solutions. You will also meet and work with some very successful Australians. They will listen and respond to the issues you raise. Guests such as Robyn Moore (Professional Communicator and voice of ‘Blinky Bill’ and Friends), Margaret Scott (author and regular guest on ‘Good News Week’) and Paula Weiridt (Tassie’s new and youngest ever Minister for Education at 29 years of age) are all planning to join us.

Further details are being developed and will be publicised soon. We would like to hear of your ideas and needs.

Practicalities

NASPAC V will be held at St Michael’s Collegiate - a school in central Hobart.

We are also doing everything we can to make you get here in April. The committee is presently negotiating with Angelsea Barracks for the use of their accommodation facilities. It appears that may be able to gain the use of the facilities that accommodate 65 students at a very reasonable cost.

The Barracks is the second oldest in Australia: full of character, charm and history. They may even have a resident ghost - who knows. It is across the road from St Michael’s Collegiate, an ideal location.

More details of location, travel and cost will be provided in future issues of Connect and to those who register an interest.

Organised by ...

For the first time, NASPAC has forged a link between the public and private education systems to bring you a conference/workshop that will have a variety of perspectives. Our committee is comprised of representatives from the State year and 12 Colleges, State High Schools, Independent Schools and Catholic Colleges.

Register Now

Finally, if you are interested in meeting motivated, enthusiastic, goal-driven individuals then come to NASPAC V. If you want to plan for change and develop partnerships with teachers and students, then come to NASPAC V. If you want to make new friends, have a great time and see the most beautiful and enterprising state in Australia then be at NASPAC V.

It’s going to be a unique opportunity because Tassie is a unique place.

Kelly West
Committee Secretary
PO Box 47
Rosny, Tas 7018

Kim Robe
Committee Chair
C/o Sorell School
Sorell, Tas 717

Tel: (03) 6265 2444; Fax: (03) 6265 1219;
E-mail: sorellmail@postoffice.sorell.tased.edu.au

Fill out your registration form now!
We are looking forward to meeting you.
Jaimee, Joriel and Kim say: "Come to Hobart for NASPAC V!"

NASPAC V
Workshops include the following:

- "SWOT: Assessment of your school's current situation"
- "Sharing our success and identifying common problems"
- "Team work, not ego"
- "How does effective student participation impact on youth issues"
- "Hypothetical Challenges"

Copy, complete, return to: NASPAC, PO Box 47, Rosny Tasmania 7018

NASPAC
National Student Participation Conference

REGISTRATION FORM

Name: ____________________________
School: __________________________
Grade/Level: ______ Sex: M/F
Address: __________________________

E-mail: __________________________
Phone: _______ Fax: _____________

Registration Fee: $30
Payable before 20th February 1999

Accommodation:
Please contact me regarding the special accommodation offer: Yes/No

Share your ideas and leadership

I would like to...

- Conduct a forum
- Perform a role play
- Present a paper
- Report on significant change in my school
- Be a group facilitator
- Other: ________________

SHOW AND TELL
Please bring something that symbolises student participation at your school to include in our museum display.

October 1998
For many people, the thought of some 14 year olds invading the FM airwaves may be a daunting prospect. However, for my friends and I, who share a Thursday morning timeslot on 3TD-FM, nothing could be further from the truth. 3TD-FM (the name comes from our school - Thornbury Darebin Secondary College, in Melbourne’s northern suburbs) is broadcast live to air from 7 am to 10 pm every day for the last four weeks of each term.

TDSC is the only school in Victoria with a broadcasting licence (excluding universities) which, as you can imagine, has prompted a lot of media attention. It’s exciting opening up a newspaper and seeing a picture of a friend or a classmate.

The programs play contemporary music, with a heavy emphasis on issues concerning and affecting Melbourne’s youth. At any given time, you could hear a conversation on anything from the up-coming Federal elections to Geri leaving the Spice Girls. Unlike other stations, we don’t have a playlist and we get to bring our own CDs in, provided they don’t have bad language. It’s a good chance to not only play the chart-topping songs, but also to support and promote local Australian bands who don’t receive the recognition they deserve on other stations. Some shows even feature and showcase up and coming bands, letting them play live in the studio.

It’s a lot easier to relate to someone your own age than somebody on a commercial station who is twenty years older.

The station first broadcast in November 1996 and is found on 99.4 MHz. Each year the transmission has grown stronger and the listening audience larger. Currently you can hear the station anywhere within a 35 km radius of Thornbury where the station broadcasts from.

Many people think that it would be nerve-wracking and scary to voice your opinion, knowing that hundreds of people are listening and will ring up and abuse you if they don’t agree with what you say, but I can assure you that it’s not. It builds self-confidence and helps you overcome your fears.

The equipment, surprisingly, is not that complex either. There are four microphones and two CD players and once you know which switch connects to each mic and CD player, you’re ready to go. All you need is a handful of CDs, a head full of ideas and self-confidence.

Recently we had Triple M’s Timbo and Bedders to give us a stirring talk on the morals and benefit of working on radio. We were told that it’s very difficult to get into radio but we already have a great advantage over teens with our experience.

It’s been a fantastic experience and opportunity far and we can only hope things go up from here.

Kat K and Tanya T, Year 11

Student Radio - it may sound uninteresting and unprofessional! But 3TD-FM has turned the tables on the accusations and is fast becoming a hit with the kids and adults.

The station is the only secondary student radio running in Victoria, and it offers people the chance to listen to the late variety in music and the latest news and information from around the world.

It all started in 1996, thanks to Rory Ryan, who was 17 at the time - it looks like he’s going to dedicate his life to radio. He got our radio station started and now there has been over 60 students volunteering to present a segment everyone has their own taste in music.

In 1998, this is our second broadcast (the first was in June) and it’s as hot as ever. I can say that it’s going to get bigger and better, so staying tuned is absolutely essential. For 7 am to 10 pm, Monday to Friday, students’ voices fly through the airwaves and are broadcast straight to your home in the hope of presenting great news and music. The broadcast range of the station extends for a 35 km radius and people living within that area are lucky.
Students on the Radio - A Student Comment:

"Youth don't want their own way; they want their own say..." (The Great Repression)

THE VOICE OF YOUTH

Yes, it's that dirty 'Y' word again: youth.

We have the Government blanketining all 16-25 year olds under the one discriminatory Youth Allowance (would you call it the pension 'the old people's allowance'?). We have articles in newspapers saying the voting age should rise (whether the article was in fun or not, it was offensive - would you rule out old voters because they may not be able to remember who to vote for?), and we have the pathetic tokenism of youth in the media.

There is a real difference between having our voices in the media - but with someone else finally controlling how what we have to say is broadcast - and having our own media - where we can control what is broadcast. This has become more apparent to us when we contrast recent media work we have done at our school.

Recently, three students from Thornbury Darebin Secondary College in Melbourne undertook two months of intensive research into the drugs issue - particularly that of drugs in schools. I was one of those students. As young people ourselves (aged 17 and 18), we were able to interview drug users from a perspective not available to the more common, older variety of journalists.

Anna Ramos, Kirk McKenzie and I interviewed Les Wentytman and Henry Nissan from Open Family, Maureen Buckland and Jane Brick from the Waverley Emergency Adolescent Care Unit (WEAC), staff at the Department of Human Services (DHS) and Christine Campbell, shadow Minister for Family Services. In addition, we interviewed a score of young drug users (or abusers), ranging in age from 12 to 25 years, who were smoking marijuana, chroming, taking speed, and injecting heroin.

Young people can't help but be in contact with drugs in their day-to-day life, but our message was a more political one. We thought it to be a perfect topic for current affairs radio on the ABC. I, for one, had the idea that with the looming election, talking about the Common Youth Allowance in relation to drugs and schools was a perfect topic.

I was excited at the opportunity given to me to air my views. We were assigned half an hour, plus talkback callers in the morning time slot. Finally the voice of youth could be aired on national radio.

Unfortunately, and despite our expectations (or might I say: 'non-core promises') what went to air was controlled by the show's adult presenter: firstly, we had our time cut back to 17 minutes; secondly, the presenter controlled the interviews and (from our point of view) refused to air the youth voices unless they said what he wished; thirdly, the presenter attempted to show us as young ignorants who had nothing substantial to say; finally, he decided on the conclusion of the segment, and proceeded to present his own views, saying that the drug problem was not in epidemic proportions, despite evidence in our research to the contrary. I was forced to make the main point of the interview in the ten-second personal wrap-up with an impatient journalist gesturing wildly for me to finish.

He spent 17 minutes cutting off and diverting the interview. Sure it made great radio but finally it was simply a token effort on behalf of the media; listeners love hearing the so-called 'voice of youth' but, once again, this was, in reality, controlled. Stereotypes related to drugs were
only heightened by the approach and so too were the stereotypes of young people.

We couldn't help but contrast this treatment with the operation of our own radio station 3TD-FM at our school. On this station, sure we have to go along with legal requirements, but we can present our research in ways that we decide on and control. What we lose, of course, is the wide coverage of the ABC: we know that our school's station can only be heard in the local area, and that we only have a temporary licence.

The repression of young people on the whole could be one of the causes for the all-time low self-esteem of many young people. Futures are dim, and hopelessness abounds. Many adolescents resort to vandalism, violence and drugs - not because they want their own way, but because they want their own say. These outlets are their only public forum. If we were to nurture the self-esteem of young people and instil hope, or at least opportunity - depression, drug use and suicide (which are often in combination) would decrease. One way to help is to give the young a voice. Encourage them to write, to talk on radio, teach others and make them feel worthwhile.

It is fair enough for me to say what we should do, but not all will have the opportunities I have had.

One of my suggestions would be to erect a graffiti wall in 'Skate Park' in the city, a prime youth hang-out, where anyone could put forward their message - legalised graffiti to direct people away from empty walls of buildings. Another idea would be to make 'youth forums' cheaper: charging hundreds or thousands of dollars to attend decision-making forums does not provide a representative sample. Attendance involves only those who have a BMW to get to school and who learnt about homelessness from a textbook.

Showcasing the youth voice can also come from putting secondary aged students on the radio, be it on school community radio (such as Thornbury Darebin's 'Radio 3TD') or through projects such as the Talkback Classroom, a project run by Steve Cutting through ABC Radio. (Although, Cutting's hard work and belief in our political knowledge can easily mean nothing to journalists and producers who run their own program/agenda and, it appears to us, only care about keeping their listeners in the comfort zone.)

So there is no doubt that a selection of youth today are given an opportunity to represent young people of the world, but we must ask whether these really have the opportunity, w/ censorship is implemented to advantage of older people interests.

For a project which aims to implement a learning curve, it succeeded for sure. Perhaps I was not about drugs, but r/ about the ways in which na young students can be manipulated by the media.

See no evil, hear no evil, no evil on radio!

Emily Rho
Year 12, Thornbury Darebin

On air, live ...

"It is unendianbly the voice of youth," says Margaret Bruce, a member of the student executive that runs the station. "While other stations may attract a younger audience, 3TD is for the students, by the students."

3TD FM has expanded past the 3 day test broadcast period. Now in its third year, it provides four weeks of broadcast in each quarter and its shows now attract a wider audience, with increased variety in presentation and format.

"It's no longer kids giggling into the microphone, dedicating songs to their Mums," says a year 12 DJ, Rockin' Jack. "3TD has evolved. It is now a finely tuned outfit that mixes youthful energy with a stick to professionalism."

I have to agree. In three years the radio station, I have seen a huge growth in program variety and quality. The station now incorporates shows from community groups in the area. One of the more notable is the segment from the Northland Secondary College's VET music industry course.

The station gives students experience in the increasingly popular field of radio. This is invaluable for any student thinking of a career in any area of the media.

Many of the shows are curriculum-based, with media classes producing radio shows as part of work requirements. Greek and Arabic classes offer the cream of traditional music and popular music is the basis of Thursday evening's 'This is Tedious'.

Hugh McGinlay
Year 12, Thornbury Darebin SC
Extract from article in The Age, 1996

Contact: Paul Van Eeden: (03) 9480 4066
Doing the Student Participation Two-Step

Do we share a clear idea about what we mean when we talk of student participation? Without that clarity, limited and (at times) counter-productive practices can masquerade under an empty slogan of 'extending participation'. By identifying at least some of these limitations, it is may be possible to suggest ways in which limited practice may be improved.

Scope

Is student participation equated solely with the SRC or JSC? The very idea of student participation can be limited in scope. It is, unfortunately, still common to find both students and teachers who simply think that some form of student body is what student participation is all about. This can be accompanied by a token participation of students in 'safe issues' and, particularly, the exclusion of student participation from what is central to the school - the learning and teaching that occurs there.

Even relatively forward-looking approaches to Civics and Citizenship Education have talked of 'representative democracy' defines the scope of what being an 'active citizen' is, rather than acknowledging that having and exercising a valuable role within communities is at the core of our citizenship. So, school-based approaches have stressed the need to build on existing examples of 'student democracy' and 'leadership', to the exclusion of curriculum initiatives learning about active citizenship in schools will include support for active student voice and participation through Student Councils and within various areas of school governance, it must also include fundamental changes to the ways in which we structure the teaching and learning in classrooms - particularly towards thinking how we share purpose and demonstrate authentic outcomes.

Exclusion

Secondly, student participation approaches originally and correctly tressed ways to include students; it tempted to provide pathways to success for those previously excluded.

These basic ideas about student participation are constantly under threat from practices that target advantages to those already successful (e.g. choosing only the 'best students' to be tutors; setting up SRC elections that reward the already articulate and 'in the know'). For some schools, caught in situations where every action is thought of as 'selling' the image of the school, educational outcomes have become secondary to those of public relations; for others, the forms and activities of participation hide a commitment to the selection of the few for continued success.

A continued attention to selective ideas of 'leadership' or 'participation' will finally be self-defeating. Where governance or curriculum activities have excluded the broad range of students and have by-passed their interests, concerns and abilities, these students have grown increasingly cynical and angry at what they see as another form of coercion and deflection. Such initiatives fail.

Student-Centred Learning

Thirdly, ideas of student participation can be limited by being seen as merely 'student-centred education', 'active learning' or 'creative teaching'. It is thought that, by having a 'hands-on' curriculum, in which students are 'doing things', or conducting simulation activities, that they are active participants.

Student participation involves more than that. Active learning may be only the first step of the dance - and when we talk about student participation we actually mean doing the two-step.

The Dance

Step 1: Moving from passive instruction to active engagement

Inquiry-based learning approaches are characterised by an active role for young people in investigation and presentation. This is the first step in which we move from presentation of information by the teacher, and relatively passive responses from students. It is characterised by teachers asking: 'how can I organise for the students to do it instead of me doing it?'.

For example, in a lesson about the nature and range of local mental health services, a teacher-centred approach would involve providing students with a list of the appropriate organisations; classroom activities might then be focused on answering worksheet questions about this information. The first step towards participation would be to change this approach by organising for students to carry out the local investigation. They might, as a group or in small teams, compile the list of services (asking and answering questions about where to find information) and perhaps interview a range of these services to write descriptive paragraphs about what they do. This information would then be disseminated within the class and discussed.

The teacher role has moved from presenter of information to one of organiser of learning. The student role has moved from recipient of facts to active searcher for information and meaning.

But this is just the first step.

Step 2: Moving from activity to real learning of value

When we talk meaningfully of developing student participation, we really need to be thinking of approaches that go beyond this. These approaches also involve creating real and recognised roles of community value for the students and for their
learning. Each example of active learning can be 'pushed' a step further to create engagement with meaningful outcomes.

To pursue the curriculum example above, we could start by asking questions about the collection of information about the services: 'why do we want to find this out?' and 'what are we going to do with the information?' What might then emerge from class discussion are several possible outcomes: the students could publish the information they have discovered in a school newspaper, in a community forum or newspaper, or through a small booklet or pamphlet which is distributed in the area.

Students are now learning for a direct purpose. They are adding something of community value to their learning, and are being seen as valuable community members, doing valuable things. These are all direct indicators of enhanced mental health.

The challenges for teachers in doing the student participation two-step, are to be:

- inventive: we must always be seeking ways for real and valuable outcomes (authentic assessment) of learning - and that might mean recognising and seizing local opportunities as they arise; and
- bold: willing to leave 'safe' or meticulously pre-planned territory and embark on exciting uncertainty - a dance of learning with the students.

Roger Holdsworth  
September 1998

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Greetings from the USA!

I met an Australian Student named Jenny Nam at the NASC conference in Derby, Kansas USA this summer, Jenny wrote an article in the June 98 issue of Connect. I'm the Ron in Jenny's USA host family, Jenny sent me your publication, which just arrived today, so we've never read it cover to cover yet. What we see is that you are trying to get folks involved.

As parents and first time host families, we can tell you that it is a blast to be a host family. From the time we travelled to the airport to meet the America West plane carrying the Australian students, the excitement was everywhere. I would guess that 300 students and parents made the 20 minute trip to welcome the Aussie Delegation at 10 pm. In a gate area designed for 100, 300 spilled over quite a little! One would have thought that the world champion soccer team had arrived: cheering fans, welcome banners, posters, and people with flowers. Because the kids had communicated for up to a year and shared photos in some cases, they recognized each other and ran to embrace. Whenever the offload slowed and no students came off for a few seconds, the crowd grew louder: "Aussie, Aussie, Aussie....." And then another student or leader would de-plane and the crowd would clap and cheer. (I'm sure the non-delegate passengers wondered what the hell was going on.) A few days later, I discovered that when some of the Australians missed a bus to take them somewhere, they had to catch a bus that was going to the airport to pick up delegates from Kentucky or elsewhere. The Australian delegates got off the bus, went to the airport gate, and welcomed the Kentucky delegates with the same enthusiasm! Those delegates were dumbfounded - are you guys really from Kansas?

What does a host family do? Not very tough really - provide a sleeping area, sleeping bags, snacks in the morning and evening (ask for girls - they eat much less), and encourage them to develop a shower schedule to accommodate your hot water heater. Plus Mom and Dad should welcome and love their host kids like you would want your kids loved if the situation were reversed. Originally, we understood that you had to furnish a bed per student. Once we discovered it was a sleeping bag and area to sleep, we upped our request from two girls to SIX! Veteran host families told us the kids didn't sleep in beds anyway - they gathered on the floor. On night one, we had the six deleges plus our daughter and her friend - e1 in the basement! They had a great time and got along better than sisters.

The conversations are worth effort: with two from down under, two from Texas, one from Missouri, one from Chicago, and one in Minnesota, we had the diverse melting pot! These students were so gracious a considerate of each other and us. I came to learn about leadership and to what they could take back to their schools. They want to make a difference in their world. What an honour for us to be a small part of that.

In talking with Jenny Nam, she was impressed at the efficiency and community and businesses become involved. My recollection was that the Conference cost about US$450,000 to put on and that the NASC provided about $150,000 to $250,000 with businesses in the local community providing the rest. That's a commitment! She and our other delegate from Australia were both overwhelmed by what happened in this student Conference our community was.

Finally, as school starts here now I heard one of my son's teacher's say this: in his 26 years as a teacher, this was his best conference for students that he had ever witnessed. Parents, local high school students, and the community pull together to make this leadership conference the best one ever. I hope we succeed. I'm thrilled to have provided my small part - a safe home for six fine students to rest in. Our daughter served as a bus guide on one of the 4 buses the students travelled on: she helped with roll calling and helped students load unload and get from point A to B. Our school had a bus guide on each of the 4 buses that the group travelled on. My wife worked the registration, and our two helped carry luggage. And our golden retriever provided the wagging tale.

To the readers of Connect, encourage you to get involved. Jenny tells me that your country is hosting an international event soon. You do not want to miss a chance to play even a small part in such an event. I believe it truly is a chance of a lifetime for a student delegate.

And after this summer, I just love the following close: G'day Mate!

Ron Root  
<rsgr@gte.net>
PASTA NEWSLETTER

# 8 - October 1998

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

Since our last issue, a number of important milestones have been reached. Three of these are of real significance.

Firstly, Education Week 1998 was a special occasion for PASTA with our NSW delegates who attended the 1998 iRC-USA Tour being invited to a special education week reception at Parliament House by the Hon. John Aquilina, NSW Minister for Education and Training and the Minister Advising the Premier on Youth Affairs. The Minister enthusiastically received our delegates and instead of a short presentation of Certificate of Appreciation, spent an hour discussing our tour and other related projects with our students and staff present. We also took the opportunity of this special occasion to present the Minister with a CSC GOLD Award in recognition of his long service to his community and the people of NSW. I hope all members can use the Minister’s support and participation in our CSC Awards program to encourage their own schools, districts and states to take up this important active citizenship building and SRC profile lifting, PASTA initiative. All SRCs are encouraged to set up CSC Award Committees and to co-ordinate the Youth at Work and Citizen at Work programs in their schools.

Secondly, George Green extended to PASTA an invitation to attend the NSW Education Week launch of the publication Student Representative Councils - a practical Guide for Student Leaders and Teachers which, upon inspection, is a second edition cut and paste of our earlier SRC publication released to schools in 1989/1990. All NSW schools will be receiving copies it is hoped that effective workshops can be organised to ensure that those who should be using this valuable resource get access to it and training in how to best use it.

Lastly, and perhaps most significantly, on Thursday 4 September, I flew down to Tasmania to meet with Kim Roberts and other SRC activists to assist them in the organisation of their Tasmanian State SRC Council and first State SRC Conference (April/May 1999). While there, I attended the Australian Secondary Principal’s Association (ASPA) Annual Conference and I met with their Executive to discuss our affiliation and their sponsorship both of PASTA and our projects. Their response at this stage is very favourable. In the USA, NASSP has asked us to affiliate with them and also with the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (AHISA), which will then give us access to, and support in all 12,000 schools across Australia.

Applications for the 1999 SRC USA Tour have already been received. Although the advertised closing date was mid-September, we have decided to extend the date until the end of last term this year in light of the meeting I had in Tasmania with ASPA. It appears as though there may be a need in future to introduce a quota system for students interested in attending so that all States and Territories can be represented. Of the applications submitted so far, fourteen have been accepted, so there is still room if you wish to be a member of the forty strong student group we intend to take next year. We are also seeking support from any advisers who feel that they might like to be part of the eight advisers needed for this tour. If you are interested, contact Ken Page (Ph: 02 4396 6485).

A short three years to have moved so far. My thanks for your support and an appeal to all members to increase your involvement, attend meetings, help us to help you, take up our projects, help us organise training and development days for you and your SRC District Networks and finally accept the recognition you deserve by joining us on Australia Day, across Australia, by nominating and accept your own CSC GOLD Award.

Ralph Murray
Well, what did we learn from the PASTA USA Tour 1998? We learned that our anticipated fears were unfounded. Midwestern hospitality as shown by the community in Derby, Kansas was second to none. Our every need was met. The organisation of state rooms, workshops, general sessions, supporting displays, photography, entertainment and food, was over the top.

What we learned from this was that if the sponsors are big enough and generous enough and the people have a heart for the job, then everything is possible! And also, that if you happen to know any out-of-work ‘Star Wars’ pilots then a phenomenal laser display can be added just to brighten up your day.

We learned that though organisers strove for excellence there was an element of inflexibility and it was a drawn. We noticed a big commitment to ‘wa Chung’ (how do you feel when someone says something nice about you?) and a great reluctance to say anything that appeared critical. We want to share your dream – just have to work out how to do it!

The National Leadership Camps were structured differently. Students were divided into Councils at discussions groups which met daily. They work through a leadership curriculum guide which was issued to each student, in a much more structured way. Adviser and Junior Councillor’s selected from previous camp.

Oz to USA 1998: DID WE LEARN ANYTHING?

We arrived in Wichita at ground level, very tired after many hours flying over an amazingly large ocean and then some, to be greeted by half of Derby High chanting Aussie, Aussie, Aussie!! In two days we made a rapid transition from our previous ground state to the full hype of the conference and our stage debut at the second general session - the first student presentation in 62 year of the National Association of Student Councils conference!

Our presentations, student and adviser, were well received and compared favourably with the US presentations that we observed. In many respects the content and presentation of workshops was very similar to those at our own state and regional conferences, focusing on a leadership curriculum, topical issues of interest to youth, and topics of more general interest. We learned that violence in schools in the US is a real issue and were interested in our anti-violence kit for students. What’s it like in Australia? was the most favourite topic of conversation, mostly I suspect, because they ‘loved’ to hear our Aussie accent.

As for student involvement, their model, where every committee chair had a student co-chair, an excellent way to share experience as well as decision making and to meet the needs of students, so they can all participate in a meaningful way. In schools it seems that some have leadership as an integral part of the curriculum whereas others do not. It appears the US pattern is similar to that in Australia. Perhaps a similar promise needs to be extracted from all those assembled here in order to make the needed change: “Raise your right hand and say after me ... I promise ... that I will never, ever, ever ... say extra curricular again ... instead ... I will from now on always say ... co-curricular ... or my uncle Bruno will come around to fix your knee caps!!!"

directed the first half of the camp and for the second half leadership was handed over to the students. It may be the availability of these leadership camps that work against leadership being included as a co-curricular activity in many schools. Social activities were more participatory than the tourist activities at the NASC conference and again we felt as though it was ‘just like home’.

Our visit to Foshay High School in Los Angeles showed us how like home it was with year 8 student studying an astronomy topic in Science almost the same as ours. The Library made its Internet facility available to us, and the school band was at work, while the school canteen was gearing up to feed 1200 students in 3 minutes. Waiaue High School, Honolulu invited us to their leadership training camp at the University of Hawaii, Manoa. Hawaii is in ‘our pond’ so to speak at the opportunity for much sharing and laughter eased some of the tensions caused by our nearness to home. What did we learn about Leadership? Successful people have found a special blend of leadership characteristics, they live inside out. They value people and good deeds. Dynamic leaders have some characteristics in common: they are courageous; they are ethical and have a keen sense of fairness and justice; they have commitment and take risks because they know that over caution and indecision are robbers of opportunity and success; they have enthusiasm which is a sticky paste that helps you ‘hang in there’ when the going gets tough; leaders know that problems are only opportunities in work clothes.

Jeanne Bow (BSc DipEd)
PASTA VP Metropolitan

What did we learn ... continued page 21
A NEW CONCEPT FOR A NEW MILLENNIUM

First International SRC Conference: Sydney, Australia: 3rd - 8th October, 2000

An International Call for Participation

The years 2000 and 2001 shape up as being exciting and productive years for the world. Nowhere will that be more so than in Australia, that part of our planet known as “the land down under”.

Whether you believe - correctly - that the Third Millennium officially starts on 1 January, 2001 or whether you - like most of Australia - intend to celebrate the potential of the next 1000 years on New Year’s Eve both then and the year before, one place you definitely will want to be during those two years is in Sydney, Australia’s biggest city.

In 2001, Australia will recognise and celebrate the Centenary of Federation, a hundred years of its formal and peaceful independence from Great Britain. Some 250 miles southwest from Sydney lies Canberra, the country’s capital. ‘Canberra’, an Aboriginal word, means “meeting place”. Like Washington DC, it is a planned city, home to Australia’s Prime Minister and Parliament modelled on the British Westminster system of government.

But the real meeting place for the year prior to that - 2000 - will be Sydney. As we hope nearly the whole world knows, Sydney will host the Summer Olympics (15 September - 1 October) and its sister event the Paralympics (18-29 October).

Bridging the time gap between each of these sports meetings will be the First International SRC Conference (3rd - 7th or 8th October, 2000), part of an extensive range of activities being billed as the Sydney Cultural Olympics.

The ‘meeting places’ for this event will be at major universities and other sites in Sydney and the Central Coast area of New South Wales, about an hour’s drive north of the city. A visit to the Olympic Stadium complex, the historical Old Sydney Town and the unique Reptile Park plus boat trips through the magnificent Sydney Harbour will be part of the experience.

RATIONALE FOR THIS CONFERENCE

In Australia, student councils are generally known as ‘Student Representative Councils’ - ‘SRCs’ for short. Representation is the key to this exciting new concept in student council meetings - an international one.

The emphasis in the SRC 2000 International Conference is to be on "REPRESENTATION". Those invited and accepted, be they students or adults, must be coming as representatives of some organisation or association involved in some way with secondary schools, be it local, state, national or international. They will have a responsibility to express the views of their organisation and to report back to them effectively.

In the Australian context, ‘secondary schools’ includes all those with students in the age range from 11 to 18. Thus, schools in various cultures known as middle schools, junior high schools or senior high schools are welcome to send representatives along with more broadly based comprehensive high schools that cover a six year range.

VISION OF THE CONFERENCE

The SRC Conference aims to bring together student and adult representatives of secondary school student and adult organisations to explore issues of relevance to youth and initiate action which will address one or more of these issues. The successful staging of this Inaugural Conference is to be in itself one such action, aimed at bringing into being an International SRC Committee which will be responsible for carrying forward the initiative at future Olympic venues every four years.

CONFERENCE THEME

Student Representative Councils: ‘Building A Better Today’ is the theme of this very first International SRC Conference. The logo depicts a globe with the Oceania and Southeast Asian regions of the world highlighted at the bottom (‘down under’ remember?). The year ‘2000’ appears over the map of Australia. A chunk of the globe at the top is overlaid by a drawing of two representative students engaged in building a better world.

This logo was designed by 16 year old Anita Samson of Penrith High School in Sydney’s outer west. Anita’s sister, Anna Samson, is one of two current Student Co-Chairs for the Conference. You can write to Anna at PO Box 82 St. Clair, NSW Australia 2759. The other, responsible chiefly for technology, in particular our Internet and e-mail communications, is Greg Arrow of Bathurst in the Central West.
area of the state. Greg can be reached on e-mail at arrog@mpx.com.au Both
Anna and Greg are in Year 12.

ATTENDANCE, EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST, WORKSHOPS

Those wishing to attend, to speak or present workshops, present
displays or exhibits or stage performances are advised to let the
Conference Organising Committee know when completing an
expression of interest form, available in Connect, the
Australian youth participation magazine. This excellent
publication has been going since 1979 and is published
every other month. It now also contains PASTA’s regular
newsletter. You should write
or e-mail us at 1 Gladstone St.
Bathurst NSW 2795 or,
alternatively, contact Greg or
Anna or the other addresses at the
bottom of this information sheet.

If you live in the Americas, expressions of interest should be
directed through the Head Office of
the Division of Student Activities of the National Association of Secondary
School Principals - 1904 Association
Drive, Reston, Virginia 22091. More
detailed information about these
opportunities will be forthcoming
during the 1998 and 1999 school years.

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

The program is for five or six
days with separate and combined
sessions for students and adults. Each
day will have a separate theme, with
general sessions and workshops,
displays and meetings, performances
and excursions.

The first day, Tuesday 3
October, opens up “A Global World:
The International Context For All”
with the official opening not until mid-
afternoon to allow for arrivals and
registration.

There will be time for
Conference orientation for workshop
presenters, students and advisers, and
an International Steering Committee
will formally hold its first meeting. As
on other days, there will be business
and volunteer organisation exhibits,
campus tours, an Internet Centre and
International Rooms open. An
invitation dinner for organising
committees, PASTA, NASC
representatives and others will
complete the evening.

Themes for the following days
are designed to highlight issues of
importance to young people around
the world:

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

Workshops will be scheduled
on each of Days 2, 3 and 4 for
participants who are willing and able
to present insights into the themes of
each day:

Day 2 - Cultural Context Workshops
Day 3 - Youth Issues Workshops
Day 4 - Environmental Issues
Workshops
Day 5 - Action Planning Workshops

The fifth day will see the First
International SRC Conference
Forum, in which the student
participants debate recommenda-
tions and formally resolve to
undertake action on the issues raised
at the Conference considered most
important. This will be followed by

action workshops to make a start
‘Building a Better Today’.

Advisers will have had the
own chance to debate and make
recommendations in their “Issues &
Action Forum Dinner” prior to the
student debate, in which advisers
take no part.

At this stage there is still no
discussion of extending the Conference to a sixth day - that is, on
Sunday, 8 October. Another option
would be to make that day optional
for either more sightseeing in or
around Sydney or follow-up and ongoing action plans:
work to assure a sound base is
made at pursuing desirable
actions.

Other highlights of the Conference will be a parade
of nations and ceremony, visit to the Olympic site, a
Birchgrove Heritage Tour, a view of the Sydney, travel
by rivercat from Sydney Harbour to Central Coast, a visit to Reptil Park and Old Sydney Town, a St. Stephen’s
Adviser’s and a Hunter Valley Wine Tasting for advisers. The
Hunter Valley is one of Australia’s
to premium grape growing regions.

Time for sampling the multiplicity of
generations and cultural attraction
of the Sydney area and or further travel opportunities in Australia, New Zealand or the South Pacific region should be considered for either before or after the SRC Conference. Anyone
hoping to attend the main Olympic events should look at making their
bookings for these now as Conference
organisers are not in a position to
organise that.

SCOPE OF THIS CONFERENCE

The Australian SRC Advisers
Association - PASTA (Professional
Association of SRC Teacher Advisers)
is organising the event in cooperation with The University of
Newcastle, Central Coast Campus,
Sydney University and The National
Association of Student Councils
(USA). PASTA and the University of
Newcastle, Central Coast Campus
recently organised the first ever group
student council leadership tour from
Australia to NASC activities.
including the very successful National Conference in Derby Kansas.

This Sydney International Conference aims to attract between 500 and 1000 secondary student representatives and student advisers from both Australia and overseas. Students attending will stay with host families in both Sydney and the Central Coast of NSW. Accommodation costs for advisers will vary according to type of hotel desired.

Registration fees will be comparable to those charged at NASC Conferences, or about Australian $500 (US$300). The good news for those coming from the USA is that the Australian dollar is weak compared to the greenback. The bad news is that there will be a lot of people travelling to Australia around that time. Thus the hardest part - getting there - should be looked at as soon as possible if you intend to come for the main Olympic events. If coming immediately afterwards - just in time for the SRC Conference - there should be lots of near empty planes just looking to fill some seats.

CONTACT DETAILS

For further information or offers of assistance in this International SRC Conference and its future development, enquiries may be directed to:

Sydney 2000
First International SRC Conference,
c/o Charles Kingston or Greg Arrow,
1 Gladstone Street, Bathurst NSW Australia 2795
Phone: (02) 63322603 Fax: (02) 63322302
E-mail: arrog@mpx.com.au
and/or
c/o Ralph Murray or Ken Page,
6 Prince of Wales Court,
Terrigal NSW Australia 2260
Phone: (02) 43851888 Fax: (02) 43484005
E-mail: suepage@ozemail.com.au

SRCs AROUND THE WORLD

The first in an occasional series of articles leading up to the First International SRC Conference in Sydney: 3 - 8 October, 2000
Charles Kingston - Vice-President, National/International of PASTA
(NB Contributions towards articles about student representative structures and activities in other parts of the world and states of Australia are eagerly being sought. Please send them to PASTA or Connect as soon as possible.)

"WE ARE ONE BUT WE ARE MANY"
Student Councils in the USA and Australia

Recently an Australian group of six advisers and 30 students, from three states and the Australian Capital Territory, completed their and our first ever PASTA OZ to USA SRC Leadership Tour. (PASTA is the acronym for the Professional Association of SRC Teacher/Advisers, the national Australian adviser’s association affiliated with NASC - the National Association of Student Councils in the USA. Our regular newsletter appears in a separate part of this magazine.)

For me it was a dream come true, having attempted to do something similar as long ago as 1985 - International Youth Year - in conjunction with Roger Holdsworth of Connect and Julia Young of the then NSW Youth Forum.

Even though I could only join them in Kansas via the magic of video as part of their presentation to the 2000 NASC delegates assembled for the 62nd annual Conference (with its theme: “The Magic of Leadership”), their preparation for the trip was the combined responsibility of many of us who remained in Australia as well as those present there - advisers Ken and Sue Page, Ralph and Christine Murray, Jeanne and Graham Bow and our students.

Our enthusiastic and informative e-mail guides in Derby, student Shelley Good and teacher Sharon Thom, told us not to worry. “As soon as you open your mouths,” they reassured us, “you’ll be the centre of attention. Everyone will just want to hear you speak!”

Well, them at least. As a ‘Yank’ by birth and growth and an NASC fan by immersion, my accent was less fascinating but I was considered more knowledgeable on how different things would be for them in the USA, including the vocabulary: “Avoid the word ‘toilet’ kids. Call it the bathroom!” And such other essential linguistic skills.

ARE WE DIFFERENT?

Yes, Australian society and its fledgling ‘SRC’ movement is different from the far longer established traditions and structures of student councils in the USA. It’s a question of history.

There are many differences: in systems and structures, in official and unofficial recognition and support, in how we do things here contrasted with how the same things are done in the USA.
Consider, for example, the complete absence of an American football season in Australia. A horrifying thought, right? It's something I've had to learn to cope with for more than two decades. So what happens to those traditional high school student council run activities that accompany the season: homecoming? And pep rallies? And marching bands? Well nothing really, as they don't exist in Australia. While you don't miss things you never knew existed (no-one else here sympathises with me when the October autumn leaves only fall in my mind) it's clear the USA 'STUCO' calendar of activities from September to June has limited specific relevance to the Australian school year.

What's equally clear however is that such northern hemisphere guidelines and resources do have general relevance to us. Shelley and Sharon wisely also said another thing: "Teenagers are teenagers. Your kids will be more similar than different." The same can be said when comparing and contrasting our two closely related but distinct cultures. Are we the same? Yes. It's a question of being human, and learning to adapt the best of both.

The aims of our student councils, the fundamental commitment to democratic decision-making, the belief that what we, students and advisers alike, do in and outside of our schools is a vital and exciting part of education and a tremendous asset to the community and the nation: these are the same. So, as our kids and advisers in the USA discovered, is the sheer fun to be had from student council activities.

**A QUESTION OF ATTITUDE**

Thus, after 25 years transmigration in Australia, when it comes now to explaining their differences and encapsulating our similarities, I find it difficult. To make them useful, so that our hoped for continuing involvement with NASC and state student council activities can be productive for both ends of the Pacific, is a challenging task.

In a brief space, this article attempts to do that. I am reassured by the certain knowledge that it is far less challenging than that task undertaken by our 36 representatives at Derby, who took time and money out of their own school year and their own jobs to make the long and invaluable trip to represent their country internationally.

In that perhaps lies the key difference between our student council movements. Our representatives were overwhelmed by the enthusiastic and wonderful reception that greeted them at Derby, at Lake Tahoe and South Dakota National Leadership Camps, and while travelling through the Southwest and California.

Such a welcome, such positive interest in our International SRC Conference in 2000, such real acceptance of the value of international cooperation can, unfortunately, be contrasted with the relative lack of attention (issues of Connect excepted) paid to the trip in Australia. Some of our representatives were jealously rejected by their own student councils. Some, legitimately elected from a state system which has both a policy and a rudimentary structure in place to support such representation, were not even allowed to openly talk about their trip at a recent state student conference.

It's a question of attitude. Yes, we are different. NASC and state student council and adviser associations in the USA provide more than just the money and the administrative support for student councils. As important is their public stance and the lobbying that ensues from it. Student leadership is valued in the USA - to the extent those national and state organisations (and individual schools) have been effective in promoting it. Student leadership is valued in Australia - but only to the extent that individuals have made it so.

**THE BIG APPLE**

There are many differences between us apart from individual accents and the particular footy codes we enjoy. The USA has a huge population - over 260 million. Our international reps were fond of telling people that OZ was 11 times bigger than Texas but with only 18 million people - roughly that of Southern California. More people means more ideas, and more people to do the work of turning those ideas into action, whether for good or ill.

The good ideas that genera at the grass roots level and, since early 1930s, have nurtured national student council movements, have grown too out of lengthier history than ours and a more complete sense of the importance of its own many histories. National this included the American Revolution, the Constitution, particular its Bill of Rights, and the Civil War. But it also very much includes 50 unique states and thousands more school systems keen to include in their curriculum not only a sense of their own and the country's history but a active mea of involving their citizens in government.

Two things emerged clearly to our recent visitors who thought the 'knew America'. One was that they didn't. Not really, in spite of miles of Hollywood film and mountains of imported American goods and fast food outlets.

The second revelation supported the first. Each of those five states is different in a much more fundamental way than Australia states are. In Pennsylvania the 'controversial' issue of 'student government' was tackled head on and survived - with that state becoming one with over 70% of its schools linked actively to the national structure. In several southern states however, which have only a little over 30% national linkages, the term was not even considered. By comparison the needless and debilitating controversy surrounding it in NSW in the mid-80s, showed how difficult adapting useful overseas models to the Australian context could be.

When you compound that with the North American diversity with the complex weaving of different ethnic groups (like Australia, the USA too has been hugely influenced for the better by large numbers and great variety of immigrants), the underlying tension caused by slavery, of which we have no equivalent understanding and the multifaceted economic, social and educational alternatives presented by
rural, suburban or urban landscapes, you have not just 50, but incalculable numbers of approaches to ‘doing government’.

One consequence therefore is that the fifty different State Student Council Associations each do things somewhat differently. You probably didn’t realise for instance that the annual Student Council Conference in Texas caters for up to 4000 students - fully twice as large as the recent national equivalent. (But then, before our arrival, Texans thought they were big!)

There is no compulsory voting in America. There are elections, regular as clockwork, every two years - a presidential one every four. There are, in most states, lots of elected positions, especially at state and local levels. And there are ample opportunities for citizen-initiated referenda, even recall of elected officials - not by a party but by the people. But there is no compulsory voting.

How the thousands and thousands of different school boards - one, for instance, for Derby, Kansas and another for Wichita, only a ten minute drive away - decide to encourage or control both their junior (7-9) and senior (10-12) high schools’ student council activities so that citizenship is real and young citizens do become concerned voters and active community members, is as varied as the colours of the landscape. And as interesting.

A QUESTION OF STRUCTURE

Mostly, it’s a question of structure and support - in the USA case on a national as well as a state and district level; in Australia’s case, the lack of it at most levels. Or, where it exists, the lack of vision in it. And the time and will and resources to develop it.

There has been no Australian Warren Schull, no Gerald Van PooL, no NASC in Australia to prod and persuade, to move and shake the traditional way of doing things.

In 1930, Schull, the then Sapulpa, Oklahoma Student Council President spearheaded the formation of a Central Oklahoma Conference of Student Councils. His idea took off and was picked up by Willis Sutton, then President of the National Education Association, who invited the student to its 1931 National Conference. (Remember, this was 1931, and in the Depression yet.) Thus was born what eventually developed into the current National Association of Student Councils, with over 25,000 member schools.

Gerald Van PooL was Director of NASC for 23 years (1947-1970). In that time the organisation became the leading service organisation for student leaders. National Leadership Camps, such as those two attended by our recent Australian group, were developed, a vital publications program brought more services to the local school level and state associations were actively promoted. It was during the 1960s that all 50 states had achieved statewide student council organisations.

In Australia, things really only got started in the 60s. And then only in individual schools. Unlike the USA, neither the Principals’ Association, nor any other body, did or yet has willingly come forward to support it. Could this year’s successful USA trip and the PASTA organised 2000 International SRC Conference be the breakthrough? We can at this stage only hope, but at least discussions have finally begun.

By the end of the 1970s there had been isolated examples of successful student councils in some of Australia’s six states and two territories. With more a sense of British history than its own, however, Australian education took little notice and even less record of these examples. Nor did it endorse in any official way their legitimate place in schools. American student council history is, by contrast, well-documented and its position firm.

Twenty years on, the concept has a legitimate policy base in Australian state school systems. In private schools, the general practice is that of the British based prefect system rather than student councils - top down rather than shared decision-making. As always of course, there are exceptions. Some, like the NSW state system, even have a state structure for student representation. While its effectiveness as a voice for student opinion is questionable and its support of advisers negligible, it is at least a huge leap ahead from the non-existent policy and absence of support when some of us still involved began communicating with each other.

THE CURRICULUM COMPONENT

But Student Councils as legitimate curriculum? Well, in spite of all the above success, not really. Not in Australia anyway. In the USA it is relatively common for schools to have a regularly timetabled class called “Student Council” or “Student Leadership”. Students not only receive legitimate academic credit for their work - credit taken into account by universities in assessing the likely success of students for enrolment - but the guidance of a teacher trained in that field.

Most critically, students choosing to do the course, most often in Years 12 and 11, are provided legitimate time - classroom time - to receive the training and do the jobs expected of such roles. Their leadership and representational positions are seen by the School Boards, as by staff and parents, as important curriculum components with legitimate time and resource demands.

Through NASC and its parent body, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and the various State Associations, there are printed and audio-visual resources galore. I’ve seen the vast library in the Head Office in Reston, Virginia. Its titles range from the general - “Student Structures: Moving Towards Student Government”, “How To Run An Efficient and Effective Student Activities Program” and “How To Change Your School” - through to practical activities - “Student Council Activity Resource Book”, “Student Projects” and the annual “NASSP National Advisory List of Contests and Activities”.

Numerous other titles attest to the range of skills and issues that are considered legitimate aspects of the student leadership curriculum: “Preparing for Leadership - A Young Adult’s Guide to Leadership Skills in

For some twenty years, copies of much of that material have been available through me and the student council organisations with which I have been associated, including most recently through PASTA. By becoming a member of PASTA and in addition joining NASC, schools and individuals can now also access their nine times a year student council magazine titled ‘Leadership’ in addition to other services provided. Previous titles of this useful publication have been ‘Student Advocate’ and ‘Student Activities’, back copies of which are also available.

Sadly, Australian Education Departments, schools and even SRC Advisers have largely chosen to ignore those resources in spite of both numerous attempts to raise awareness of their existence and the pleas of advisers for advice. Recently the NSW Department of Education, through its Welfare Branch, revised and reissued its 1988 Student Council Handbook. While an attractive and handy reference, its scope is limited. Not once in the process of putting it together was any serious attempt made to seek out these resources, much less consult with me or any others who have access to them or NASC. As with the ‘STUCO’ yearly calendar mentioned in the introduction, their general relevance, even allowing for cultural differences, should alone have warranted research and consultation.

ALWAYS A BRIDESMAID, NEVER A MARRIAGE

Thus, unlike in much of America, in the daily running of schools here, student councils and student leadership projects are still nearly always considered an ‘extra’ - as in extracurricular - never an essential. In Australia, student councils and student leadership courses are rarely timetabled or recognised on student reports; the knowledge, skills and attitudes gained from involvement rarely considered by universities for admission.

Thus, the traditional USA reliance on Year 11 and Year 12 students to be the school’s active, committed leaders faces stiff competition from what are perceived as far more important academic needs. (“That conference or whatever it is in America is all very well dear, but it won’t get you the mark you need on your HSC now will it!”) It’s a hard one to argue against when the society as a whole finds such involvement puzzling at best, an irrelevant distraction the older the students get.

Rarer still is the establishment of a position of student council adviser, with time and or money provided, as a permanent and essential staffing position. There are no ‘activity advisers’ in the sense that NASC and USA schools know them. (Host school classroom teachers coordinating each year’s NASC Conference, for instance, are on half load for a semester, then totally freed from normal classroom duties for the second semester prior to the Conference. To a lesser extent, similar allowances are made for state and district activities.) While some enlightened schools and some systems, like the Australian Capital Territory, make time allowances for such activity, there is no consistent pattern in Australia.

And there is certainly no formal training for the job. Too often, it goes to the ‘unfortunate’ new, usually young teacher who happens to be seen by the Principal when ‘those other jobs’ created by someone’s transfer are being doled out. In most school systems in the USA, incremental salary rises are accrued for extra training, including such things as attending an NASC National Conference as our six Australian advisers recently did.

It’s a question of accountability. And resources. And status. The United States student council movement has all that - to some extent. Australia doesn’t - to some extent. But we are on the move.

CIVICS AND CITIZENSHIP ACTIVITIES

Successful secondary student councils in the USA tend to be links in their programs and their place in their schools to the whole gamut of activities in the school, with a role in setting the overall activities calendar as well as planning events themselves. Through their community service projects - our 19% Conference delegates experienced a huge range of these in Kansas - the school activities are positively spread throughout the larger community. In addition, the importance of knowing how government works and becoming confident and skilled in working with it is a facet of the best case practices in the USA student council movement.

By contrast, Australian Student Councils have generally had little say over other activities in the school, until recently and in only some cases, tending in the main to be fund-raising and socially oriented organisations. While this traditional role may not be all that different from many of the less developed councils in North America, and while here it is slow, sometimes dramatically changing, the scope of involvement and the recognition of those who are involved falls far short of best practice across the Pacific.

True, in Australia there is generally no big emphasis on elections and positions as many USA models employ. No great campaigns here. Often not even many posters or speeches. For much of the student body in most of the schools, the SRC is still either an unknown or perceived as an elite club. This happens also in many USA schools.

The apolitical attitude of teenagers generally is part of the reason. So too, is the huge attention paid to sports and to a lesser extent the arts. How can organising activities compete with the beach. Or being on TV?

However, the relative lack of emphasis in Australian schools on its own history and on education in civics or government is also part of the
reason things are so different here. With no revolution to stir its fundamental sense of identity, no civil war to rupture it and without the economy or location to deal with superpower status, Australians have until recently, been ambivalent about the importance of their own history. With 100 years of official if peaceful independence from Britain being commemorated in 2001 there is now a revived recognition of civics and citizenship education. It is too early yet, and curriculum documents being what they are, too abstract at present, to predict whether such will impact positively on the student leadership area, as it has over the last 70 years in the USA.

LESSONS FROM OZ

But the picture is not all one-sided. As Australia has much to gain from learning from international models such as the best case practices in the USA student council movement, so too can our colleagues abroad learn from us. If we as students, as educators, as a nation choose to promote what we’ve been largely reluctant to in the past (Connect - again - excepted) then a more positive image should better match the increasingly positive reality.

Where well-run and well-supported by the staff and the community, student councils in Australia have often taken on planning and promotion of some quite innovative and socially conscious activities, especially in recent times in the areas of welfare and environment. Students in many schools now regularly are part of school committees dealing with serious policy issues on peer harassment, drugs, vandalism, technology. Student opinion affects, in some cases even involves itself in both the content and the delivery of curriculum. In Victoria for much of the 1980s, student representatives were mandated as part of secondary School Councils.

In districts with supportive advisers, and especially those in the towns and suburbs with a real sense of community, students are asked to speak or assist at educational seminars, services clubs, conferences and in other schools on a wide variety of issues. Since 1979 at least, at the best run leadership and peer support camps, students have been involved not only in selecting the topics to be addressed, but working as co-staff members to run the camps. Similar to the JC (Junior Councillor) concept at USA National Leadership Camps yes, but with the key difference that these students are still in high school.

And, again to some extent - best case practice always provides positively useful examples - Australian student councils and student participation projects promote an active involvement in educational decision-making and an awareness of serious issues in society that may surpass that in many North American schools, especially in those 40% or so of schools which do not link with the national structure there.

Where they exist, district, regional or state student council camps for more than a decade now have regularly addressed more than just skills development and motivation, choosing instead to communicate about controversial social and political issues from racism to homophobia, from unemployment to youth suicide. And not only to ‘talk about’ but to attempt to develop useable action plans to pursue in their own communities and collaborate with others to achieve recognisable goals.

AND WHERE TO NOW?

In 1999 and 2000 both Australian and North American student councils, their teachers and advisers, their schools and their communities have a lot to gain if they choose to join their already affiliated national and international colleagues. All the policies and projects currently in various stages of development are open to all and need assistance to succeed. Amongst the most important to us are:

1. The Community Service Certificate Project (the CSC) to recognise voluntary effort and active citizenship;
2. Increased recognition of SRCs as legitimate parts of the curriculum of schools, in particular as part of the civics and citizenship area;
3. Increased recognition, support and resources (especially time) for SRC Advisers and SRC students to do effectively what they know is without question educationally valid and stimulating;
4. The continuing development of PASTA as a national association with active international affiliations and sharing of activities and resources;
5. Continuation of annual conferences in NSW and the NSW SRC, with renewed emphasis on both as legitimate avenues for real student participation;
6. The beginning of state student council structures in other states, in particular ACT, Victoria and Tasmania where such has already begun;
7. The initiation of a national student parliament to meet every two years in the Old Parliament House in Canberra, the nation’s capital;
8. The Fifth NASPAC (National Australian Student Participation Conference) in April 1999 in Hobart;
9. Two more annual (June/July) PASTA OZ-USA SRC Leadership Tours - to Roseville, Minnesota in 1999 and Cupertino, California in 2000;
10. The world comes to Sydney in September/October of 2000 for the First International SRC Conference (and, oh yes, the Olympics and Paralympics too!).

With NASC, IOC and Australian government support, establishment of an International SRC Olympiad Committee for the continuation of International Conferences once every four years should be one successful outcome of that international conference. We look forward to sharing this exciting new stage of Student Council development with you.

The future, as always, shimmers brightly. The present, as usual, remains challenging, awaiting many many others to light candles illuminating its current shadows. Write, call, e-mail. Join us. Be with us ‘down under’ in 2000 and light candles with us.

Charles Kingston
PASTA Vice-President
EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
1st INTERNATIONAL SRC CONFERENCE
SYDNEY 2000

USHERING IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

In October 2000 - between the Sydney Summer Olympics and the Paralympics which follow - PASTA is organising the first International SRC Conference. Our aim is to attract as many secondary student leaders and advisers as our sponsorship and venues will allow. Our maximum aim is of course for 2000 participants to match the many year 2000 Olympic celebrations around Australia.

CREATING AN INTERNATIONAL SRC OLYMPIAD

We hope you are interested in this exciting project. If you are, please photocopy this page of the PASTA insert and distribute a dozen or a score or hundreds of these to your peers, colleagues, business associates and contacts throughout Australia and the world. Help us to help you be proud that our country is behind this major cultural Olympic year event.

TAKE PART IN PLANNING YOUR FUTURE

Send your completed copy to us so we can move ahead and keep you involved in the project. If you want to really show your interest fill out all of the page and become a member of both PASTA and the 2000 Conference Committee.

As part of the important preparation for the Sydney 2000 SRC Conference - currently scheduled to be held from 3-8 October in between the Olympics and the Paralympics - PASTA and Connect hope to run a series of articles highlighting student participation and leadership structures and activities in various parts of the world. However, very little is known.

We need information.
Let us know what is happening (or not happening) in your School, District, State or Nation so that we can share that information. All sources will be credited in the ensuing articles.
The following is an outline of proposed articles for what we hope will be a regular column in coming issues of Connect.

Nov 98    New Zealand / PNG
Jan 99    Australian States
Mar 99    Western Europe
May 99    Indian / Asia
Sept 99   USA
Nov 99    Southern Africa
Jan 2000  Latin America
Mar 2000  Eastern Europe
May 2000  Middle East
July 2000  Pre-Conference outline
Sept 2000 Conference Special
Nov 2000  Conference Evaluation

And then Athens 2004 ...who knows?

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FORM
SYDNEY SRC 2000 CONFERENCE

A. Contact Details:
Name(s):
______________________________
______________________________

Position:

Organisation or School:

Mailing Address:  

Phone:

E-mail (if available):

B. I am / We are interested in: (tick all that apply to you)
___ 1. Attending the SRC 2000 International Conference
___ 2. Making a presentation at the Conference
___ 3. Being on the Conference Steering Committee
___ 4. Helping to sponsor this International Conference

C. Attached are a few ideas on:
___ 1. A possible theme and / or logo.
___ 2. Publicity and promotional material.
___ 3. Keynote speakers and / or performing artists.
___ 4. Workshop topics.
___ 5. Other (eg venues, caterers, transport, tours)

RETURN TO:
SRC 2000 Conference Steering Committee
1 Gladstone Street Bathurst NSW 2795
Phone: (02) 6332 2603; Fax: (02) 6332 2302
e-mail: arrog@mail.mpx.com.au
US Trip ... What Did We Learn? (continued from page 12)

When I first got to the conference I thought that these Americans were crazy! All they wanted to do was to swap badges and other stuff which we had not been told about. The opening ceremony of the Conference was mind-boggling: a huge light and sound show with 2000 people in one big room. One of the sessions which I attended was an ice-breaker session which emphasised being yourself and not worrying about what others would say and think.

On the last day we were put into groups to do some inter-State idea sharing. In these groups we discussed issues like ‘violence in schools’ (including guns in schools). This lead to a discussion about the shootings of students in America. We had a very long talk about this issue. I found that most students didn’t really want to address the problem and felt that they couldn’t change the gun laws. In fact, a few voiced an opinion that they should have the right to a firearm to protect themselves. Then there was one guy who was totally against the idea of taking weapons to school. He voiced his ideas well and most people listened to him. Some people said that the reason they took guns to school was to protect themselves; their schools have up to six thousand students and they said that the teachers can’t be expected to know every single student.

Overall, I felt that the American SRCs were more of a ‘show-piece’ than actually being bodies which dealt with issues. For example, they were saying how big the problems were with shootings in schools but did not want to face the issue head-on.

David Carter
Bairnsdale Secondary College, Vic

Following on from the success of the first USA SRC Tour, the members of PASTA are proud to announce their willingness to organise future tours to attend these conferences on an annual basis. The Conference will be held in the following locations over the next three years:

- 1999 - Minneapolis, Minnesota;
- 2000 - San Francisco, California;
- 2001 - North Carolina.

Applications for the 1999 tour have already been called for and so far 18 people have been successful. If you are currently in Year 9 to Year 12 and are interested in this or later tours, contact the tour organiser (Ken Page) on:

Phone: 02 4396 6485; Fax: 02 4393 1157 or E-mail: <suepage@ozemail.com.au>

Hollie Gravener
Bairnsdale Secondary College, Vic

LATE FLASH

On Thursday, September 17, during Education Week in New South Wales, the NSW students and advisers who attended the first SRC Tour to the USA were invited to have morning tea with the Minister for Education and Training, John Aquilina. In recognition of their contribution to the success of this tour, they were presented with a Certificate of Congratulations by the Minister.
NSW 2040
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I recently attended an all-day workshop for Canberra SRCs. The afternoon workshop was on the topic (which we’d previously identified) of revitalising SRCs. The workshop was facilitated by Roger Holdsworth, editor and publisher of Connect. Although brainstorming symptoms and ideas was a slow process, once the discussion started everyone’s mind seemed to open up.

So the question is: why is revitalising your SRC so important? If the SRC is not being heard by the teachers and having its input into the school, then the students are not really being able to voice their thoughts and exercise their rights effectively.

How do we combat this dead or stagnant SRC?

That is a good question. After hearing of some of the problems - a lack of time, teachers who dominate discussion, students who don’t seem to care - some people at this ACT workshop said: "Get a new, more involved teacher" or "Go on a planning camp or workshop". Both of these are good ideas however they may not always fix every problem, so here are some other points that the workshop came up with that might help you to combat laziness in your SRC:

Starting:

- Go on a camp or training day where experts come and talk to your SRC on ways to run an SRC productively.
- Approach former students (ex SRC members) to come back to the school and talk about how important an SRC really is in the larger world.
- Set up a meeting of all representatives and brainstorm around the question: “Why do we really have an SRC?”

Time and importance:

- Ask the school if the SRC could become a class or elective within the curriculum.
- Ask the school to include the SRC in the curriculum; perhaps not as a fully fledged class, but also not just to let it become part of the education only of the students who want to do it.

Getting the right people:

- Instead of elections being held on the basis of a single person wanting to be on the SRC, students could make ‘tickets’ or ‘parties’ to be elected.
- If a person fails to attend three meetings in a row, then move a motion to remove that person from the SRC.
- If a person is not performing to a high enough standard on the SRC, then ask for a new person to take their spot.
- If a person is given a job during a meeting, then get the SRC President, Vice President or even the teacher to pressure them into completing the set task between meetings.

Unfortunately that is all we could come up with in a short session, however we hope that they have helped you in some way. We would be interested to hear your ideas too.

Karl Schubert
Belconnen High School, ACT
Training Junior School Council Members: Part 1

In Connect 61 (February 1990), we outlined some ideas for Training Days for primary school students on Junior School Councils and Student Representative Councils. These ideas drew on practices in schools in the northern suburbs of Melbourne (some of these schools are highlighted in the publication Democracy Starts Here! Junior School Councils at Work - available from Connect, see page 32). These schools (and others) have continued to meet and to run training days for their students.

The following information is edited and reprinted from Connect 61 (now almost out of stock) and is the first part of a collection of ideas - here, concentrating on games. The work of students, teachers and consultants associated with these Networks is warmly acknowledged.

JSC Training Days

Training days for students on Junior School Councils were first offered within these Networks in 1988 as a response to requests from the schools for support. Sharing ideas between students was valuable, both in gaining ideas and also in encouraging students to reflect on what they were doing through presenting information to others about their own schools.

The training days were operated as half-day sessions - a session that ran longer than a half day was both too long for the students and too disruptive to the schools.

Training days operated around such themes/slogans as:
- "So we can let each other know what we are doing and so we can work on making our Junior Councils even better."
- "How do meetings work? What are office bearers? How to promote your JSC at your school. How to be a good representative. Making it all happen. Discuss good ideas."
- "More about meetings; how to conduct surveys."
- "Student democracy: being a good representative."

Program Principles

In planning the training programs, the following principles have emerged. These are enlarged upon in the details of the activities given below:
- the program should involve students as actively as possible - even straight information presentations should be as practical and as active as possible;
- students should all be treated as competent and valued people and the program activities should build upon this sense of competence for all students;
- the program activities should encourage students to make presentations to the group as a whole;
- activities should stress cooperation rather than competition and should not allow discrimination on the basis of gender, background etc.

Program Booklet

The program material for each training day was put together in a booklet. This usually contained a face page reflecting the advertising leaflet for the day, the program outline, discussion guidelines, worksheets, information/note space for students to take notes, an evaluation sheet etc. Students appreciated being able to take something concrete away from the day.

Program Details

Games

'Warm-up' games are played for a number of reasons - but it is important that there are reasons, and that the particular games are chosen with aims in mind that complement the whole day. In some cases, the actual content of the game can relate directly to the training session (eg the A B Pairs game below gets students to argue around situations related to JSCs). In other cases, the games have underlying reasons to do with developing cooperation etc.

We have found that there are some general principles underlying these games:
- they must be fun - and encourage students to relax;
- there must be some point to the game - not just activity for its own sake;
- the game must seek to make everyone welcome and not belittle anyone;
- they need to involve the adults present as well as the students;
- they can be 'dagg', encouraging informality and friendliness.

Often these training days bring together large numbers of students who have not met each other before. At the start, students stay within 'safe' school-based groups, sitting quite separate around the room. This separation can easily continue into discussion groups with students unwilling to speak in front of strangers. The overriding aim of the introductory games is to put students at ease.

There is a clear difference between training days that start with a game and those that don't. The games serve to introduce participants, break barriers between school groups, energise students and encourage discussion. (These games are not only applicable to primary school students - they are necessary and work equally with secondary school students and adults.)

We can identify particular group of games with similar aims. However, these categories can overlap - a particular game might fulfill several of the requirements of these groups, or be used in different ways on different occasions.

For ease, we have grouped game according to what we regard as their principal aim:

- getting to know you games: to introduce students to each other and to the whole group;
- breaking down barriers games: to encourage students to break barriers between groups, against talking in front of strangers - permission to speak;
- energising games: to build the energy of the whole group, especially after a fairly passive session;
- cooperation games: to build active cooperation between members of the groups.

The following games are, by no means, a full list of what is possible. They are a few games we have found useful - and we have usually found them somewhere else and adapted them to meet our circumstances. They will need to be further adapted to meet both your needs and the personalities of the organisers - they depend very much on the style and energy of those leading the game.

For lists and descriptions of other games, see also the manual published by Life Be It and The Hitch-hiker's Guide to Student Government, by Charles Kingston and Les Vozzo (West Wyalong HS, 1982) which has a large section on games for student groups.
Getting to Know You Games

Pairs Introduce Each Other

A very simple introductory exercise. Ask students to find someone they don’t know. When everyone is paired off, they have 5 minutes to find out information about the other person (sometimes you need to say “find out 4 important things”) to introduce the other person. Use a “one minute to go” warning. Then ask students around the circle to introduce their partner.

Throwing Ball and Calling Name

A variation of the above aimed at learning names. After everyone has been introduced (or has introduced themselves) someone throws a ball (or a plastic chok) across the circle, naming the person to whom the ball is thrown. The person catches then throws to someone else, calling their name.

Prepare stickers, each with a single name that is half of a pair eg ‘hot’ and ‘cold’, ‘Adam’ and ‘Eve’ etc. Make sure that names are ones that the students of this age group are likely to know. Move round the group and put a single sticker on each person’s back (where they can’t see it). Make sure that there are exactly the same number of stickers as people present - half a pair looking for a nonexistent partner is frustrating!

Students then ask questions of other people in order to discover ‘who’ they are. The questions must be able to be answered by ‘yes’ or ‘no’ eg general questions such as “Am I a person?” or specific questions such as “Is my name ‘cold’?” When students discover who they are, they find their partner and sit down together - this time can also be used to find out some information about their partner (for introductions).

A variation of this with older students is to use a three-digit number - students have to ask questions to discover their number.

Names are filled in and then used to introduce people to the group. We used a variation of this when a group of primary school students from JS Cs met a group of secondary school students from SRCs. We had two different coloured sheets, one asking primary students to “find a secondary student who...” and the other asking secondary students to “find a primary student who...”

Star Signs

This game gets groups talking about common characteristics. Start by posing a ‘research’ question: “I’ve always thought that there was something in star signs. People who have the same sign seem similar. I’d like to test this out with you.” Ask students to get themselves into groups of the same star sign (mass milling around - this might need some assistance) and then sit down in small groups. Ask them to discover what they have in common and to be prepared to report back to the whole group. After about 10 minutes (monitor groups for a feeling about how much time is needed) each group reports on what they have in common.

These groups can then continue as workshop groups for the training day - maybe some adjustment is needed to even up the group sizes.

This works well with a reasonably large group (around 70-100 students). However, do students from all cultural backgrounds use the same star signs? With a smaller group (20-60 students) you can use the seasons in which students were born. Football teams etc are also a possibility.

Breaking Down Barriers Games

AB Pairs: small role plays

Students are asked to find someone they haven’t met before and introduce themselves. (This is sometimes assisted by getting the whole group to walk around silently in different directions until a stop command is given - then find someone near them.) Each pair is then to decide who is A and who is B.

The pairs are then assigned roles eg “A is a student on a JSC who has been asked to attend an evening meeting; B is that student’s parent who is worried about the student missing homework”. The pairs are told that they had better talk about the conflict. Pick a variety of ‘conflicts’ relevant to the group: some ideas below.) The pairs have about 3 minutes (initially) to discuss the issue (monitor the pairs to assess when to stop the discussion). Ask students to remember who they were with, what the argument was about, and where they had reached.
situation 1. The ask them to change pairs (again meeting a new person), choose A and B, assign a different situation and roles, and then give 2-3 minutes to argue the views. This can be repeated a third and fourth time if the program permits - it is ideal to have four situations.

The whole group is then reminded of the four situations: "In number 1, it was about ... and you were with ... ". The number of a situation is then called out and participants have to find their partner in that situation and resume the argument where it left off. Call out situation numbers at random, with increasing rapidity. This results in rapidly increasing chaos and noise! Choose a time to call a stop to the whole exercise - don't let it go on too long.

Some AB ideas:
A is a student who wants health foods in the canteen;
B is a student whose parent works for a soft drink manufacturer, who offers a deal to the JSC for a dispenser in the canteen (with profits to the JSC).
A is a teacher who supports assessment by marks out of 100;
B is a teacher who supports written or descriptive assessment.
A is a student who wants time off from a class to attend a JSC or SRC meeting:
B is the classroom teacher.
A is a student member of the JSC/SRC;
B is a student who says that the JSC/SRC is a waste of time.

Wind-Ups/Spirals
This is a quick exercise that can follow other games. It can build group spirit and break down barriers between students from different schools.

Students start in a large circle holding hands. The circle is broken at one point and one student at the end moves into the centre (still linked to one end of the line) with instructions to stand still and not rotate. The other end of the line walks forward in a circle around the whole group, pulling the line behind. The group winds around the stationary person. This can either be done in a small circle (around 10 people - it's quick) or as a massive 'wind-up' of the whole group (takes ages).

A variation is to end the wind-up by having the centre person bob down and draw the line out of the spiral through participants' legs.

Energiser Games

Trains
Students line up in several 'teams' with a single student out front, some distance from and facing the line. This student is the 'engine'; the others are 'carriages'. The engine has to run to the head of the line, pick up the first carriage (carriage put hands on engine's waist) and together they run round the line of carriages, round the original engine position, back to the line, pick up the second carriage and so on, until the whole train is formed. If the train 'breaks', carriages cannot move by themselves and must stop - the front of the train must then go around the course and pick up the stranded parts before proceeding to get more carriages. The game finishes when all the trains are complete and back to the engine's starting point.

Oranges/Apples/Pears - musical chairs
All participants (including the organiser) are allocated names of fruit in rotation: orange, apple, pear, banana etc. Everyone except the organiser starts sitting on a chair in a circle. Remove any spare chairs. The organiser calls a fruit and everyone in that category has to change chairs - the organiser sits down on a vacant chair. The person without a chair calls out another fruit, and so on - keep it moving fast. 'Fruit salad' can be called, and everyone has to change chairs. The game can be ended whenever you like.

Barn-Yard Animals
All participants are labelled randomly as a few barnyard animals (cow, sheep, dog, cat, pig etc - choose the number of animals to leave about 8-10 people in a group). You can run through the noises that the animals make, getting people to practise making their sounds. Then mix up participants by getting them to walk around for a while. Everyone shuts their eyes (warning about 'no cheating ... no peeking') and the groups are asked to find their group by making the noise of that animal. When they have found someone, they are to link arms and continue to listen for the rest of their group.

These animal groups can continue as discussion groups for the rest of the day.

Cooperation Games

Chain-Making
Each group (of about 6-10 students) is given a pre-prepared bag of materials - computer paper, coloured squares, string, scissors, stapler etc (each bag should be roughly equivalent). They are told that their task is to work as a group to make a chain that stretches across the room. (Other criteria can be added eg a definition that a 'chain' must be made of loops of paper, that the loops have a maximum size etc). They are told that they can get the materials out of the bag, look at them and talk about how they will make the chain, for 3 minutes but not start yet. At the end of the talk time, tell them they can start and they have 10 minutes but ... "Oh, I forgot another rule - no talking from now on. Go!" After 10 minutes (with a 3 minute warning) group display their chains.

It would be useful to have a discussion afterwards about how the groups worked. Did they find the silent difficult? How did they complete the task? Did someone become the 'boss' - emphasise that the process of competing in the chain is more important than the product.

Knots
A group of 8-12 form a circle standing shoulder to shoulder, facing inwards. Hands are stretched in to the centre of the circle. Each hand grasp another across the circle - one hand to one hand. Without letting go, the group the attempts to disentangle itself and reform a circle (or sometimes a couple of separate or linked circles). If a group does it quickly get them to repeat the process, this time without talking. Again, the whole group can discuss the processes involved.

Games as Grouping

Reference is made here to using the games as a way of breaking up the large group into smaller discussion or work groups. Many of the training day programs involve mixed (ie interschool groups, either sharing information or discussing topics. These games are useful starters for these small groups, as they establish information about and trust between group members. Care needs to be taken in a break-up to ensure adequate mixing of schools, gender balance, size evenness etc. It is remarkable how often any sort of 'random' numbering around a large group (1.2.3.4.1.2.3...) still results in small groups of divergent size and characteristics.

It is possible to pre-organise these groups, either by knowing names of participants before the day and allocating them to groups, or by allocating them at registration. We found it useful to prepare blank name tags with coloured dots, and then get students from each school to complete name tags in order of arrival, so that a distribution of that school is made across colour groups. It is then possible to talk about 'green group in the corner near the door' and also to play many of these games using colour as labels.
Silk Road Legends Youth Camp

Greetings from Mongolia!

The Mongolian Youth Development Centre is pleased to invite you to participate in the Silk Road Legends youth camp, scheduled to take place July 20 - August 3, 1999. The camp will be based on learning more about the famous by-way that had a large impact on Mongolia centuries ago. Ten days will be spent at camp near Ulaanbaatar, with discussions and preparations, before a four-night trip leaves for a former part of the Road. At this time, participants will have the opportunity to assist in restoration of a historically significant landmark on the legendary route.

We would like to invite you to discover this land of intrigue and diversity, a place we think is one of the world’s best kept secrets. All youth organisations, NGOs and students are welcome, in groups of any size (ages 14-25 years). Total numbers: 450, including Mongolian youth. Fee: USS400 which includes all meals for the two-week camp, accommodations, activities, transportation to and from airport or train station. Deadline for registration: March 1st, 1999.

Please contact us for more information about next summer’s programs or with any further questions you might have. The Land of Blue Skies is sure to astound, so please come and experience it for yourself.

M Esunmunkh

Mongolian Youth Development Centre
PO Box 198
Ulaanbaatar-210648
Mongolia
Tel: 976-1-328410; Fax: 976-1-311915
E-mail: sssmydce@magicnet.mn

Youth 98:

Youth Reference Group Report

In April 1998, the Youth 98 Symposium: Public Spaces, Public Voices, was held in Melbourne. The Youth Reference Group of YACVic (the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria) was approached by the Symposium’s Program Committee to run a Youth Forum during the three days of the Symposium, and to provide feedback from young people attending to the whole Symposium and to the organisers. (This was also the first project of the Youth Reference Group following its establishment in March 1998.)

"The Youth Forum at Youth 98 created an opportunity for real participation by young people, where they were able to speak freely and know that they were truly listened to and that this created action."

The Reference Group have now published a Report of the Symposium and of their and other young people’s participation. This report outlines:
- the role of the group;
- what happened during the 3 days;
- what happened at the Youth Forums;
- issues arising from these forums;
- a report from a session to discuss 'participation projects';
- a report on what the Youth Reference Group got out of the Symposium; and
- a set of Challenges and Recommendations.

The full Report is available free from the:
Youth Affairs Council of Victoria,
Suite 1, 250 Gore Street, Fitzroy 3065 Vic
Phone: (03) 9419 9122

Australian Curriculum Studies Association
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September 29 - October 2, 1999
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Issues:
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Contact: ACSA, PO Box 331, Deakin West ACT 2600

October 1998
INTRODUCTION

Background

The Australian Youth Policy and Action Coalition (AYPAC) has developed the Declaration for an Inclusive Society in response to a growing trend towards divisive political debate and public policy in Australia. AYPAC is saying that we fundamentally want young people included, not excluded from our community.

Why?

Young people as a population group are often subjected to regressive policies based on negative stereotypes of young people or simple prejudice. In particular young people are often used as a political football at election time, especially at a local level where “law and order” agendas have been regularly pursued for political purposes at the expense of young people’s rights and freedoms.

The Declaration is also in response to the notions of “mutual” or “reciprocal” obligations adopted by the two major political parties in the current election campaign. The problem with this concept is that increasing the social contract is not an equal one. Governments are asking for more from the individual, at the same time as cutting back services and opportunities.

AYPAC is seeking to shift the debate away from concepts of reward and punishment to an inclusive approach to the development of public policy for all Australians.

What we will do with it.

By signing the Declaration, signatories will be committing to working towards an inclusive community which respects and supports its young people. AYPAC sees the Declaration as a long term project which we will use to promote a better deal for young Australians. It will be circulated for endorsement to politicians, community leaders, opinion makers and young people. AYPAC intends to write to all members of parliament and Senators asking them to commit publicly to the Declaration.

PREAMBLE

This declaration seeks to draw attention to young people’s claim to be directly included in a democracy. Democracy is not a finished product, but something which needs to be continually worked on. The fundamental principle - that power comes from the people - does not change, but it must be developed to meet changing conditions. We need to be aware of areas in our society where we have overlooked the rights of people, or where people, particularly young people, have been excluded. We need to acknowledge where, perhaps due to old customs, mistaken opinions, prejudice or vested interest, members of our society have been ignored or pushed down.

We know now that young people have the same inherent capacity to think and make judgements as others, yet many cannot enrol to vote. We believe that people should be paid the same for equal work, but young people are paid less solely on the basis of age. When we decide on proper levels of income support or other benefits we make assumptions, like those we used to for women, about young people’s needs or how dependent they are on others. Young people are subject to discrimination in jobs, in law, in finance and accommodation. Their status is ambiguous; they are sometimes seen as children, sometimes as adults.

This is routinely used against them. When they pay, they pay as adults. When they are paid, they are paid as children.

There are arguments made to justify this discrimination. Young people, some say, are not interested in voting or politics. Youth unemployment will go up if equal pay for equal work is introduced. They are biologically unable to make good judgements or lack the discipline to do so.

They need less. Their welfare is the responsibility of their parents or others. So the arguments go.

All of these arguments have been used before: to justify the position of slaves, of women, of ethnic minorities, of indigenous people. They were not valid then, and they are wrong now. Young people are not children. They have a claim to be included in the nation, beginning with the right to be heard and to vote, and not to be discriminated against. These are serious claims which a democratic society must address in law, in policy, and in custom. At a deeper level, this a call for our society to recognise those whom we exclude, and to include their voices in the voice of the nation. We in this land are a community, and when we exclude some class of person we disfigure ourselves.

By signing this declaration you will be supporting and working towards an inclusive community which respects and supports its young people. AYPAC sees the Declaration as a long term project which will be used to promote a better deal for young Australians. Contact AYPAC for further details.

AYPAC is Australia’s national youth organisation, representing a broad range of youth organisations and the diversity of young people’s interests across the Australian community.

When you sign the Declaration, return it to AYPAC by mail, e-mail or fax:

AYPAC
PO Box 204
Ainslie ACT 2602
Tel: (02) 6247 1666
Fax: (02) 6247 1799
Email: aypac@tpgi.com.au
The Declaration can also be found at: http://www.aypac.org.au

"Public Spaces for Young People"

This Guide to Creative Projects and Positive Strategies has been written by Rob White to highlight projects on Negotiating Young People’s Use of Public Space which were supported by the National Campaign Against Violence and Crime and the Australian Youth Foundation. The book outlines key elements of a broad youth-friendly strategy and describes the basic features of various grass-roots initiatives and specific community-based projects. For information about the book’s availability, contact the AYP (02) 9367 2044 or e-mail: youth@ayf.org.au

National Children’s Summit

The National Children’s Summit will be held at Parliament House, Canberra on 4 and 5 December 1998. It is convened by the Coalition for Australia’s Children, an alliance of over 45 children’s and youth organisations and peak and national level.

Organisations are asked to send one representative plus a young person as part of their delegation. A youth vote group at the Summit will ensure that children and young people have the final say.

Further details from the conference organisers on (02) 9593 3643.

Wangaratta Student Participation

Just after we went to press with Connect 112, we were informed that the Country Connections Student Participation Project featured in that issue had not been refunded. The Project has applied to the Victorian Department of Human Services for a Youth Grant to turn TEENROAR into action and to train students for power and decision-making at school policy level and at local government level. The Project’s work, including plans for a leadership YOUTHVOICE Camp in November possibilities for a Victorian conference in 1999 are now on hold.
THE DECLARATION FOR AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

We hereby declare our adherence to the following principles for active and inclusive citizenship.

- Participatory Democracy:
  We are committed to young people being involved in the decisions which affect their lives. A robust democracy demands opportunity and encouragement for full participation from all its constituents, regardless of the legal right to vote or remoteness from centres and institutions of power and decision-making.

- Full Employment:
  We are committed to the revival of the youth labour market in Australia. No public policy agenda, which includes the interests of young people, is complete without a strong emphasis on full employment and redress of locational disadvantage problems in those regions of high and long-term youth unemployment.

  Community and business sector commitments to full employment is an essential element of a viable youth employment strategy.

- Adequate Income Support:
  We are committed to a fair and adequate system of income support for all Australians - especially young unemployed people, young people with disabilities or illness and students.

  Income support arrangements should be premised on the right to a living income, on the basic honesty of citizens and on a fair approach to the cost of living.

- Civic Rights:
  We are committed to equal rights for young people in the community and equity between young people and other groups in society. We support the rule of law, and the right of young people to freedom of speech, association, movement and assembly. Citizenship education should include all Australians in an approach which fosters understanding and opportunities to explore, question, challenge and affirm social values.

- Social Justice:
  We are committed to young people's rights to live in a healthy and sustainable environment that integrates social and economic policy to advance prosperity and encourage compassionate communities. Access, equity and participation for young people are key elements for an inclusive and just society.

- Freedom from Racism and Discrimination:
  We are committed to an alliance between community and government to promote racial harmony, mutual respect and personal safety. Opportunities for increasing understanding of different cultures and for inquiring into the nature of our own racism are important for discouraging bigotry and prejudice. We support corrective action such as equal opportunity legislation where required.

- Access to Justice:
  We are committed to young people's access to justice, including information, representation, appropriate grievance processes and the recognition of their legal rights. The justice system must avoid stereotyping young people, must uphold the rule of law, and must affirm their rights as citizens.

- Reconciliation:
  We are committed to a whole-of-nation process of reconciliation, aware that great damage has been done to indigenous people and that we have benefited from these actions. We recognise prior ownership of the land and the vitality of indigenous lifestyles and cultures.

- Freedom of Movement:
  We are committed to the lawful use of public places by all citizens - including groups of young people. Streets, parks, gardens, city plazas and shopping centres are venues for the legitimate enjoyment of social interaction. This enjoyment should not be diminished by unnecessary statutory or police intervention.

- Cultural Diversity:
  We are committed to a diverse, multicultural, inclusive Australia, to celebrating and learning from the many cultures and peoples that make up the Australian nation. We strive for openness, acceptance and understanding between cultures in the pursuit of social harmony and inclusiveness.

- Intergenerational Partnerships:
  We are committed to constructive interaction between Australians of different ages. We encourage mutual respect for different personal histories and lifestyle choices and support projects which develop partnerships between Australian from different backgrounds and generations.

- National Identity:
  We are committed to the inclusive evolution of our national identity. This will involve promoting peace in international affairs and recognising that our cultural and natural heritage originates both from indigenous and non-indigenous peoples.

"I believe in an inclusive and tolerant approach to public policy and the development of our national identity. I support the articulation of a set of national standards, which will acknowledge and recognise the contribution of all groups of young people to the Australian nation and its place in the international community. A staffing point is the internationally recognised human rights conventions to which Australia is a signatory, I call for and commit to the full inclusion of young people's interests and voices in the democratic life of the nation."

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KIDPOWER advocates a joint collaboration between community health professionals (school health nurses), education representatives (occupational health and safety advisors and curriculum advisors), injury representatives (Child Accident Prevention Foundation of Australia) and local schools (students, teachers and principals).

For more information, contact the West Moreton Public Health Unit on (07) 3818 5000.

KIDPOWER is a resource kit that has been developed by the West Moreton Public Health Unit and aims to significantly reduce the number of school-based injuries in young people aged 10-14 years.

A student injury committee is developed in each school and is responsible for conducting safety audits, establishing needs and developing strategies for injury prevention relevant to their school context.

Schools will be able to evaluate the effectiveness of the project by collating their own injury statistics over a period of time.

October 1998

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(name) (organisation, if any)
(city/state)

ENDORSE THE PRINCIPLES OUTLINED IN AYPAC'S DECLARATION FOR AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY.

(signed) (date)
Young Women and Leadership Project, Vic

Challenging Young Women

The Young Women and Leadership Project was clearly defined to encompass young women who did not perceive themselves as part of the leadership process. We sought to involve young women from a wide variety of backgrounds, cultures, occupations and interest areas as possible. Invitations were sent out to youth groups, young women’s groups, neighbourhood houses and groups servicing women.

We decided to seek two groups to participate: a group based around the inner city area, and a second group based around an outer suburban area - we chose the Werribee and Hoppers Crossing area. We placed advertisements in the Age (free!), the Leader papers in the Werribee region and in the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) and Women’s Information and Referral Exchange (WIRE) newsletters seeking expressions of interest in participating.

The project sought to get the groups of young women to discuss issues around the topic of leadership, have the discussion videoed and develop the filmed material into a video kit suitable for stimulating discussion with other women in both formal and informal settings.

Events

Two day-long discussions were organised in July.

Playback Theatre attended to listen to and replay the stories and issues arising from the young women participants’ experiences of leadership.

Young women formed discussion groups to look at and talk about five key issues: what is leadership? who are your role models? can we work differently? how do we learn the boys’ rules? and do women have other dreams?

The discussion groups were filmed by Generation Productions.

While most participants in the inner city forum came by themselves (approximately one third had a connection with WIRE), almost half the participants in the Werribee forum came from a young mothers group.

The volume of information and enthusiasm was overwhelming. There was an obvious need for opportunities for young women to talk and to share information. There was a strong sense that the events must be the beginning of something.

The Kit

Our aim was to produce a kit which could be used with groups and classes of young women with minimum difficulty for the group presenter/teacher. We sought to keep the material simple enough for young women: 14-15 years to find it useful, but stimulating enough for young women of 30 years to find provocative in discussion.

Getting the kit together entailed watching the filmed footage and grouping comments under the five general headings and selecting specific comments to include to give a real taste of the discussion on the event days. The video producers and I then talked about possible visuals and the production processed the film footage into a video adding stimulating graphics and music. It is not a ‘talking heads’ video.

The kit contains quotes from the video which have been processed onto photocopiable sheets and also into overhead projector sheets. The notes pose questions for further discussion, exploration, essay writing and debate. The kit contains suggestions for other extension activities.

Response

Participants who attended the launch were very happy with the video. The kit has been advertised on the internet and the response from around Australia (mainly from tertiary institutions) has been very positive. The kit will also be available for hire from WIRE.

Julie McCormack, Project Manager

This project was funded by the Victorian Women's Trust.
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

**STUDENT PUBLICATIONS:**

**Australian:**
The Observer (St Hilda’s College, Qld) Vol 8, Sept 1998

**OVER Other PUBLICATIONS:**

**Australian:**

- Civics and Citizenship: Teacher’s Handbook; Sample Units; Student Activities (Youth Programs Department, Australian Red Cross, Vic) - SCIP support material, 1998
- Curriculum Perspectives (Australian Curriculum Studies Association, Deakin West, ACT) Vol 18 No 3, September 1998
- Education Alternatives (Caulfield East, Vic) Vol 7 Nos 7, 8 (September, October 1998)
- First Australian Delegation: NASC 62 (PASTA, NSW) - souvenir booklet of messages
- Linking and Thinking Health (AHPSA, NSW) Vol 5 No 3 September 1998
- Negotiating Staying and Returning: Young People’s Perspectives on Schooling and the Youth Allowance (Youth Research Centre; Victorian Department of Education) June 1998
- Network News (Surry Hills, NSW) September 1998
- Other Ways (AERG, Chirnside Park, Vic) #77 Sept ’98
- Prime Focus (VPPA) Vol 4 No 4, August 1998
- Principal Matters (Sth Yarra, Vic) Vol 9 No 4, April 98
- Public Spaces for Young People (Rob White) (Australian Youth Foundation/National Campaign Against Violence and Crime) August 1998
- Rights Now (National Children’s and Youth Law Centre, NSW) August 1998
- Starlink (Melbourne, Vic) Issues 29, 30; August, September 1998
- Youth Studies Australia (ACYS, Hobart, Tas) Vol 17 No 3, September 1998

**Overseas:**

- Communication Research Trends (St Louis, USA) Vol 17 (1997) Nos 3 and 4
- Education Now (Nottingham, UK) No 21, Autumn 1998
- National Coalition News (NCACS, New Mexico, USA) Vol 23 No 2, Fall 1998

**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**

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<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Pages</th>
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<tr>
<td>448</td>
<td>Minutes and Agenda (including Students Against Racism information) (Eastern Region SRC, Vic) September 1998</td>
<td>7 pp</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>449</td>
<td>Youth 98: YAC Vic Youth Reference Group Report (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria)</td>
<td>8 pp</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>450</td>
<td>Affirming the High Schools Years: Reports from Working Groups (ACT Government Schools Student Network, 4 September 1998)</td>
<td>8 pp</td>
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43, 44, 45, 46/47, 48, 49, 50, 51/52, 53, 54/55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65/66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77/78, 79, 80, 81,
82, 83, 84, 85/86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95/96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106/107, 108/109, 110, 111, 112, 113

- 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) $_________

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