Students investigating and acting to improve primary to secondary school transition:

Three stories of Student Action Teams at work

Student Action on: Cybersafety ... Environment ... Transition ... Litter

Student Voices on: Success at school ... Organisation & representation

Student Resources: Represent! (VicSRC) ... Enviro Inspiro! (NSW SRC)

Connect on-line - for FREE ... Civics and Citizenship Education Digest
Rules of student engagement ... Values Education Research Handbook
This Issue:

Thanks for hanging in with us over the months since the last issue of Connect. That time has enabled us to put out this bigger double issue, but also to travel a little; if you’re interested have a look at our travel blog, there is a link from the ASPRINworld website.

Student Action Teams in this issue

I was going to draw your attention to the range of practices around Student Action Teams that are highlighted in this issue. However, the more I thought about what we are learning, the more expansive my thoughts became, and so there’s an extended essay on page 18 that explores these reflections.

Connect archives on-line

But the other exciting development that I want to draw your attention to, is the availability of 30 years of Connect archives – for free – on a new website constructed in partnership between Connect and ACER.

There’s more detail on page 30. We are very pleased to be able to make this treasurehouse of information about student participation practices available to you.

For subscribers: note that we will maintain the most recent six issues as print-only and subscription-only, and only put these on-line 12 months after you get them. So for all the latest news and stories, continue to subscribe: that way we are also encouraged to keep publishing Connect!

Education directions

The examples and stories of student participation in Connect represent some very different ideas about educational purposes, practices, priorities and directions.

Nic Abbey from VICCSO recently forwarded a link to an illustrated talk by Sir Ken Robinson that can be found at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDZFcDgpL4U This is fascinating to me because he and I say very similar things about the disconnection between schooling and outcomes as seen by many students – and the implications of this; and also because of the engaging way that his talk is presented.

Have a look – thoroughly recommended!

See you again in 2011

Have a great break over the summer holidays - if that’s what you are able to do. We intend to be back for Connect’s 32nd year in February – but for that we need your stories by the end of January. Thanks for being great champions for the important roles that all students can play within their schools and communities.

Roger Holdsworth

Why does Connect exist?

Connect has been published bi-monthly since 1979.

It aims to:

• document student participation approaches and initiatives;
• support reflective practices;
• develop and share resources.

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Next Issue: #187: February 2011
Deadline for material: end of January, 2011
In Term 3 this year, students at Whittlesea Primary School (WPS), north-east of Melbourne, formed a Student Action Team on Cybersafety. The team was formed in response to student concerns about the improper use of the internet amongst primary aged children.

Representatives were nominated and selected from each class from Year 3 to 6. The students were selected based on the criteria that they were interested in the subject and displayed a desire to make a difference in their school and community.

After forming, the team put together an application and were selected to participate in the ‘Learning On Line Cybersafety Program’, an initiative from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. The students decided that the team would focus their efforts on their school community and, more specifically, the Year 3 to 6 students at WPS. The children on the team felt that the issue was most relevant to these students.

The team’s first task was to investigate the term cybersafety: what it meant, and what actions students need to take to ensure they are cyber-safe. The team researched the topic through discussion with peers, student-initiated conversation with teachers, via the internet and by sharing their personal experiences. The website www.superclubsplus.com proved particularly helpful in motivating student interest in the topic and in providing relevant and up to date information on cybersafety.

The students then decided that they would need to investigate the online problems that were faced specifically by students at WPS. Their solution was to create a survey which all students from Years 3 to 6 would complete. The survey included questions about the children’s online habits, the websites and online chat programs frequented by WPS students, and about the cybersafety issues that students may have experienced.

In response to the needs identified by the survey, the WPS Cybersafety team brainstormed and put into action a number of strategies aimed at raising awareness of cybersafety at WPS and at educating the students in their specific areas of need. The Student Action Team educated parents and students through articles in the school newsletter, informative and thought provoking posters displayed around the school and through presentations made to students and teachers at assembly.

Another project the students collaborated on was a photo-story about a girl facing a cyber-bullying issue. The students produced the presentation using photos with captions and speech bubbles to convey the message that something can be done about cyber-bullying. The end product was used to inform the student body about the constructive action that they can take, should they face such an issue.
In August, the students were fortunate to attend a celebration day organised by the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), along with a small selection of other schools in Victoria. The special day was held at the MCG for students to present their findings and to celebrate the action taken on promoting cybersafety at WPS. The students were able to participate in a number of cybersafety awareness activities during the day, adding to their expertise on the topic. There was also video footage taken with the students responding to cybersafety issues and giving advice about being cyber safe for other children. Part of the presentation given by the group on this day, including the aforementioned photo-story, can be found online at fuse.education.vic.gov.au/pages/View.aspx?pin=RZJR4D

Outcomes

The steps taken by the Student Action Team thus far have ensured that students at WPS are more conscious of the possible problems and solutions concerning cybersafety. The team has been successful in generating more discussion about cybersafety between WPS students and an increase in awareness of the issue and its solutions within the school.

Currently, the WPS Student Action Team on Cybersafety is working on a set of posters that will be displayed above all computer stations in the school. These posters will bear a consistent message to be reinforced by the Student Action Team within classrooms about what students should and shouldn’t be doing to ensure they are being cyber-safe when online.

A Student-Led Approach

An important aspect of the investigation and action into cybersafety at Whittlesea Primary School was that the students were in control of the project with the supervising teacher taking on a facilitator and advisor role. This has led to the empowerment of the students. The experience has promoted team-work, responsibility and a sense that, as proactive students, they can make a difference in their school and their community. The students have become self motivated, passionate about their cause, and have rightly felt extremely proud of their achievements so far.

The team has worked hard to be able to celebrate a number of successes since its formation this year. Whittlesea Primary School’s Student Action Team on Cybersafety is looking forward to further opportunities for the remainder of this year as well as into the new year, to make a difference to our school and our community in regards to cybersafety.

Rebecca McEwan
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There will also be a version of the poster sent home in an attempt to achieve consistency between home and school. In the future, the children plan to organise and run a parent information evening to spread their message and promote cybersafety awareness further and more fully, into the community.
Students Find their Voice
with the Youth Environment Council of South Australia

The Youth Environment Council of South Australia is inspiring a new generation of students in this State to take action for the environment.

On Wednesday 17th of March, 100 student representatives from 26 primary and high schools across South Australia descended upon the Goodwood Community Centre for the first South Australian Youth Environment Council (YEC) Sustainability Forum for 2010.

The YEC Sustainability Forum allowed like-minded students from across the state to share, learn and be inspired about sustainability, and to voice their environmental concerns and develop solutions for these issues. Students heard from former YEC members who gave inspiring speeches about their experiences with the Council.

The Forum also provided workshops to equip students with the skills required to get environmental action projects up and running in their schools. Students attended workshops such as ‘how to gain funding for projects’, ‘telling your stories so others will listen’, ‘how to get the whole school community involved’ and ‘what service providers and resources are available to help’.

Four students from Grange Primary School attended the Forum and left feeling inspired. “Never give up; you can do at least one little thing to make a difference” was the message they left with. Another student discovered that “learning is not just about listening; it’s about doing”. The students decided to put their new skills into action and are planning a new school sustainability garden to showcase to the local community. Students also reported they would hold a ‘Green Day’ to raise environmental awareness throughout the school.

Since the March Forum, students have kept in touch through a series of online CENTRA sharing events, with each focusing on an environmental theme including waste, water and biodiversity. At each online event, guest speakers present the latest information in this environmental area. Two to three YEC schools are also invited to provide an update on how they are progressing with their projects. These events are recorded and feature on the YEC website for others to view (see below).

In September, students reconvened to share their environmental action project achievements with other students. Students also recorded their ideas and opinions on environmental issues and took them to the Minister.

The Youth Environment Council is a joint initiative of the Department of Education and Children’s Services and the NRM Education Program of the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management (AMLR NRM) Board.

Please visit www.yecsa.net.au for further information about the Youth Environment Council of South Australia.

Elisia Brook
NRM Education
Proudly supported by the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board
Climate change and other environmental issues are daily news items in today’s media. As students discover more about the earth’s environmental problems, the future can look bleak. It is not uncommon for them to experience a range of psychological reactions including a feeling of hopelessness when faced with environmental threats and future predictions. Students can develop a sense of futility as predictions unfold to reality. It is therefore critical that, as educators, we support students and their wider community to build a sense of optimism and hope for the future, based on sound information, learning and actions to address sustainability at school, in the community and at home.

The NRM Education program of the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board has been encouraging students to use their voice, have a say and develop the necessary skills to empower them to take action on environmental issues. Through a Youth Environment Forum program, students in Years 4 to 10 are guided through a process for identifying environmental issues of concern, planning and taking action locally.

“I was surprised by the growth in student groups and what they came up with and how they could so confidently stand out the front and talk about what they’d done and share it with everyone else.”

Teacher, Youth Environment Forum

Currently in its third year, the program has expanded to include 55 schools in nine clusters across the Adelaide metropolitan region, allowing more students to voice their opinions about environmental sustainability whilst being supported and empowered to make a difference. The Forum process involves students researching and presenting on a topic of their interest that will help their school achieve greater environmental sustainability.

“Thinking back to the first forum, how the students were a bit scared and timid about speaking up, I watched them after the third forum and they were full of ideas and jotting down things. It’s only when you see the growth from the beginning of the year that you realise how far they’ve come.”

Teacher, Youth Environment Forum Cluster

At the first forum, students are encouraged to begin thinking about environmental and sustainability issues that are important to them through a series of visioning and brainstorming activities. School groups discuss the issues that are raised and narrow their list to a top three. These issues are put forward to the larger group and, through a secret ballot vote, each student selects one issue they are most concerned with and would like to learn more about. From these votes, the top three issues for the group are selected. At this point students are asked to start thinking about which issue their school group might like to tackle and take action on.

This first forum is not only valuable in identifying the issues of greatest concern to young people, but also an important opportunity for students to meet like-minded students from other local schools and the beginning of new friendships.

“... every person matters ... when a group of people are committed to something they can change it for the better”

Student from 2009 Holdfast Cluster Youth Environment Forum
**Forum 2**

At the second forum, students learn in depth about the top three environmental issues from guest speakers and workshops. Students ask questions and engage in further discussion about these issues. Student groups select an issue and develop detailed plans for action within their schools and/or local community in response to the environmental issue that has been selected.

After the second forum, students and mentoring teachers take action back at school and develop an interactive presentation to bring to the next forum.

**Forum 3**

At forum three, student groups from each school present and share their action projects, experiences and learning with the wider cluster.

**Forum 4**

Forum four provides the opportunity for students to celebrate their successes as well as the friendships that have been forged over the year. The celebration format varies from cluster to cluster, depending on the input from students, but has in the past taken the form of a certificate ceremony, where parents and friends may be invited to attend, an excursion of environmental relevance and/or special activity.

**Why have the Forums been valuable to students?**

Feedback collected from teachers at regular planning meetings, and from students through evaluation forms, indicates that Youth Environment Forums have been most valuable for students in helping them:

- Gain confidence, leadership and public speaking skills as well as being important for attitude development
- Meet other students, make new friends and realise that there are other students in their local area who are equally concerned about environmental issues
- Connect to people and programs that are working on protecting the environment and understand how students can assist these programs
- Gain a wider perspective about the environment and help generate new ideas
- Research information and learn the skills to encourage behaviour change in others
- Become empowered students who can create their own solutions by developing plans of action

“I think the enthusiasm has gone up a notch or several notches and the level of engagement has certainly increased since the beginning of the year and that was really noticeable...and the kids were very excited perhaps more so at the end of the year, knowing they had achieved something. At the beginning of the year there was excitement from anticipation and at the end they had excitement to reflect back on what they had done and the journey that they had taken to get there and also that others had gone on similar journeys in other sites...”

*Teacher, 2009 Youth Environment Forum*
Realise that their voices are valued by adults and that they can use them to make a difference.

Having teachers involved in this planning and review process has also meant that Forums continue to be relevant to their students as well as ensuring students have the support they need from mentors and the school to carry out their ideas and actions.

Case Studies

The following case studies are in the words of students who developed the projects as part of the NRM Education Youth Environment Forums.

School A: Reducing Pollution Around the School and Local Community

To reduce pollution we built a depot for our school and local community as part of our school environmental project for the 2009 Northern Hills Youth Environment Forum.

We chose to build a recycling depot after participating in Clean-up Australia Day (CUAD). We noticed that the area around the local reservoir gets rather filthy, particularly along the roadside. We developed an action plan that involved building a recycling depot, as our community does not have one nearby. We decided to build it in a brick enclosure by our sports shed; all it needed was a roof and a door.

The depot roof and door was completed in early 2010 and we will soon be able to collect the roadside litter and recycle it. We will have the local community donate their cans, cartons, plastic and glass bottles to the school to get money for purchasing items the school needs. Recyclables will be sorted into wool bales supported by steel frames.

We applied for a grant to help pay for the roof and door of our depot and asked our Principal if it could be budgeted for. The wool bale frames were donated by a local business and we will paint a mural on the outside of the depot. This is a work in progress that is still continuing.

Our outcomes have been:

• The main roads and local area (such as the reservoir) get cleaner because people do the right thing.
• Our community gets a recycling depot
• Our environment gets less pollution.

School B: Environment Expo

For our ‘taking action’ project, our team decided to plan an environment day for our whole school. We decided on and planned 14 activities for all year levels. On the day, all our team members did a great job at running the assembly to launch the day and then running the activities on local frogs, recycling, water and litter-free lunches. Other activities were run by supportive adults and included nature art, environment trails, environmental board games and biodiversity.

We wanted to raise awareness about the importance of the environment and how to protect the school-yard environment. We also wanted to show students how much water they use as well as show students how easy it is to reduce school yard litter.

We chose to run a whole school environment day because we believed this would be an effective way to spread the word about how to protect the environment while teaching students how best to do so.

It took about three quarters of a term to plan the Environment Day as well as design and make the environmental board games that students played on the day.

The Environment Day was a great success and had a positive impact on the students:

• All students had a great day with lots of hands-on learning
• Students were running their own sessions about the environment
• Students were shocked by how much water they use on a daily basis; this has had a massive impact on all students, especially younger students whose jaws dropped at the amount of water used per person. This has led to students turning off the taps instead of leaving them running
• We have seen a massive difference in the yard as well as people’s lunchboxes; there is less school yard litter due to students bringing school lunches in reusable containers and students are actually picking up litter
• Students are now placing items in the right bins and recycling more.

“I think the NRM (Education) process was really good in giving us a structure that the kids had to operate within....they met that challenge very well and the structure certainly worked.”

Teacher, 2009 Youth Environment Forum
**School C:**
**The Great Environmental Makeover**

As a group, we decided to focus on the topic of drought. We created a natural habitat at the front of our school with support from students from across the school, staff and parents.

We have worked very hard at school in creating our garden and it has been a long journey. Although we had a few minor delays with the weather and managing other curriculum activities, we finished our garden just in time!

To preserve our natural habitat, we have also made a short film with our camera. The film was completely created and edited by three expert students.

This project has given us the opportunity to combine different curriculum areas together. We have researched information about our local environment, learnt new technology in filming and editing and most of all we have learnt how to be flexible, adaptable and patient.

We chose a native garden because going green has many benefits for the environment:

- **It preserves our beautiful landscapes**
- **It increases our native wildlife**
- **It reduces greenhouse gases**

Below are the steps that were taken to develop our native garden. You can do it too. Drum up support within your school. What’s important to your school community? Ask questions and seek opinions.

**Steps towards a ‘masterpiece’ native garden:**

1. Develop an environment committee
2. Choose a suitable site. One that can be developed into a sustainable garden. Look at existing plants and trees. It may be necessary to leave these, check with your Principal.
3. Analyse the soil. You can improve it by adding mulch from your school mulch pile and worm castings from your school worm farm. Your soil will become very healthy!
4. Getting funding for your school project is extremely important. We had a long discussion with our Principal and showed him detailed plans for our garden. The funding was approved by our Principal and the Governing Council.
5. Use your local library to locate great garden resources.
6. Research indigenous plants for your local area.
7. Call your local council and select plants that are native to your area. Councils can supply you with a great list of local native plants.
8. Choose a variety of plants with colour that attract birds and insects which complements a sustainable habitat.
9. Organise a class bushwalk. Admire and observe the natural habitat to get lots of ideas.
10. Create a natural habitat for native animals using logs, rocks, a pond, pebbles and other things you discovered on your walk.
11. Plant your plants and grasses with love. Place them in areas focusing on height and suitability of the area.
12. Create a walking trail that encourages education and an understanding of the importance and beauty of our environment.
13. Record your data and research (take lots of photos) for future reference and be proud of your achievements – because we have made a difference!
14. Have fun creating your natural habitat.

**Elisia Brook**
NRM Education Officer

Proudly supported by the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board

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For more information about NRM Education Youth Environment Forums, resources and case studies, please visit [www.nrmeducation.net.au](http://www.nrmeducation.net.au), hover over ‘Working with Schools’ and click ‘Youth Voice’.
MAD (Making A Difference) in Massachusetts

Brockton High School may be on the other side of the globe, but it was at the centre of the ruMAD? program in August, when staff from the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) spent a week in Boston, Massachusetts collaborating with Bridgewater State University (BSU) and Me to We, the internationally recognised youth-focused social enterprise. The three organisations came together to develop and deliver FAM (Friends and Mentors) for Change, a highly successful mentoring program that connects university students from BSU with at-risk students from nearby Brockton High School to help them stay in school and excel in their studies.

Experienced FYA facilitators, Aidan McLaren and Dean Delia, were invited to Boston to train the BSU mentors in the Education Foundation’s ruMAD? framework and to run social change workshops directly with students at Brockton High.

Sue McCombe, Director of University and Community Partnerships at BSU said the ruMAD? program brought a new perspective and much needed focus to FAM for Change.

“Our mentees have wanted to get involved in meaningful ways in their community and to become mentors themselves to younger school children. Now they have a clear vision and sense of purpose that will definitely help us move our program forward over the next academic year,” she said.

Kenny Monteiro, FAM for Change program manager, said the Brockton High participants took a lot out of the ruMAD? workshops. “I think the program has helped them understand the value of teamwork, and most importantly they continue to discover the joy of helping and teaching others,” he said.

FAM mentor, Iolando Spinola, said: “The ruMAD workshops were able to help the FAM for Change program develop clear and strategic action plans centred around social and community issues. The mentees were able to choose the issues they were most passionate about, which ranged from bullying to homelessness. Through the creative and powerful nature of the workshops the mentees were able to discover their strengths and passions, as well as what areas they needed to develop. The mentees’ leadership in their community action plans not only empowers them as individuals, but also empowers them to realise they can have a positive effect on these issues that may have seemed impossible to change. Addressing larger problems in the community and in society gives the mentees the motivation and confidence to manage aspects of their own lives such as grades, time management, peer pressure, and so on. The ruMAD workshops were powerful on so many levels and, as mentors, we plan to encourage and support all the projects that FAM is going to work on throughout the year.”

FAM mentee, Priscilla Cruz, added: ‘ruMAD? was a good experience! It was different, new, and interesting. I have learned so much from this ruMAD? program. I usually am an open person but sort of had a nervousness edge to me, only because I didn’t know what people’s reactions would be towards me. I learned that people want the same thing, to be happy, to have someone there when they need them, to have trust, loyalty, and love! There are people out there who care and are trying to change the bad to good. So when I am asked: ‘are you mad?’ I smile and say ‘yes’, because I am making a difference in any way possible. ruMAD helped me come out of my comfort zone, taught me a lot of new things, and also helped me reach out to others to make a difference. This program is motivating, inspiring, educational, and best of all FUN! So now I ask you: RuMAD?”

The ruMAD? visit to Boston was the first time that an Education Foundation program has been delivered internationally and opens the doorway to further rewarding international collaborations.

“Our work with BSU and Me to We on the FAM for Change program is a shining example of the impact that FYA programming can achieve, locally and globally,” said Dean Delia, FYA’s Senior Manager, Partner and Program Development.

To hear directly from ruMAD? students, search for ruMAD? on Facebook and watch the videos. Learn more about ruMAD? at www.rumad.org.au
Identifying the lack of student voice at Castlemaine Secondary College as a focus concern, the 11G SWEET Class (Student Wellbeing, Engagement, Enterprise and Transition) came up with the idea of creating a class Zine publication to be circulated to friends, family and the broader community. The first edition was released in May 2010 and contained articles, interviews, a skate segment and reviews all created by young people. More editions are in the pipeline and the plan is to use the Zine as a tool for getting articles published in the local paper.

Clean Up Your Act

The senior SRC at Castlemaine SC also identified littering in the school as a major concern. To help address this, the students created an ruMAD? awareness campaign aimed at changing perceptions and actions of littering amongst students at the school. The campaign involved the creation of a short film in which members of the school’s community were interviewed about littering in Castlemaine. This film was then screened at a student-organised ‘littering assembly’.

To help add to the impact of the ‘littering assembly’, the SRC collected rubbish from around the school and placed it inside the hall, in and around where the student audience would be sitting. As the audience arrived, they could truly feel (and smell) the impact their actions were having!
“It’s just a piece of paper!!!”

This was the starting point for our performance for the Catholic Education Office Student Wellbeing Drama Festival.

At our first meeting we were given our school’s relationships policy and were asked a key question: “How can we show this piece of paper being lived out through a performance?” We were quite challenged with this question and found it difficult to generate ideas.

We then formed a writing committee and brainstormed and improvised concepts. This led to us to think about what styles of theatre we could incorporate to best express our theme. Throughout the play we included the following styles of theatre: Stylised, Melodrama, Slapstick, Broadway and Musical. We decided to have a minimalist set as we wanted the dialogue and costume to be our main focus. When designing our costumes we decided to begin in neutral colours and, as each value was being lived out, they would blossom into a colour. We also wanted to show that, if we live out our school values, we start to form positive relationships.

Then suddenly we had a light bulb moment and the concept of a game show called The Choice Is Yours was born. We threaded the College’s values (above) through our script; within each scene a value was seen to be lived out.

Even though we were filled with many emotions on the evening of the Drama Festival, we pushed our nerves aside and performed to the best of our ability.

In the end it all turned out for the best. Our school was awarded second place out of 39 schools in Melbourne. Such a great achievement and something we all hoped for.

We were very honoured to represent our school and participate in this event. It was something very new to us as we had never performed to such a big audience before. What I loved most about this experience, was not only winning an award, but all the good times the group shared together. The process was just as rewarding as the end product. We were very supportive of each other and, as actors, we were very dedicated to the performance.

The whole experience has taught me that I can make a change in the world if I live out our school values because: “it’s not just the words on a piece of paper that matter, it’s how you live them out.”

Anthea Carrafa, CRC St Albans
Transitions and changes happen all the time in schools: transitions from grade to grade, from one school to another - and transitions from one stage of education to another, such as primary to secondary school or from secondary school to post-school options. For most students, these are times of excitement and challenge, but for a significant number, their fears and uncertainties have a strong impact on their learning and wellbeing.

How do we actively involve students in decision-making about transition? How do we ensure that transition is not simply something that happens to students, but that they are active participants in shaping and forming this experience?

Increased recent attention to these questions has led several schools to adopt Student Action Team approaches to support students’ collective engagement with the individual and structural aspects of transition. A long article in Connect 180 (December 2009), outlined the transition approaches of a cluster of schools in the Bentleigh area of Melbourne. Here student teams researched student fears and concerns about transition, and the current school practices. They then both recommended and took action to improve what happened in their schools. (A similar approach was also adopted within two NSW school groups in 2009, and had been previously used in NSW around the transition of students from a Language Centre to a ‘mainstream’ school setting: see Connect 166-167, August-October 2007.)

Their experience with this approach has been built upon by this cluster in 2010, and other regions have picked up similar approaches. The following three stories outline slightly different focuses and methods, but all have an essential element: these are student-led approaches to transition. In all cases, the student teams have worked within some constraints: decisions by a previous Student Action Teams to establish a ‘student expo’ on transition; an existing ‘Back To’ day for Year 7 students that had previously been organised by teachers.

And from these stories, there has been increased interest in other areas of the state about ways in which students can be authentically engaged in action at an important time in their education.

What should schools be doing to make sure that transition is not just an isolated event – eg a single visit to the new school – but a continuing process?

### Publication Support

The Catholic Education Office in Melbourne has recently produced two linked publications about transition: a Research Document and a DVD, both under the title: *Every day is transition day*. These resources provide a context for Student Action Team (and other) approaches, outlining why transition is important, suggesting a simple framework for consideration, summarising some stories of current practice against this framework and providing an audit tool for use by school communities in prioritising their initiatives on transition. There are also further resources and reading referenced.

The suggested framework has, as a central idea, that students, as well as teachers and schools, should make a ‘conscious commitment’ to processes of transition, through which they increase their sense of control over what happens. So it is not surprising that some of the examples outlined here in *Connect* are also referred to in the Research Document, and shown in the accompanying DVD.

Copies of the Research Document are available for download from the Student Wellbeing Action Partnership (SWAP) website at: www.education.unimelb.edu.au/swap
1. Year 7s Return to Primary Schools

Student-Led Back-To Day

For a couple of years, a cluster of schools in Melbourne’s north-west have been organising a ‘Back To’ Day as part of their transition programs for Year 6 and Year 7 students. On this day, Year 7 students from Catholic Regional College, St Albans return to their primary school (or to one of the participating schools: Holy Eucharist School, St Albans South; Resurrection School, Kings Park; St Paul’s School, Kealba; Sacred Heart School, St Albans) to advise Year 6 students about what life is like at secondary school.

In the past, this day had been organised by teachers from the schools as part of a cluster initiative. In 2010, it was decided to support students from the schools to organise and structure the day. To do this, Student Action Teams were set up at four of the schools and these were commissioned to research students’ anticipations, concerns, fears and needs for information, and then to develop programs for the day at each school.

The whole project began with a teacher meeting to discuss this way of working, and to determine how it could occur as part of the curriculum of the schools. Then activities were held with all the Year 6 and 7 students at their schools, in which they were asked to think about transition, and create PMI charts and small role plays about their experiences and concerns. Following these discussions, students were invited to apply for nine or ten places on their school’s Student Action Team.

The SATs then met separately and together over the next few months to carry out and share research – and then to plan the day. Based on their research, the Year 6 teams designed the ‘Back To’ program for their school, and the Year 7 teams briefed and organised all the Year 7 students.

The day went very smoothly. Year 7 students presented a DVD showing ‘a day in the life’ of a secondary school student, showed portfolios and answered many questions.

At a reflection day for all the SATs after the event, students reported what had happened and evaluated the strengths and weaknesses both of the day and the overall process. One student from Resurrection Primary School reported on his school’s involvement:

Since our first meeting, our Student Action Team has been researching and investigating the worries, concerns and positives that Resurrection Primary School Year 6s had about the transition from Year 6 to Year 7. We gave 64 students a survey and a questionnaire about how they were feeling about going to high school. Most of the kids had mixed feelings about going to secondary school but the majority were excited.

On the Back To Day, CRC students came to talk to us about transition. Our warm-up game (find your pair) went well and got everyone mingling. We presented our PowerPoint and the CRC students presented theirs. Both presentations went well. We then worked in small groups, which we believe that the CRC students were comfortable with. The CRC students answered all our questions and queries about going to high school.

We also looked at their portfolios and diaries and this was interesting and helpful. We ended the session by making a small book of helpful tips about secondary school. After the small group discussion, the Year 6s felt more prepared and at ease with going to Year 7.

Our Student Action Team believes that, thanks to Mrs Barone and to all our preparation, enthusiasm, perseverance, dedication and hard work, the day was a great success. We look forward to secondary school.

Aravindh Kannen
Year 6, Resurrection Primary School, Kings Park

At the final reflection and celebration session, all members of the Student Action Teams also completed a PMI analysis of the day and made recommendations for the cluster’s future directions around transition from Year 6 to Year 7. This is what they had to say (opposite page):

For more detail, contact:
CRC St Albans:
Margaret Stewart or Kevin Quinn
Holy Eucharist, St Albans South:
Jeff Parker
Resurrection School, King’s Park:
Frances Barone
St Paul’s School, Kealba:
Andrew Curmi
The positive things about the day included:

- It was planned and run by students
- The Year 7 presentations were useful and fun
- The portfolios helped us see what Year 7 was like and we got to know what would be expected in Year 7
- The cooperation and team work, especially through the games and lunch activities: it made sure everyone was comfortable and enthusiastic
- The question and answer sessions, especially in small groups: “It was a good way to get rid of our concerns and fears”
- Parents helped with the food
- Teachers remembered the Year 7 students

The things to be improved on the day:

- Some of the activities weren’t organised as well as they could have been
- There wasn’t enough time on the Back To day
- Some students were nervous to mix or to ask questions, some weren’t interested and not everyone was paying attention all the time
- Where the Year 6 students had too many questions, this didn’t allow time for the Year 7s to contribute their own experiences

Interesting things about the day:

- **Primary:** It was interesting to see the old Year 6s and hear about the life of a Year 7
- **Secondary:** Changes happening in the school and meeting old teachers and friends

In the student organisation of the project, positive things included:

- It was planned by students who worked out the information about the agenda
- The teams developed good working relationships and cooperated with each other. Mixing with the other SAT teams
- It was a good opportunity to understand each other’s ideas
- The organisation was good: we organised the day in plenty of time
- We improved responsibility skills

We could have improved:

- Involving the other Year 6 students more often and getting everyone to contribute
- Some were too nervous to speak up
- We relied on teacher support, which was a problem when teachers were away

Interesting things about the process:

- Time goes fast when we’re busy
- It was difficult organisation but interesting, working out the agenda and making decisions on how the work should be done
- We didn’t understand the project at the start
- It was great to meet and mix with different SAT teams
- It was interesting to get the different kind of views of other students and to learn about surveys

The ‘Back To’ Day at one of the schools
2. A Transition Expo Day

Student Leaders Take Action

Student leaders from six secondary and two primary schools in Melbourne's south have gathered together throughout this year with a focus on improving student feelings about transition to secondary school. The schools involved were St Peter's Primary School (East Bentleigh), St Andrew's Primary School (South Clayton), Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College (Bentleigh), Star of the Sea College (Gardenvale), Salesian College (Chadstone), St. James College (East Bentleigh), De La Salle College (Malvern) and Sacred Heart College (Oakleigh). Approximately four students and one teacher represented each school in the planning of an 'expo day' that had been suggested by students and teachers from the work of some of the schools in 2009.

The students developed research questions to find out the concerns and areas that needed to be addressed and then planned actions to do this. Initially we posed these questions:

1. **Primary**: What do we want to know about how the secondary school will look like?
2. **Secondary**: What would have helped a better transition? What could we do (on the day) to help Grade 6 students know what secondary school will look like?

The teachers were there to support, but the students were encouraged to think, reflect and develop their own ideas. Later in the year we continued to work on ideas and actions using the skills we had previously learnt.

As a cluster group, the students decided to work towards an expo/interactive workshop activity day in which all the 170 Year 6 students from the primary schools could participate. The student leaders from both primary and secondary schools who attended the forum days led the activities. They tried to be creative and planned a variety of ways of presenting the information on the Expo/Activity day.

### The Interactive Expo/Activity Day

The day was held at St. Andrew's Primary School in Clayton in mid October. About 170 Year 6 students, about 20 Year 7s, and some teachers, principals, representatives from School Focused Youth Services and from the Catholic Education Office Wellbeing Team attended.

All Year 6 students gathered initially and were given a show bag that included many ideas and tips about going to secondary school such as 'Friendship Tips'. They were also given a passport document that they filled in as they rotated, in small teams, around the activities.

The Year 7 students organised various events and interactive exhibitions for the Year 6 students. There were role plays, videos, demonstrations of the organisation of work, folders, mock weeks at school, maps of schools and Year 7 students' talks. The Year 7 students did brilliant work in engaging the Year 6 students and addressing their questions and issues in a fun, interactive and informative way.

### Responses

After the day, some of the Year 6 student leaders said about the project:

- I learnt to be trustworthy, to work with other students and how to act if there is a deadline. I also learnt about friendship skills. I was most proud of the times that we got together with other primary and secondary schools to plan the activity day in October. We got to do it ourselves without much help from the teachers. We finished it to a high standard and it was a very successful day that everyone enjoyed.

Joan Carrazzo and Student Action Team members

St Peter's Primary School, East Bentleigh
JCarranzo@spbentleigheast.catholic.edu.au
3. Grade 6 Transition

A Student-Led Cluster Initiative

In Term 4, Year 6 students from three primary schools (St Dominic’s Broadmeadows, Holy Child Dallas and Corpus Christi Glenroy) in Melbourne’s north-west have been actively involved in developing their own program to assist with transition to secondary school.

Steph Dragwidge, a Masters student of Social Work from Latrobe University, has been working with the students in classroom research to explore both their concerns and excitement felt about moving to a new school. In Student Action Teams, representatives have been developing activities for two ‘joint days’ when the grade 6 students from all three schools get together in week 4 and week 8. Teachers received information and training around engaging students and encouraging their active participation in the development process.

The Year 6 children are from three catholic primary schools that serve as feeder schools to Penola College. Although the program will benefit the 75% of students moving to Penola, an important part of this program is developing opportunities for those not going to Penola. By working with the three schools together, students who are going to one of 14 other schools next year will have a chance to share their experiences, learn strategies for effective transition and hopefully meet others transitioning to the same school.

As well as working together, the schools have partnered with the Foundation House Beaut Buddies project running at Penola College for Year 7 and 8 students from refugee backgrounds. The Penola students offered to spend 10 weeks in Term 4 helping Year 6 children with transition, drawing upon their own experience of multiple transitions in life (e.g. home country to Australia, intensive English language school to mainstream school, Year 6 to 7).

Students have enjoyed meeting each other and sharing ideas so far. We’ll be evaluating the program and developing a teacher resource for Year 6 transition with the assistance of Hume Whittlesea School Focused Youth Service.

Sally Beattie
Family School Partnerships Convenor
Catholic Education Office Melbourne
sbeattie@ceomelb.catholic.edu.au

Aims of the project:

- To relieve anxieties about transition to secondary school
- To build confidence and leadership skills in students
- To give students an active voice in developing their own transition program
- To connect students from different schools who may be moving to the same secondary schools
- To empower students from a refugee background by acknowledging them as experts in transition
- To raise awareness in grade 6 children of transitions in life and how attitude can be a key to resilience
- To engage students in research and literacy through relevant curriculum and social opportunities
- To give students opportunities to engage in interschool activities
Reflections on labels, power and uncertainty

In working with schools to support Student Action Teams on various issues, I’ve become increasingly aware of differences in the ways that such ideas are being addressed. While there has been a heartening growth in references to Student Action Teams as a way of increasing student participation and engagement in schools throughout Australia, this growth has also led to some very different practices.

“I don’t know if what we’re doing is a real Student Action Team,” said one Principal. So what is a ‘real Student Action Team’? And does it matter?

There isn’t a tight and prescribed ‘Student Action Team Program’, but rather an orientation towards a way of learning and teaching. However I think that, to be a Student Action Team, there has to be a team of students working on an issue of concern to them, where they take action to make changes based on the outcomes of investigations they undertake. So there clearly has to be a ‘change agenda’ as well as a ‘doing things agenda’.

This cannot always be as sharply defined as this in practice. In some situations, the scope for change is much more limited or defined. Where a topic is ‘commissioned’ by a community group or by a school, there are immediately constraints placed on the breadth of student decision-making. On the other hand, where students are working in a team to implement something or take responsibility for something, this can still have a strong student participatory focus, while not strictly perhaps being a SAT.

So maybe we need a new label? I suggested to the above Principal that some of what the school was doing could be called Student Responsibility Groups (SRGs). These are groups or teams of students who take on responsibility for the implementation of something eg the school’s publicity or website, the operation of aspects of the library, running assemblies and so on. These students have important responsibilities, have to make decisions and carry out valued roles within the school. But they neither investigate much about their area of responsibility nor are expected (or in some cases, allowed) to make changes. Their areas of responsibility are defined by the school, by teachers or by tradition, and their roles are to ensure that they are carried out.

It is important to recognise such distinctions.

Even within Student Action Teams that do have a strong expectation for investigation/research and change, there are diverse practices. The location of the teams represents one such diversity.

In the ‘original’ SATs, students undertook investigation and action within community settings - outside schools. They worked on community safety, traffic safety, the environment of the town and so on. Other more recent SATs have worked on issues within the school community: transition, student voice, school sustainability practices and so on. I can see why: these issues are immediate and accessible; they are of importance to students. But they also offer teachers possibilities for easy action; they can be addressed without leaving the school grounds or, in some cases, the classroom. These are totally appropriate issues for SATs to tackle. But these issues are also more easily contained and limited in their impact; they avoid challenges about the roles that students can take within their broader communities.

SRGs and, to some extent, school-based SATs are also more likely to have higher degrees of teacher control and (perhaps as a consequence) ultimately lower degrees of student responsibility and control. They can also be pre-planned and organised by teachers within predictable curriculum requirements and are more certain – and that’s both positive and negative.

To undertake an investigation and then develop action that is really based on that research, means that neither students nor teachers can be certain where the learning will take you. And to do this in a community setting is to increase the degree of uncertainty. The diagram below is a first attempt to think about these comparisons.

Support for authentic student participation within the real context of schools must start somewhere – it must start with the possible. But if it remains uncritically there, it will stagnate – and that will constrain and minimise students’ real participation. The best SRG and SAT practices look for significant possibilities for a starting point, but then also recognise, create and seize opportunities to push practice further along the continuum of increased student engagement and control. Teachers ask: how can I do less, and support students to do more? How can students have greater responsibility, decision-making and control?

It is to be self-critical and even impatient with limitations. It is to be willing to invite and embrace uncertainty.

Roger Holdsworth

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**Student Responsibility Groups** → **Student Action Teams:** **School-based** → **Student Action Teams:** **Community-based**

Teacher control  

Uncertainty
Supporting teachers to support Student Councils

2010 has been an incredibly productive year for the team at VISTA – the Victorian Institute of SRC Teacher Advisors. Highlights and achievements for the year include:

• re-establishing contact with over 100 teachers
• creating an online Ning network to allow SRC Teachers to network with others, share resources and discuss issues or ideas
• securing funding from DEECD to deliver the online professional development series ‘Look Who’s Talking’
• providing SRC Teachers the chance to network at our Wine and Cheese Nights
• offering a workshop for primary SRC Teacher Advisors at the FRENZY Conference
• a VISTA presence and involvement in the VicSRC Congress
• participating in the VicSRC launch of Represent!, an SRC Resource kit for students and teachers
• developing networks with other individuals and organisations

The Future

Plans already in development include:

• a research investigation into the issues and working conditions for SRC Teachers
• the creation of resources to support teachers working with Student Councils
• the continuation of online processional learning through the DEECD Virtual Conference Centre
• a research investigation into the feasibility of an SRC Teachers’ Conference
• an SRC Advisors Teacher of the Year Award
• a research investigation into the establishment of a Victorian State Junior School Council

Tentative Wine and Cheese Nights for 2011

The VISTA team has well and truly started to coordinate its quality and informative professional development series for SRC Teachers in 2011. For those of you who like to plan ahead, tentative dates for our Wine and Cheese Nights in 2011 are:

3rd March; 31st March; 5th May; 9th June; 28th July; 1st September; 20th October; 24th November

Final times, presenters and topics for these sessions are yet to be confirmed, but will be made available via the VISTA Website at http://srcteachers.ning.com. Sessions are held at the offices of Second Strike (115A High Street, Kew) and all those who attend will receive a free SRC Resource Kit from Second Strike (Attend all of the session for 2011 and you will have collected the whole set!) For those of you overseas, interstate or in regional and rural locations, our PD sessions are also broadcast over the internet thanks to the DEECD Virtual Conference Centre. If you are unable to attend a live session, we do try to make recordings of the sessions available from our website.

Welcome Jane

We also welcome Jane Leslie to the VISTA Team! Jane is employed as VISTA’s Administration Assistant and works in our office two days a week. Jane is working on updating our membership database, processing new membership applications and keeping all our members up-to-date with our new newsletter.

If you’ve got any questions, concerns or issues you’d like to discuss, get in touch with Jane at the VISTA office on (03) 9853 0600 or by e-mailing: vista@srcteachers.org.au

Get Involved

VISTA is an organisation that is reliant on the support of other SRC Teachers. Without your input, VISTA cannot operate to its full capacity. Become a member in 2011 and access all of the fantastic opportunities and resources we have available.

From all of us at VISTA we would like to wish all SRC teachers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We hope you enjoy your (well deserved) break and return fresh and ready in 2011 to help make the Student Council at your school the best it’s ever been!

Scott Duncan
VISTA President

vista@srcteachers.org.au
http://srcteachers.ning.com

October-December 2010
Represent! is the Victorian Student Representative Council’s (VicSRC) new resource kit for students and SRC support teachers. This new resource, produced in collaboration with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, is full of useful advice, tips, tricks and guides for even the most experienced of Student Representative Councils.

The resource kit was launched at The University High School by the Minister for Education, the Honourable Bronwyn Pike MP, on Friday 22nd of October in front of members and supporters of the VicSRC, the Department of Early Childhood and Development (DEECD) as well as those who contributed to the resource.

The kit itself was a huge project taking many months to put together, with contributions from a range of people. The result is now a 160+ page document covering everything from starting an SRC at your school, to effective meeting practices and how to involve your SRC in decision making at your school. This is the most comprehensive project the VicSRC has undertaken and we are really proud of the results. We hope Represent! will become a valuable resource for SRCs around the state – who will all receive three copies to put in their libraries and have on hand ready for every situation an SRC might encounter.

Naturally a big thank-you is extended to those involved, particularly our partners in this project, the DEECD, and also to previous members of the VicSRC Executive, for their consultation and hard work. Thanks also to those at The University High, for a great launch and also some pretty decent sandwiches!

It is my great pleasure to be speaking to you today on behalf of the VicSRC and particularly, on behalf of the VicSRC Student Executives both past and present who have worked tirelessly to create this resource for SRCs we are launching today.

The Victorian Student Representative Council aims to support and strengthen the SRC of every secondary school in Victoria. While we have provided many resources, tools, training and advice to schools in order to achieve this goal, none have ever been as comprehensive or as exciting as Represent! This resource presents a progressive and challenging vision for SRCs and will hopefully encourage renewed life and vision in the work of SRCs around the state. As the VicSRC approaches our 10th anniversary, we are excited and hopeful about this potential new era in student representation across the state.

We are obviously thrilled about the launch of Represent! This resource will help existing SRCs to achieve greater things, work more effectively, be further integrated into the decision-making mechanisms within their school and realise their full potential. Within Represent! we encourage SRCs to place lesser emphasis on fundraising for charity and rather to act primarily as a voice for the student body, working for changes and improvements within the school. This is something that many SRCs and schools often forget, and we hope that Represent! will challenge SRCs to have a stronger focus on being the voice of students, really allowing them to make a difference.

We hope the resource will also assist students in schools without an existing SRC to set up new ones. It’s important that every secondary school student in Victoria has their say, and this really has to start at the school level. Without an SRC, students are simply that much more limited in their potential to create change and get the most out of their education.

It’s important that SRCs are recognised as the voice of students within their schools and in their wider communities. Democratic processes, as outlined in Represent!, ensure that this voice is truly representative. By including a wide cross-section of students of different ages, backgrounds and ideals, the SRC can consider an issue from many different perspectives, giving greater scope to their decisions.

Being on an SRC brings many benefits. As well as making a difference through influencing school decision-making, being an SRC can have a positive impact on the individual too. Skills learnt through SRCs build on those learnt in the classroom, such as public speaking, critical thinking, communication and teamwork. These skills are invaluable later in life and assist students in becoming conscientious citizens.

When this resource was first conceived, it was going to be little more than a few loose-leaf paper inserts into a folder. As we worked on it further, it just grew and grew because there was so much information that we knew was necessary to include, and very little that we could leave out. Luckily, the Department agreed and took on a greater role in the production and publication of the resource, really allowing it to become the epic tome it is today.

With the assistance of the Department, this has become a much larger and more comprehensive document than any of us had ever imagined. Covering such a broad range of topics, and going into such great detail on each one, means that it will be useful to even the most experienced SRCs.

I wish to acknowledge the considerable contribution of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, and give our thanks particularly to Nicole Koomen, Dina Guest and Helen Clarke who worked closely alongside the VicSRC on this project. I’d like to thank and congratulate the authors of this resource, Roger Holdsworth and James Tonson, as well as Kate Walsh, the VicSRC Coordinator, who has spent many months overseeing this project. To all the students who contributed or were consulted in the writing of Represent!, thank you. Your contribution has been invaluable and will help Student Representative Councils for many years to come.

Finally, I wish to thank the Honourable Bronwyn Pike, Minister for Education, for giving her time today to launch Represent! Her support of the VicSRC and student participation on a wider level is greatly appreciated. It is the Minister’s support and the support of a wide range of people and organisations across Victoria that has allowed the VicSRC to become the organisation that it is today.

We hope that students and teachers alike enjoy using Represent! and are inspired and motivated to strengthen their SRC and the voice of students within their school communities.

Michael Kurtanjek
2009/10 VicSRC Student Executive
The following resolutions were debated and agreed to by the 2010 VicSRC Congress in August. They have been grouped here by common themes.

### SRC Support
- That the VicSRC create an online forum of SRCs on the VicSRC website to facilitate the exchange of ideas and examples of leadership and training.
- That the VicSRC lobby the state government to subsidise and introduce mandatory leadership workshops and programs (focused on year 9s) for all Victorian High Schools for at least one day a year.
- That the VicSRC write to the government and encourage them to allocate a yearly fund to their SRC and allow the SRCs to use this fund at their discretion.

### SRCs in School Decision Making
- That the VicSRC encourage School Councils to discuss and get approval from SRCs in the decision-making process.
- That the VicSRC survey School Councils and Principals as to why they will not approve events, then turn this information into a resource that gives schools ideas on how to overcome these disapprovals and have these events approved. Also, case studies of successful events and how they were approved would be included in the kit.
- That the VicSRC encourage all SRCs to develop a decision making ‘power’ map of the school to be posted and be made accessible to all students.
- That the VicSRC should work with the DEECD in reforming the current student satisfaction survey include a mandatory student opinion section.
- That the VicSRC encourage schools to introduce a survey of students about a particular teacher or subject at the request of a student.

### SRC Promotion
- That the VicSRC should create a video that will be used in schools to promote student involvement in their SRC.
- That the VicSRC encourage schools to allow SRCs to raise funds for themselves (as a council) and other school projects on school grounds.

### Bullying
- That the VicSRC support anti-bullying campaigns in schools (physical, verbal and cyber bullying) by advertising through VicSRC resources and media and by providing examples of case studies in schools that have been successful.
- That the VicSRC encourage regional clusters to work together to exchange effective policies and strategies on anti-bullying.

### Healthy Food
- That the VicSRC conduct a survey of all Victorian High Schools regarding which healthier canteen options are successful at their schools, then use this information to create a list on the VicSRC website of healthy and cost effective food suppliers to be made available to all schools.

### Environment
- That the VicSRC emphasise the availability and benefits of government incentives or subsidies to help schools become more environmentally friendly; we propose that this is done by sending letters detailing specific actions that can be taken to Principals and teachers as well as writing an article in the VicSRC Newsletter.

### Sexual Diversity
- That the VicSRC encourage schools to raise support and awareness for sexual diversity in schools.

### Drugs and Alcohol
- That the VicSRC research the possibility of developing a partnership with drug, alcohol and gambling associations or community groups to deliver interactive workshops and guest speakers who have first hand experiences; the intention being that students are awakened to the traumatic encounters due to the misuse of alcohol and illicit drugs.

### Graffiti, Vandalism and Littering
- That the VicSRC should distribute to schools case studies of schools that have been successful in cracking down on graffiti, vandalism and littering.
Georgia Kennelly is a Year 12 student in Victoria who, because she leaves school this year, has just finished several years' representation on the State Executive of the Victorian Student Representation Council (VicSRC). Why do students get involved in Student Councils - and at a statewide level? What is the impact of this work on their lives and on their schools?

Connect asked Georgia some direct questions:

When did you start with the VicSRC? Why and how? What was your school-level involvement at that time?

GK: In Year 9 I was secretary of the SRC at my school. I’m fairly young for my year, and I was pretty terrified but determined to exceed the older students’ expectations of me. The President of our SRC at the time spoke to me not long after school had started for the year, saying that there was a meeting I should attend of this organisation known as the ‘VicSRC’. She gave me the details and said she’d see me there.

I was only 13 and didn’t know the city very well, but managed to make my way to the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic), where the meeting was being held, opposite Federation Square, dressed up in my mother’s clothing, because I wanted to look professional. I was faced with a room of Year 12 students and some adults, and was too scared to speak. The first meeting was a blur; I still had limited knowledge of what the VicSRC actually was, apart from the inkling that we had to organise an event in May known as “Congress”. She gave me the details and said she’d see me there.

After a busy few months, Congress 2007 came up and I saw that we were actually making a difference. Students would turn up; quiet and sticking to their school groups and then leave, energetic and happy, with a plethora of new friends and ideas. I started to understand why there was the VicSRC in the first place, and really wanted to go further with it, to help more students and their SRCs.

Well, why is it important to have an SRC? A VicSRC?

GK: I think that there are two different perspectives you can take when looking at an SRC, and the benefits gained: firstly, the benefit the school community gains from having an SRC; and secondly, the benefits the students in the SRC gain. An SRC is about giving students a voice, and what nobler a cause? Giving someone a voice is one of the biggest gifts you can give them. Teaching students to argue their case intelligently and assertively is also a skill that they will use for the rest of their lives in whatever career they choose.

From a school perspective, having an SRC means the students can channel their concerns through a democratic body, and can reduce truancy, bullying and vandalism, among other issues.

Having a VicSRC is so crucial to promoting student voice at a state-wide level, and being a part of it over the last few years has really shown me how much potential it has. I could go on about strengthening and supporting SRCs, however only so much can be conveyed with words. You really need to experience it yourself to understand how satisfying it is to support SRCs in their roles as representatives.

Looking back over your time on the VicSRC Executive, what have been the biggest achievements that you’ve seen? Why are these important?

GK: Getting funding for the VicSRC from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development was a major achievement. Not only did receiving this funding mean that we could finally make some of our dreams a reality, but it also meant that the Department was recognising the VicSRC as the peak body for student voice. Our relationship with the Department has blossomed since then, and we could not do what we do now without them.

More recently, the launch of Represent! was a massive achievement as it marked both the production of a great kit of information for SRCs and support teachers, but also indicated a strong commitment by the Department to supporting this form of active student participation. It was also important that the Minister took time from her busy schedule at launch the publication. This has great symbolic value for students as it gives a message right from the top of the education system in this state, that having student participation in the governance of schools is vital.
How has being involved changed you?

GK: I remember being that shy 13 year old with bad teeth, walking into a room of strangers and not knowing much about why we had an SRC. I knew I wanted to make a difference and help other students, but that was about it.

Now I have renewed confidence in myself and my ability to speak up. My public speaking skills have improved tenfold and I am not afraid to assertively argue my point to others older than me. Before involvement with the VicSRC I was intent on becoming a dancer but now I’m planning to study Law – a career where I can speak up on behalf of others.

Having the honour to be a part of the VicSRC Executive has given me opportunities I could never have dreamed of.

Is there a downside to involvement at this level? Is it a distraction from studies for example?

GK: There is always a negative side to involvement and the simple fact is it takes up a lot of time. Modern day students are expected to do well in their studies, have a part time job and an energetic social life, and who has time to chuck in advocating for student voice on top of all of that?

It does take up a lot of time, and that can’t be ignored. It will affect your studies. Accept that. I know now that my ATAR score will be lower than it could have been if I was not a part of VicSRC.

But do I regret it? Not one small bit. I am not defined by a 4 digit number. Having been part of the VicSRC not only helped other students, but it taught me things I could not learn in class.

So where to for you now?

GK: I personally want to be a lawyer now so I can help others. For example, I would love to take on a case about the rights that students have for representation on School Councils. I’m very passionate on that issue.

Which then raises the question: what do you think are the next challenges for students involved in SRCs and on the VicSRC?

GK: We need more students to be inspired to be representatives in schools, so that the VicSRC can continue to have a solid basis in the action of students in their own schools. And this will only happen when schools recognise the work that SRC members do voluntarily within those schools. For example, teachers are happy for us to take time out for participation in sport competitions but not for representation, or for the training we need to make us effective. We need more awareness of the positive impact that SRCs can have.

The SRC Awards were a great thing for the VicSRC to initiate this year. Finally there is some recognition possible for all the hard work that students and their organisations do.

Whittlesea SRC cluster

Do you know about the cluster meeting of SRCs that are being held throughout Victoria - like the one that was held on October 20th? Were you there?

This was the latest meeting of the Whittlesea Cluster to be exact. The day was held at Kildonan Uniting Care in Epping in Melbourne’s north. The day was run and facilitated by Erin Young, conference facilitator of the VicSRC, and brought together over 20 students from the local area, plus members of the VicSRC.

The meeting commenced at 9:30 am; we were introduced to each other and did some ice breakers to loosen everyone up. The day was then filled with great activities on team dynamics, team building, overcoming problem at our school, and how the SRC can welcome new students into the school, whether they start at the school in year 7 or year 12. The best part of the day was making a mock video that could be used to promote a school SRC at an assembly. These videos were funny but very informative at the same time; they had such things as ‘what an SRC does,’ and ‘how free dress days and fundraisers are planned and run.’ If your school is low on members, I highly recommend that you make one of these videos; it might get the whole school singing up.

This was a really fantastic day. If you would like to host or find out more information about clusters in your area, you can e-mail VicSRC Coordinator Kate Walsh at coordinator@vicsrc.org.au or view the events page at www.vicsrc.org.au for upcoming events.

Student involvement promotes youth leadership within and between local schools; without student involvement at events such as these, clusters such as the Whittlesea event would not be as successful, so please don’t hesitate to contact Kate. This was a really great day and if there is one in your area I highly recommend you attend, and hope to see you there.

Tim Eric and Sammy Chapman
VicSRC Exec 10/11

Victorian Student Representative Council
The 2010 NSW SRC is the NSW Department of Education and Training’s peak student leadership consultative and decision making forum and represents secondary students in NSW government secondary schools. It consists of 22 members elected from regions across NSW and includes two Aboriginal student leaders.

The term of office of the 2010 NSW SRC commenced in November 2009 with two days of training, followed by the inaugural 2010 NSW SRC meeting held at NSW Parliament House, Sydney. Subsequent meetings were held on 11 and 12 March, 2 June 2010 and 1 September, 2010. The NSW SRC completes their term of office on 23 November, 2010.

The 2010 NSW SRC has worked primarily on resolutions passed at the Student Forum at the 2009 State SRC Conference and also ran Enviro Inspiro!, the student-led school environmental competition.

### Actions of the 2010 NSW Student Representative Council

The following resolutions were passed at the 2009 State SRC Conference. The 2010 NSW SRC has responsibility to address each of these resolutions.

**Resolution 1:**

*That the 2010 NSW SRC encourage regular meetings between school executives and SRCs in NSW secondary schools*

The NSW SRC has:

- participated in a forum with senior officers including the Director-General of Education and Training to discuss the best ways to take action on this resolution;
- conducted a survey of 50 schools to determine how often secondary SRCs currently meet with school executives (principal, deputy or head teachers);
- created a set of draft guidelines on how schools can set up regular SRC meetings with school executives;
- created a draft letter for endorsement by the Secondary Principals Council and Student Welfare Directorate. It is hoped that this tri-level endorsement will encourage school principals to support the resolution;
- updated SRCs across the state on these actions by video-conference.

**Resolution 2:**

*That the 2010 NSW SRC raise awareness and promote the use of the link to the DET student leadership website and its resources to students*

The NSW SRC has:

- prepared an email to be sent to regional SRC contact persons to encourage greater usage of the website;
- designed a draft poster to promote the website;
- arranged for the NSW SRC logo to be placed on both the primary and secondary student portal entry pages. This logo is hyperlinks to www.schools.nsw.edu.au/src
Resolution 3:
That the 2010 NSW SRC promote the use of video conferencing at regional and state levels to enhance communication between SRCs

The NSW SRC has:

- organised and run two very successful video conferences. The first was in March 2010 and demonstrated how video conferencing is an effective way to share information between SRCs. Over 20 secondary schools participated! The second video conference was held in June 2010 to promote the NSW SRC initiatives, Green Day and Enviro Inspiro! Over 100 students at 10 secondary schools participated;
- promoted the benefits of video-conferencing to SRCs at inter-school and regional SRC events.

Resolution 4:
That the 2010 NSW SRC promote and support the distribution and implementation of 'SRCs: a practical guide for students and teachers'.

The NSW SRC has:

- prepared an email to be sent to regional SRC contact persons to encourage usage of the resource
- designed a poster to promote the resource.

Other Tasks From the Student Forum:

It is moved that the 2010 NSW SRC promote a 'Green Day' in which students participate in environmentally friendly projects

Goals:

- To promote Green Day, an event to be held in September 2010 in secondary schools. A base line of activity is that a school assembly be held in all secondary schools to encourage students to improve their local environments.
- To provide a 'how to run a Green Day' guide for schools and put this on the student leadership website, possibly on the Enviro Inspiro webpage at www.schools.nsw.edu.au/src/statecompetitions/enviro_inspiro/index.php

The NSW SRC has:

- designed a poster and 'how to' guide to promote Green Day and arranged for both these resources to be available online at www.schools.nsw.edu.au/src
- written a school assembly speech for secondary students to read on Green Day
- promoted Green Day at inter-school and regional SRC events
- successfully run a video conference to promote Green Day.

ENVIRO INSPIRO! 2010

The 2010 NSW SRC conducted Enviro Inspiro!, the student-led school environment competition. The NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water generously provided funding to support this competition. In 2010, there were 32 entries. This is a 100% increase from 2009.

In 2010, competition guidelines were modified to allow:

1. joint school entries which focused on environmental issues rather than just the school environment;
2. completion of the project prior to 2010 as long as the media component was completed in 2010.

2,000 posters were printed to promote the competition and the NSW SRC encouraged students and schools to enter at inter-school and regional SRC events.

Three NSW SRC members participated in the Enviro Inspiro judging panel which met on 7 July 2010 to review all entries. The judges commented that the standard of entries was high and the three winning entries were showcased at the 2010 State SRC Conference. The winning schools and their entries are:

1st Place: Mudgee High School - Hakea Hedge
2nd Place: North Sydney Girls High School – A Biodegradable Truth
3rd Place: Warrawong Intensive English Centre – New Beginnings
Consultations with the 2010 NSW SRC:
Forum of students with senior Department of Education and Training officers

In November 2009 and in September 2010 the 2010 NSW SRC met with senior officers of the Department. Two forums per year will continue to be held each year between the NSW SRC and senior officers of the Department - one at the commencement of the NSW SRC term of office, the other at the completion of the term of office.

Other consultations with 2010 NSW SRC

Consultations were held with:
• Representatives from the NSW Commission for Children and Young People about the role of the commission
• Rey Reodica, Executive Officer, Youth Action Policy Association on the actions of the group
• The Manager, Parliamentary Education and Community Relations, on the history of the NSW Parliament
• Sue Burton and Megan Craig, Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water, and Mark Caddey, Sustainable Schools Coordinator, on ways to encourage schools to engage in events and activities to improve school environments
• Paul Brock, Director Learning and Development Research, about the Macquarie 2010 Bicentenary Commemoration
• Emily May, Policy and Training Officer, YAPA, about School and Community Partnerships
• Representatives from the NSW Department of Health as part of a consultation process on Protecting Children from Tobacco
• Shades4AIDS
• Phil Hart, Coordinator, Student Focused Equity Initiatives about the Student Equity Advisory Team.

2010 NSW SRC Liaison Roles:
Each NSW SRC member liaises with a nominated departmental officer or government or non-government group or agency. Liaison roles include:

State SRC Conference Action Team
The NSW SRC member attended all 2010 State SRC Conference Action Team planning meetings and shared information between the NSW SRC and the Action Team.

NSW Youth Advisory Council
A member from the NSW SRC liaises with the NSW Youth Advisory Council.

UNICEF Day for Change
The UNICEF Day for Change liaison person corresponded with UNICEF about ways to promote UNICEF Day for Change with SRCs.

NSW Commission for Children and Young People’s Reference Group
The NSW SRC liaison person communicated regularly with the NSW Commission for Children and Young People, attended meetings of the group and provided advice on issues related to the actions of the group.

DIY Reality: recipes to transform and inspire

Written by young people, for young people, this 104 page full colour book is an ideal resource for any young person who wants to make a difference in their community by organising a community event or project. Projects featured range from music, dance and drama to youth forum and anti-bullying campaigns. The common theme is youth-initiated and youth-led projects, highlighting how effective young people can be when given the opportunity to act on their ideas and passions!

The book follows the timeline of a project and includes some inspiring stories, ideas and helpful guides on how to execute each aspect of a project such as: How to Get a Grant, How to Write a Media Release and How to Book a Band.

Cost: $34.00 incl GST

Orders: To order a copy of the book go to www.yapa.org.au/diy and fill in the online order form. You can also download the introductory pages of the book.

All orders will receive a bonus 6 month subscription to unleash, YAPA’s magazine of youth action and opinion for young people aged under 20 years.

Multiple copies? Contact YAPA for discounts on 10 or more copies of DIY Reality.

Enquiries: Joanne Bennett: info@yapa.org.au or (02) 9281 5522 extension 3

For further information see: www.schools.nsw.edu.au/studentsupport/studeadsrc/src/secstateactiv/nswsrc.php or e-mail: student.leadership@det.nsw.edu.au
Student Councils on the Web

How do schools represent and promote their Student Councils, SRCs and JSCs? Many schools’ web-pages now include specific sections about student participation; some of these pages are actually written and maintained by students. Here’s a relatively random collection of web descriptions of Student Councils from around Australia – grabbed from current school web pages:

Montagu Bay Primary School Student Council, Tasmania

Through the Student Council you can contribute to the life of Montagu Bay Primary School. You can:

- Participate in decision making on how the school is run
- Provide services to students, such as assist with conflict resolution, help with computers, build a student website, act as book buddies, manage student issues including the use of Game Cards, and student behaviour in the playground
- Contribute to community projects in Australia and overseas
- Run fun activities for students such as ‘Mad Hair Day’, ‘Footy Final’ and ‘Jump Rope For Heart’
- Get Student Mediators and Aussie Sports Leaders trained and working with students from Prep to Grade 6.

Representatives

All classes from year 3 to 6 will have one girl and one boy representative who will have a voice and a vote. The year 2s will also have 2 representatives (one girl and one boy), but they will only have a voice and not a vote on the Council.

If you want to be a member of the School Council you must represent the ideas, interests and suggestions of your class. You are not elected to the Council to promote your own ideas alone.

Elections

If you want to be a member of the Student Council you will need to persuade your class that you are the person to elect.

When you vote you will be selecting from a list of nominees from your class. From the list you will vote for three girls and three boys. You will number your votes from 1 to 3 for the girls in the order of your preference, with 1 being your top preference; and you will do the same for the boys. As a result you will elect one girl and one boy to represent your class.

Dampier Primary School Student Council, WA

The Dampier Primary School Student Council ... is a representative body of children across all the primary years, with two representatives from each class, together with the six elected school prefects who act as an ‘Inner Cabinet’.

Each class holds its own selection process at the beginning of the year and these representatives hold their position for the full year. As well as this, a Guest Councillor system operates on a rotational basis, giving even more children the chance to be involved in the process. The Council meets once a fortnight and the children run the meetings themselves, taking turns to ‘chair’ and ‘scribe’.

A set agenda is followed, including normal meeting process items such as Correspondence, Business Arising etc. General Business also follows a set format:

- Good things happening around our school
- Not so good things happening around our school
- A chosen issue, and
- Ideas to solve the problem

When choosing a problem to discuss, the group needs to focus on one that they can make a difference to and have the power to solve. Over the years this has resulted in several successful problem-solving initiatives eg the Flying Fox and Play Equipment Rosters for the Junior playground, Umpire Rosters for Junior and Intermediate soccer and football games and the Lunch Basket System to eradicate the unsightly and recurring problem of unclaimed lunch boxes.

This year we hope to get a wall mounted oscillating fan for the Sports Shed, as it’s so hot in there.

Sometimes it is just a matter of bringing problems to the attention of the whole school body through dramatic and/or humorous sketches to get a point across eg reminders about correct bike behaviour, everyday school rules and expectations of common courtesy and good old-fashioned manners eg welcoming new students to the school.

The Student Council is an obvious forum for students to demonstrate their active citizenship and willingness to perform school community service.

Student Delegates at Swifts Creek P-12 School, Victoria

The Student Delegates are elected members of the student body who aim to represent the views of students of the College, and to allow students access to the decision making process. These delegates have replaced the former SRC. Students are elected to this role from each year level, with two being selected from Year 7 and two from Year 12.
Newstead Primary School
Junior School Council, Victoria

The Junior School Council is made up of students that are elected annually by the student body. It consists of students from all grades assisted by a teacher. This Council provides a forum for students to discuss and present concerns and ideas, as well as come up with fun events and activities for the school. They also raise funds to support their own activities, such as building a beach volleyball court. The Junior School Council reports monthly to the School Council on its ideas and activities.

www.newsteadps.vic.edu.au

Student Council, Cairns High School, Queensland

The role of the Student Council is to act as the forum where the opinions and concerns of the Cairns High student body may be voiced. It also aims to promote communication between and within year levels. The Student Council also develops leadership and a sense of responsibility at all year levels by encouraging participation in community and charity projects.

Regular meetings are held for effective organisation and participation of students in council run events.

The Student Council strives:
• to represent the total student body
• to encourage and allow leadership at all year levels
• to foster and maintain better communication between year levels and within year levels
• to foster and maintain communication between student body, teachers, administration and the P&C
• to represent the school in the local community
• to encourage student participation in community and charity projects both local and globally

cairnsshs.eq.edu.au/wcmss/index.php/Student-Council.html

Student Council, Shenton College, Shenton Park, WA

The function of the Student Council is to act as a representative body for the students at Shenton College conveying suggestions and comments from the students to the appropriate persons, as well as organising events and programs.

Shenton College councillors are voted in by peers through a preferential voting system. Elections were held in Term 4 of last year. The Year 8 councillors were elected at Shenton College early this year.

Within the College Student Council, specific areas of importance were identified and related portfolios have been established: Charity, Environment and Facilities, Social and Public Relations. Each portfolio is assigned a leader responsible for reporting the progress of the portfolio area to the executive committee.

www.shenton.wa.edu.au/students/studentcouncil

SRC 2010: Sydney Boys High School, NSW

Each year the student body of Sydney Boys High School are given the opportunity to apply for an important leadership position on the school Student Representative Council. Applications involve students vowing that they will commit to the position and work hard throughout the year to represent their peers. Names of applicants from each year are submitted to an online voting site on the SBHS SRC website. Voting is preferential and not compulsory.

As a result, six students are elected from each year to represent their peer/year group. These students are required to join committees on the Council and attend regular Friday lunchtime meetings. If students fulfil their role satisfactorily with the committees they are part of throughout the year, they are honoured with a badge and may purchase an SRC tie.

The SRC gives students the opportunity to learn about group work, running meetings, working on committees, responsibility, commitment and leadership. SRC members get the opportunity to go to regional and state SRC meetings as well as a range of leadership development and motivational seminars. It is a Council voted in by the students, run by the students for the students of Sydney Boys High. The teacher facilitator works alongside the SRC to help with elections, excursions, meetings and getting ideas off the ground.

Regional Meeting 1 2010

The first regional SRC meeting of 2010 was hosted by Randwick Girls High on the 4th of March. It was the perfect start to the year with a variety of discussions, quality food and a great workshop kindly set up by Family Planning NSW. The main issue raised was discrimination of any kind in schools and how to raise awareness and tackle any such issues.

We were privileged enough to hear from two brave, same-sex attracted individuals who had suffered much discrimination and injustice during their high school years. Their stories were truly touching and gave students a new insight into tackling homophobia. They very much wished that their message be spread.

Isnad Zaman, Vice President 2010
www.sydneyhigh.org.au/src/
You can now access most back issues of *Connect* on-line for free! Thanks to a great partnership with the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), back issues of *Connect* have been up-loaded or scanned and are now loaded on a newly developed site within ACER’s Research Repository: ACEReSearch.

You can find issues of *Connect* at:

research.acer.edu.au/connect

Here you can find out about *Connect* and its aims and scope, submit articles, subscribe – and gain access to issues 1 to 180.

To do this, look at the left-hand menu; there you’ll find a pull-down menu with which to select the issue number – browse; then when the front cover of that issue is displayed, simply click on the link in the main body of the page to download a PDF of that issue.

In addition, for recent issues (not the earlier scanned issues unfortunately), you can specify key words and find those issues that contain those references.

**Availability**

The last 12 months of *Connect* (ie the last 6 issues) will continue to be available ONLY by subscription. But issues will be progressively added to this site and made freely available after that 12 months.

After all, the sharing of ideas, stories, approaches and resources is what *Connect* has always been on about.

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**Thanks**

This archiving project has been developed over recent months as a partnership between *Connect* and ACER. Many thanks in particular to Sophie Lissonet who has put much work into construction of the site and uploading issues.

Enormous thanks also to Lance Deveson and Stuart Hughes from ACER for their support and encouragement of the project and to Dianne Koglin for mammoth scanning efforts.

**Let us know**

There may be some gaps or improvements necessary. As you use this resource, let us know. If an issue of *Connect* seems to be missing, check the issues either side, as double issues show up only as one issue number. And if you have any ideas for improving this resource, please let us know.

Most importantly, please USE it.

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research.acer.edu.au/connect/

All back copies of *Connect* to be available on-line for free!
Austalian students call for bigger say on education

Tell Us is a national campaign that asked 10,000 secondary students about the meaning of success at school. Findings reveal that Australian students should have more of a say in their education. Students also say that school prepares them for the future, but cannot rely on test scores alone to measure what they know.

Ten points to sum it up...

1. Tell Us is Australia’s first national campaign to ask students what success at school really means.
2. The current focus on student and school performance and the national curriculum has drawn a wide range of players to the national stage, including Federal and State governments, the education sector, academics and media. But where are the voices of students?
3. The campaign brings thousands of student voices to the debate to help redefine how achievement and success is valued at school. Tell Us also provides a snapshot of how students across the country feel about the current system.
4. Over 10,000 secondary students were part of the Tell Us campaign. Students from every State and Territory used Facebook, school events, surveys, advocacy and interviews with media to have their say...
5. Students should have a real voice in their education
   a. The majority of students say they don’t help decide how their school runs (50%)
   b. Only four in ten students say their school listens to what they have to say (40% say their school does listen; 35% say their school doesn’t listen; 25% are unsure)
   c. The majority of students say that what they know cannot be measured by tests or marks (60%)
6. Students say that, in addition to academic achievement, success comes from participation, friendship, sport, arts, recognition from peers and teachers, and leadership positions.
   a. Six in ten say that what they know cannot be measured by tests or marks (58%)
   b. Qualitative feedback gives us an insight into what matters to students:

I think the most successful thing I am at school is being in the SRC Club, which means I can put my say to my school.

My sporting achievements were mentioned at assembly. It felt really good to be acknowledged.

I felt successful at school when I was the president of the Make Poverty History club. I helped organise and run an awareness and fund raisimg week.

I felt successful at school when I was appointed House Vice-Captain in Year 11. It was more important than just doing well in a test, it showed me that I was valued as more than just a student, but as a worthy contributor to the community.

I felt most successful at school after my Outdoor Education Camp last year. Although I didn’t stand out from the crowd in particular, I felt successful because we as a group had bonded and strengthened our friendships - we all helped each other.

7000 young people across Australia have had their say in Tell Us, the country’s biggest national student survey on school education. The survey results, released by The Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) on 12 August reveal that secondary students want a more active role and a greater voice in their schooling.

Nearly half of students surveyed said they don’t help decide how their school runs, while only four in ten students agreed that their school listens to what they have to say.

Drew Arthurson, Acting CEO at FYA, said, “What we’ve heard from students throughout this campaign, and in other FYA initiatives, is that they not only want a bigger say in their education but also have great ideas and real enthusiasm to improve Australian schools. That’s why we’ll continue to develop the Tell Us platform alongside students to amplify their voices and ensure that their views are heard loud and clear by decision makers.”

Sixteen-year-old Lucinda Donaldson, Year 11 student at Sandringham Secondary College, Vic and participant in Tell Us, said, “I think lots of students want to become more involved in what happens at their school. We’re the ones actually in the classrooms and doing the learning. Maybe the government, teachers and parents need to start listening to us more if they really want to understand what makes students feel successful in school and encourages us to learn,” she said.

Tell Us also had some positive findings about how Australian schools prepare students for a successful future and develop important skills. Out of all students surveyed:

• 57% agreed or strongly agreed that school helps them reach their full potential;
• 58% agreed or strongly agreed that what they learn at school is relevant to their life;
• 57% agreed or strongly agreed that school helps them develop their most important skills.

Tell Us also had some positive findings about how Australian schools prepare students for a successful future and develop important skills. Out of all students surveyed:

• 57% agreed or strongly agreed that school helps them reach their full potential;
• 58% agreed or strongly agreed that what they learn at school is relevant to their life;
• 57% agreed or strongly agreed that school helps them develop their most important skills.
7. Students think schools are positive places that prepare them for the future
   a. The majority of students say that what they learn at school is relevant to their life (58%)
   b. The majority of students say that school helps them develop their most important skills (57%)
   c. The majority of students say school helps them reach their full potential (57%)

8. FYA believes that schools, students, governments and the corporate and non-profit sectors can all take actions to improve the learning experience for young people.

9. All students who took part in Tell Us will receive a Student Action pack with hints, tips and resources to create action at a local level.

10. In addition, FYA is working with Tell Us advocates, young people who want to drive this campaign, to deliver the findings to Governments and to really open up the debate around school success.

The Foundation for Young Australians
GPO Box 239, Melbourne 3001
www.fya.org.au
info@fya.org.au
Rules of Student Engagement

In a growing number of schools around the world, educators are striving for more than better test scores. Instead they are betting on student engagement, the idyllic notion of investment, engagement, and ownership in learning. The following are lessons I have learned over the last five years as I have worked with more than 50 schools across the US and Canada in their quests to engage students.

Rule #1:
Every school should engage every student in every classroom. Learning ability, grade level, interest tracking...none of these should be seen or addressed as barriers to student engagement. Instead, these are points to build upon and learn from. Student engagement is an active, intentional process whereupon young people become purposefully compelled as learners.

Rule #2:
Student engagement does not end at the schoolhouse door. Students must be active within their families and throughout their communities. This goes far beyond classroom assignments and community service. Providing learners with active student voice in democratic governance, powerful opportunities for cultural expression, and meaningful experiences of freedom of speech throughout their community can open the doors for students. Authentic student engagement can also occur at home, in play, through positive relationships with adults, and throughout our communities.

Rule #3:
Every adult in every student’s life should feel responsible for engaging that student in learning. Only through the constant encouragement and focus of parents, teachers, youth workers, principals, religious leaders, counselors, and other supportive adults will students feel there is a real investment in their education that extends beyond their own interests. Every student should feel that educational success is their responsibility; likewise, every adult should feel that student engagement is theirs.

Rule #4:
Give a student a lesson and they’ll think for an hour; teach them how to learn and they will learn a lifetime. Learning to learn is a task that many educators aspire to impart without ever being explicit in their intentions. Every student must have a constructivist understanding of the nature of learning, the purpose of schooling, the course of the education system, and the arch of lifelong learning. From kindergarten through graduation, educators have more than the opportunity to teach students about learning; they have an obligation.

Rule #5:
Engaging students is a living, breathing goal that must continuously evolve. Will Rogers once said: “Even if you’re on the right track you’ll get run over if you don’t move.” We live in a world of transition and change; students change with the times, and often with the days. Do the same old thing and we’ll get the same old outcomes we’ve always had. As technology constantly changes, so do our students; many educators have told me that students have changed more in the last 5 years than schools have in the last 25. This makes opportunities for real learning through meaningful student involvement.

Adam Fletcher
Director of SoundOut

Learn more about what SoundOut can do for your school by visiting www.SoundOut.org

What has happened to Civics and Citizenship Education? Since the national Discovering Democracy program (initiated in 1997), there has perhaps been less heard about this topic. However, it remains a vital part of education in schools, especially if students are to be supported to come active and informed citizens.

This Digest has been prepared by Suzanne Mellor, Marion Meiers and Pat Knight at the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) for the NSW Institute of Teachers and provides a useful summary of approaches that schools can adopt. As well as the history of recent national approaches, it summarises the concepts of civics and citizenship education and places these in the context of international research (the IEA Civic Education Study).

International Research Handbook on Values Education and Student Wellbeing

Student Action Teams also feature (chapter 48) in the recently published International Research Handbook on Values Education and Student Wellbeing (eds: Terence Lovat, Ron Toomey, Neville Clement; published by Springer, 2010).

This huge 1015-page volume describes its contents:

“...Open classroom climates and whole school governance structures provide authentic opportunities for students to learn and participate effectively in their communities. Providing students with opportunities to learn and practise civics and citizenship competencies within the school context plays a significant role in developing civic knowledge and engagement.”

‘Civics and citizenship education’ (Mellor, S. and Meiers, M.) in The Digest, NSWIT, 2010 (3) can be downloaded from www.nswteachers.nsw.edu.au

Local and Overseas Publications Received

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

**Australian:**

DIY Reality: Recipes to Transform and Inspire (YAPA, Surry Hills, NSW) Jessica Carter, Jess Pitt and Pia Birac; 2010

FYA Newsletter (Foundation for Young Australians, Melbourne, Vic) Issue 3; September 2010

NSW SRC Annual Report (NSW SRC and NSW DET, Sydney, NSW) 2010

Parents Voice (Parents Victoria Inc., Brunswick, Vic) Vol 37 Issue 4; August 2010

Represent! (VicSRC and Victorian DEECD, Melbourne, Vic) An SRC resource kit for students and teachers; October 2010

Student Advocate (VicSRC, Melbourne, Vic) Vol 4 No 4; October 2010

The Digest (NSW Institute of Teachers and ACER) No 3; 2010

Transition and Engagement (Catholic Education Office Melbourne, Vic) Research Document 6; September 2010

YAPRap (YAPA, Surry Hills, NSW) October-November 2010; December 2010-January 2011

Youth Affairs Council of Victoria 2009-2010 Annual Report (YAC Vic, Melbourne, Vic) 2010

Youth Studies Australia (ACYS, Hobart, Tas) Vol 29 No 3; September 2010

**International:**

Education Revolution (Alternative Education Resource Organization, New York, USA) Volume 22 No 3 (Issue 62); Fall 2010

International Handbook on Values Education and Student Wellbeing (Eds: Terence Lovat, Ron Toomey, Neville Clement; Springer) 2010

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www.asprinworld.com/Connect

ASPRINworld: the Connect website!

www.asprinworld.com/Connect

**Connect** has a website at ASPRINworld: ASPRIN is the Australian Student Participation Resource and Information Network (“a cure for your student participation headaches”) – a still-emerging concept. The Connect section of the website is slowly growing, with information about subscribing, recent back issue contents and summaries of and order information for Student Councils and Beyond, Student Action Teams, Reaching High and Switched On to Learning.

Connect is now also archived and available electronically: research.acer.edu.au/connect

All issues of Connect are being archived through the ACER Research Repository: ACEReSearch. Connect issues from #1 to #180 are (or will be soon) available for free download, and recent issues can be searched by key terms. See the ASPRINworld site for index details of recent issues, then download the whole issue you are interested in.

www.informit.com.au

Current and recent issues of Connect are now available on-line to libraries and others who subscribe to RMIT’s Informit site – a site that contains databases of many Australian publications. You can access whole issues of Connect as well as individual articles. Costs apply, either by a library subscription to Informit’s databases, or through individual payments per view for articles.

Documents

The documents listed in this column may be of general background interest. You may be able to find these on-line or a photocopy could be made available for research purposes. 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.

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<td>637</td>
<td>Student voice as the strategy for schooling transformation (Dr David Warner, Etham College; paper at Leading System Redesign Conference, Birmingham; 2008) (11 pp)</td>
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<tr>
<td>638</td>
<td>Report into Student Leadership (Jacqueline Lyons, Georges River College, NSW; Leadership Fellowship Report; April 2005) (14 pp)</td>
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<tr>
<td>639</td>
<td>Leading/Managing Schools in Communities Made Poor (P Thomson, Nottingham; in Leadership and Management - Politics and Governance; 2010) (8 pp)</td>
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Connect Publications:

- Switched On to Learning ($5; limit of 10 copies per order) 2009 $ ...........
- Reaching High ($33; $27.50 for Connect subscribers) 2006-7 $ ...........
- Student Action Teams ($33; $27.50 for Connect subscribers) 2006 $ ...........
- Student Councils & Beyond ($33; $27.50 for Connect subscribers) 2005 $ ...........
- Democracy Starts Here! Junior School Councils at Work 1996 $ ...........

Case studies of Primary School SRCs ($6.60 or $11 for two copies)

Foxfire Publications (stories of a US-based student-run oral history publication project):

- Sometimes a Shining Moment and Foxfire: 25 Years ($22 each) (limited copies) $ ...........

(all prices include 10% GST + postage and packaging within Australia; ask us about prices outside Australia)

Materials Sub-total: B: $ ..............

TOTAL ENCLOSED: A+B: $ ..............

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