Student Voice & Action

Primary, Secondary and Tertiary students discuss its meaning and importance

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We are reminded that Student Voice is not an end in itself. To be limited to that notion can be to simply regard students as ‘data sources’ or to risk ‘ventriloquy’ (as Michelle Fine notes): adults selecting and ‘using’ some voices of students, perhaps those that reinforce or support their own views! And it’s time also to remember the vital questions that Michael Fielding asked in an article in Forum in 2001: Who can speak? About what? Who is listening? Where are the spaces for speaking and listening? Where does negotiation of meaning happen? Who controls these spaces? and so on.

And the big questions remain: What is the outcome of ‘student voice’? What does it change? What is its impact?

Students recognise this too: their voices can quickly become muted or silenced and they become cynical about the rhetoric, if they are encountering rejection or apathy.

So ‘Student Voice’ is a starting point, not an end point. How do we go beyond that start?

Roger Holdsworth
as a pre-service teacher, TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design; see: www.ted.com) TV has been a frequent source for inspirational ideas in innovative education styles. On one such occasion, I spotted a TED talk from the Principal of a progressive school called Riverside from my home-town in India. It was fascinating listening to the Principal, Ms Kiran Bir Sethi, talk about the revolutionary changes the school brought about, not only in the lives of its own students, but also in the community in the form of a Design for Change Challenge.

So, in the summer of 2010, I packed my bags and decided to spend a month at Riverside. I went there not knowing what to expect, and returned with my mind full of innovative teaching ideas: ideas that would not only help me engage my students better, but also empower them to believe that they, as Mahatma Gandhi said, could be the change they wanted to see.

Keeping student voice and wellbeing on the top of its agenda, the school conceptualised the Design for Change Challenge (DFC) (www.dfcworld.com) in 2008 as a national challenge. This challenge went global in 2010, aiming to get students to believe in ‘I Can!’ instead of ‘Can I?’. DFC follows a simple procedure of ‘feel, imagine, do & share’ to empower students in the age groups of 8 to 15 years. Students are encouraged to identify issues that bother them, think creatively to brainstorm possible solutions, select the most feasible solution, and actually implement it!

This is where DFC becomes refreshingly unique. Steering away from being a token gesture of student voice, it facilitates, empowers and enables students to make a difference. The final two steps of ‘doing’ and ‘sharing’ become proof of a respectful student voice, where students implement their solutions and review the change they create. By putting up their story on DFC’s global website, students share their stories and, in turn, provide inspiration to thousands of others like them!

In 2011 in Australia, this process begins in Term 3 of the school year. Schools have until August 15 to select and register their ideas on the DFC website. Stories of change can be submitted on the website in form of a PowerPoint presentation or video by October 15, in time for the contest winners to be announced on November 14. The challenge is supported with a user-friendly website that answers most queries from students, teachers and Principals. It also has stories from previous years, along with suggestions for teachers about ways to introduce and conduct the challenge in their classrooms. Alternatively, questions can be emailed to the website.
A Curriculum-Based Approach

Although most teachers will agree that DFC is an effective tool for student voice, they might also be concerned about the lack of time in an average school day to implement this. Despite the expected and unexpected interruptions and change of plans that occur in an average school day, teachers are required to cover all aspects of a given curriculum, while ensuring that they are engaging students and catering to all learning styles and abilities. Adding another project to an already tight school schedule seems an unwelcome proposition to most teachers.

The DFC challenge provides a solution to addressing curriculum criteria in upper primary and middle school grades using an integrated approach to learning and teaching. Since most schools have units of inquiry as part of their curriculum, teachers can use the time allocated for this inquiry to create meaningful discussions about issues of interest to students and show the relevance of their learning in their lives. DFC is a concept that can easily integrate key areas of discipline-based learning in areas of Mathematics, Economics, Science and Literacy, and seamlessly integrate the three strands of VELS requirements (and similar frameworks in other states and territories) in Levels 3, 4 and 5. Probably the most attractive proposition about DFC is that the process takes as much time as teachers are willing to give it. It also has the ability to lend itself to most issues and causes, and teachers can decide on the depth of the problem they want to address.

DFC Stories

For example, last year, Grade 4 students at Antonio Park Primary School in Mitcham, Victoria decided to bring some joy into the hospital life of sick children in Australia. Working in conjunction with the management and therapeutic staff at the Box Hill Hospital, they identified ways in which they could bring happiness to the children’s lives. The group convinced the whole school community to support them in their endeavour. Teachers used this exercise to effectively integrate ICT, the Arts, Thinking Skills, Interpersonal Development, Personal Learning, and Speaking and Listening Skills into this project. Students not only prepared ‘fun show-bags’ for the junior patients and brightening up the ward, but also spent time with the patients. The students’ reflections at the end of the project were proof of their greater empowerment and self-confidence.

At the same time, Grade 6 students from St Matthew’s Primary School in the UK decided to put their school on the world map by becoming role models of a sustainability drive. The class divided itself into groups to tackle their identified problems of littering – including fruit and vegetable waste – with the help of the school environment coordinator. They contacted their student and parent community, along with the local Council and raised funds for compost bins. They made presentations to the student community to convince them of the benefits of recycling. And they were pleasantly surprised with the results.

A feedback survey conducted by the Goodwork Project showed a marked improvement in student motivation and self-esteem. Students said that they experienced the joys of giving, teamwork and, most of all, felt valued as members of their community. Surprisingly, the aspiration to win the contest was the least motivating factor. This research showed that teachers spent no more than a total of 10 hours on the project with the students, and no more than 15 to 20 minutes each school day for a week to implement the solution. 73% of the participating students said they wanted to do a similar project again, with or without the DFC outline. 92% of the participating teachers remarked that students’ participation in the challenge would most likely result in an increased desire to contribute to their community.

Effective Learning

As a graduate teacher hoping to have my own class next year, I – like many others – am looking for effective ways to engage my students, establish my teaching philosophies, and reduce behaviour management issues in my formative years. Videos of DFC stories from across the world have inspired me with ideas to make learning fun for my students and establish my identity as a modern and innovative teacher.

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Students learn to have a voice

This year, a group of Year 5 students at St Joseph’s Primary School in Springvale (in Melbourne’s south-east) have formed a team to investigate how students can have a voice in the school.

We have surveyed all Year 5-6 students and a sample of Years 1 to 4 students to find out what they like about the school and how the school could be improved. We have then collated the results to get an overall view of what students were saying about the school. The next step will be to report back to the school community. We plan on making posters to display around the school and do a digital display for the electronic board in the school foyer. We will also report our findings to the whole school community at assembly. Next we will organise visits to other schools to see how their students have a voice in their school community.

What is student voice?

Student voice is students:

- having ideas on how to improve the school
- having a chance to have their say about what is good or needs attention
- expressing their feelings about what they want or what is making them feel bad

Why is student voice important?

Student voice is important for me because it helps me to:

- enjoy school
- get ready for high school
- contribute
- behave more sensibly
- learn to think for myself
- be more confident in English
- communicate better
- learn how to speak up and say what I want to say

Student voice is important for the school because:

- it encourages better learning and teaching
- the school then knows what students want
- teachers get to know better what students know
- it helps to identify what the school needs
- it builds the school’s reputation and other children will want to come to the school

Why would teachers want student voice?

Teachers want student voice because:

- students, parents and staff all contribute to what happens in the school
- students are the biggest group in the school and we need to know what they think about their school
- they will know what students want for their school
- it improves students’ education and gives them a life skill

By the investigative team members:

Tin, Lochlan, Daniel, Suthesh, Alex, Leanne T, Leanne N, and Laura
1: Student Voice: More than terminology

There are many terms describing the active roles that students can play in schools: ‘student participation,’ ‘student agency’ or ‘student action.’ These terms are preferable to the more limited ‘student voice’ – as I feel ‘voice’ implies simply ‘having a say’ or ‘speaking out’ rather than taking part and being responsible for one’s actions and life. So, for example, ‘having a whinge’ could be ‘speaking out,’ but may not change anything unless it is followed up by some form of action.

In thinking about these aspects of student voice, participation, agency or action, I want to focus on two aspects of student participation: Student Representative Councils (SRCs) and Student Action Teams (SATs). (I recognise that these are not the only forms of student participation, for other areas include involvement in school Committees and Boards and curriculum approaches such as cross-age or peer tutoring.)

In preparing to be a teacher, I have developed a view that, while SRCs can have positive roles in schools, a concern is that the usual few students end up in positions of responsibility. Holdsworth (1998) asks: “Whose voices are being heard? Those who speak the most coherently? Those with whom we most readily agree?” (p 10). I would like to see avenues and opportunities for less articulate students to develop skills and feel that they also have a role in the goings on at school – and in their lives.

SRCs

Student Representative Councils or SRCs are traditionally made up of students who have been elected as representatives of the student population. My observation in schools is that, after election, student representatives do whatever they do behind closed doors – no-one else has much of an idea about what they do. When I left school, my view of SRCs was that they were tokenistic groups, performing duties that had little meaning, carried out by the usual suspects: those who are popular and do well academically. In discussing this topic with other pre-service teachers, although our views about student voice were not perfectly aligned, nothing was said that challenged this perception of tokenism. That is, this was so until we made our formal class presentation on the issue, where my views of SRCs were turned upside down.

When we asked our class what roles SRCs performed, and whether those functions were tokenistic or meaningful, I was pleasantly surprised by two of the responses. In a response about fundraising for charity (which I had thought of as tokenistic), one person said that it would be meaningful to the recipient of the food or money raised. I had been thinking of fundraising in terms of an activity to keep the students occupied without requiring too much effort from the adults in the school, rather than for the purpose of helping people, and this changes its meaning. The other point that caused a shift in my outlook was about the organisation of social events for students, which I also had thought of as tokenistic – until someone challenged that, by pointing out that those events are important to students … and I have to agree. I hear the students at the school where I am placed talking about their upcoming social events with anticipation, and this agrees with my own memory of looking forward to my school social events.

Yet, while I see that the activity of fundraising is valuable and that the student organisers will gain skills by being involved in it, how will the rest of the student population benefit from this activity – other than perhaps feeling good about themselves for helping unfortunate people? SRCs do not exist to focus on such activities; it may be OK if they engage in them as a small aspect of what they do, but we must ask ourselves: ‘What is the function of SRCs? Is it to act as a charity? A social club?’

SRCs must be about enriching the lives of students, representing them on issues that affect their experience, whether that is the curriculum, safety and comfort of students, the school environment or anything else that affects them. Just as we elect governments in the expectation that they will act on our behalf, to respond to the needs of our community, let’s have SRCs that respond to the needs of the students in their community, as agents of change, not as fundraising or social organisations.

While my view of the role of SRCs has changed, I still believe there are problems with the way they function and they need to be made inclusive of all students. Representatives need to be elected, as meetings that include every student would not achieve anything; however, perhaps those representatives need to be more accountable to those who elected them. Perhaps, on a regular basis (maybe once a month), each group that has elected a representative could meet. For example, if the representatives are elected by their year level, each year level would meet during class time, as a group. The representative/s would report what had occurred in any meetings and ask for input to take to future meetings. If a position were required to be stated by the year level, votes could be taken so that, when the representative of that year level attends future SRC meetings, it would be from a position of representing the views of his or her year level, rather than their own personal views.

SRCs will give people who are already leaders further skills in this area, and there is no reason why that shouldn’t happen. However, if they can be more inclusive of the rest of the student population, and students feel they are represented by...
these organisations, they may become greater instruments of activity and change.

If schools have SRCs, they should allow them to function as representative and respected organisations, otherwise, why have them? The authorities within the school should accept them as legitimate stakeholders and treat them as such (who can argue that students are not the biggest stakeholders in any school?). By being truly representative of the students and accepting the responsibility for trying to address issues faced by the students, SRCs will function as a means of training students to accept responsibility for their own lives and their community, while at school, and later in life. At the most basic level, I will encourage students to talk to their SRC representatives about their ideas, thoughts and complaints.

SATs
Another aspect of student voice is that of Student Action Teams or SATs, which appeal to me as a way of involving students in decisions about directions their education will take. SATs are used as a means to engage students in activities that they direct, with the teacher as a guide only. Fielding (2004: 202) also refers to this style of student-led learning as including ‘students as researchers,’ where students initiate and direct research and the teacher acts as a support.

One example of a task undertaken by a SAT was at Whittlesea Primary School (see Connect 185-186, 2010), where students undertook research and implemented activities and disseminated literature based on their findings. The teacher was a facilitator, but responsibility was with the students, and they decided on what approach to take. The students were observed to be proud of their achievements and maintain their focus on the issue (McEwan, 2010). By having that kind of ownership of a project, including building it from the ground up, students will want it to succeed and will contribute accordingly. For this reason, I would use SAT approaches, where possible, in my classroom. As a whole class activity, a SAT could be set up to lay the groundwork for a public artwork for example. Various groups within the class could have different roles, such as writing a proposal to the Principal or local Council, costing the project, sourcing materials, designing the artwork, and finally, the making of it. This type of project would teach students about aspects of creating public art, including research, organisation and communication skills.

Conclusion
Student participation, action or agency is going to be a big part of my classroom. I am interested in expanding minds and abilities, and what better way to do that, than provide avenues for students to speak their minds, explore ideas, test theories, and learn to communicate by communicating. If I can maintain this approach, students will gain more than art related skills and knowledge; they will learn skills in taking control of their own lives.

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References


2: Student Voice and Real Roles

From day one of my Education course, I was drawn to the issue of student voice and real roles. It had all the makings of intrigue and loathing with student politics, popular versus disenfranchised students and rumblings of image management. After researching and presenting on this topic, my initial enthusiasm was tempered somewhat by the multifaceted nature of this issue and my strong sense that school culture has the biggest effect on a consistently engaged student population. I agreed with the Department of Education’s definition (2007: 5) that student voice was “a potential avenue for improving student outcomes and facilitating school change”. Further it is “more than token consultation” but students “being able to voice their views about change and to have those views heard” (DEECD 2007: 6). The most persuasive reason for taking student voice and real roles seriously is the research cited by the Department (2007: 38) showing it can be “helping to improve teaching and learning; improving teacher-student relationships; increasing student engagement with their learning; and raising student self-esteem and efficacy”.

The policy aspect of student voice was disappointing as there were no grand schemes from the Education Department requiring schools to take this issue seriously. The Department (2007: 2, 7) itself quotes from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Victorian Essential Learning Standards, but they do not find it important enough to set a policy for it. The guidelines for school engagement policy development recommend that schools involve students in the policy’s development and implementation, and that the policy should outline how students can become active participants in their education (DEECD 2009: 10). After such compelling research in their 2007 research paper, it is disappointing that the issue is relegated to a few paragraphs
two years later. I imagine after going through the stress of deciding rules for suspensions and expulsions, which are part of the engagement policy, the school would have little enthusiasm by the time they considered student voice.

While student voice is important in classrooms, I think this is an issue where school culture has a strong influence on how well student voice is heard. If the whole school is orientated to taking student voice seriously, students will feel empowered to speak up more often, as they have seen in the past that their concerns and claims are dealt with carefully. Some research agrees with my view, for example: “it is clear that student voice initiatives need the support of the whole school, with the whole school culture supporting the processes” and “a lone teacher in a classroom using this approach may become frustrated” (DEECD 2007: 38). At a school like Nossal High School (2011) where “students are involved in all levels of planning of the school” with representation on School Council, teacher selection panels, curriculum and wellbeing committees, I imagine this creates a culture of student engagement around issues of voice. At a school where the student voice is relegated to an SRC fundraising and making speeches, the culture is likely to be less positive. This is not to say that, as a teacher, I cannot influence the school’s student voice culture, but it would be in small ways such as attending the SRC and encouraging students to dream bigger and smarter, and suggesting opportunities for student voice during staff meetings.

In the classroom, culture matters as well. I have noticed that students at my placement school are sometimes reluctant to offer their opinions. For example I have heard students mumble criticisms and questions about tasks that they do not feel comfortable to voice to the whole class and to me as the teacher. It seems a classroom culture has been created where they sit and listen, then do what they are told. It is possible this culture has been built up over years of schooling – and to undo it will take time. However I believe the effort will be worth it, due to the previously stated benefits of student voice. To do this I think it is important to ask plenty of questions and take the answers seriously. Whenever someone speaks up, they should be encouraged; I need to respond with words and tone that communicate acceptance of their right to speak and a serious engagement with their concerns or comment.

I will also have to be explicit about my desire for students to have a voice. This will probably require frequent statements along themes of: “I want to hear what you have to say and get your feedback. Please do not be afraid to be honest about what you are thinking and feeling. We as a class cannot deal with your valuable opinion if it remains a thought in your head”. As well as speaking and listening, I will also have to show, through words and actions, that I have taken student voice seriously with statements such as: “last week you said you did not want to do this, so I after taking your concerns into account we will do this instead”. This fits in with what a student said at a forum about what makes a good teacher: “they ask our opinion, taking our perspective and do it – they act”. (Students from Gold Coast 2005: 27).

As an English teacher there are further opportunities to take account of student voice and create real roles: the students could help choose the books, films and opinion articles that will be studied. There is also plenty of scope to offer choices in presentation such as written, oral or audio visual, essay topics and whether a class of students feels they learn best through instruction from the front or small group discussions. As curriculum requirements are set by government, there is a limit to how many decisions students can make and some may feel choosing books and presentation styles are tokenistic. English also allows time for dealing with some theoretical learning issues. Holdsworth (1998: 4) writes that there is an “increasing need for engagement of students more directly with the immediate purposes for their learning”. My English mentor teacher has already impressed on me the need to explain extrinsic motivation for learning content to the students. I could take this one step further and help students find their own reasons for the learning and thus it will be a more real role for them.

In conclusion, researching student voice and real roles has helped me understand the depth and width of this issue and challenged me with the obvious benefits of taking it seriously. Due to the lack of state government policy requirements, I believe school culture is most important in determining how student voice works out, but a teacher can still have some influence in their classroom.

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3: The relevance of Student Voice in the teaching profession

The Cambridge Dictionary (2011) describes a teacher as a person who gives knowledge to others, especially students. I beg to differ, believing that teachers are facilitators of learning, helping students realise their potential. Holdsworth (1998) recommends that, by building upon the strengths of young people, teachers can value their contributions as partners in the learning process. He adds that, while teachers are often exhorted to ‘train’ students to be better citizens of the future, they continue to ignore and devalue the current experiences and potential of their students, relegating them to a ‘non-citizen’ or ‘apprentice citizen’ status.

Recent research has shown growing awareness in giving voice to student interests and perspectives (DEECD, 2011; Jenkins, 2006; Mitra, 2004). There is acceptance of the benefits of active student role and voice in the functioning of a productive classroom. Hargreaves (2004) says an active student voice leads to an increase in engagement, participation, meta-cognitive skills, responsibility, relationships and social skills of students, which help teachers and students develop a shared, rich vocabulary to talk about learning.

The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEEDYA, 2008) aims for all young Australians to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens of the world. A strong student voice can create a productive and thinking classroom where students take responsibility for their learning. Hargreaves (2004: 7) believes “student voice can become a gateway of change that replenishes and sustains the school as a community of learners”. Allocating real roles and responsibilities ensures that students are not only applying their learning in real world situations, but also becoming maximal citizens as described by Evans (1995, cited in Holdsworth 1998: 1). This creates a rich learning ground for civics and citizenship, leadership and reflective practices in a classroom. By respecting student voice and suggestions, an effective teacher can reflect upon and modify teaching styles to suit learning needs and preferences of students. Giving students active roles in the decision making of their education and the system often increases the involvement of historically disengaged students (Holdsworth, 1998). Considering the remarkable difference active student voice has made in the efficacy and productivity of students and teachers in schools in and outside Australia (Manefield, Collins, Moore, Mahar and Warne, 2007), this is an aspect of education that no longer deserves mere lip service.

Challenges encountered by schools regarding student voice

Although Mitra (2004) says that the history of student voice is not a new phenomenon, she adds that tokenism has often left students alienated and disengaged. Holdsworth (1998) and Manefield et al (2007) support this argument saying that giving limited functions in relatively ‘safe’ areas of participation like fundraising and organising social activities undermines students’ capacity and potential. This tokenism often translates to student groups having a primary function of collecting data or making requests and demands. Holdsworth (1998) points to limited functions and responsibility, along with the quality of recognition of Student Representative Councils by schools, as challenges for effective student voice in schools. Hargreaves (2004) adds to the argument saying that students may fear that ‘consultation’ is yet more empty rhetoric if they don’t come up with the right message.

Student roles are often not given the autonomy of adult roles, leading to restricted responsibility. I concur with Holdsworth (1998) about the system teaching active citizenship in the most negative way.

The struggle for equality by young people is often undermined by providing learning activities and experiences that will bear fruit later in life. This deferral not only removes all responsibility from students in their youth, but also removes immediate relevance or purpose from learning. Hargreaves (2004: 12) remarks that “by convention, students are expected to challenge and critically evaluate curricular work, but are not expected to adopt a similar approach to the way the school is organised and lessons conducted”. Student roles should be used to empower students to make significant changes within their immediate or broader community, and make them active citizens of the present, rather than of a distant future.

Hargreaves (2004) remarks that teaching and teachers are sensitive aspects of student voice. Inviting students to give open feedback is not easy, especially for a new teacher still trying to establish his/her teaching style and personality. Since most teachers have been educated in a conventional system where student voice has been almost unheard of, it becomes difficult for them to abandon planned lessons, and be willing to listen more than talk. Trusting the students in the initial years to take learning into their own hands can also be challenging. Added fear of classroom management also takes centre stage as the democratic aspect becomes dominant. Not giving due respect to student intellect, the school system can create disillusionment among the students, leading to a lack of agency, belonging and competence as explained by Mitra (2004). However, active student voice can provide opportunities for meaningful decision making and active participation in areas like curriculum planning and assessment.

When student voice is being heard and acted upon, another big challenge is that of favouritism. School authorities often choose the already advantaged students who, as Holdsworth (1998) says,

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help in ‘selling’ the image of the school. The less articulate, or marginalised students often get neglected. Hence the initiative of student voice does not succeed entirely and negates one of the main aims of student roles: to give opportunity to the historical non-performers to perform and gain self-confidence.

In order for life-long learning to take place, schools need to devise teaching strategies that help students in not only understanding concepts, but also in applying these in real life situations. By giving students consequential roles and freedom, education can succeed in developing foundations for life-long learning and self-actualisation as defined by Maslow (see Margetts and Woolfolk, 2010). When students see themselves as constructive members of a democracy and seek out ways to add value to their community, it becomes an indicator of their enhanced mental health and their rise in the degrees of participation in the ‘participation ladder’ as explained by Hart (1992).

Relevant policies to support schools in addressing these challenges

Article 4 of the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of a Child (1989) articulates the participation rights of children and declares that all children have a right to express opinions and be heard, especially in matters of their interest (UNICEF, 2011). Dewey (1916, cited in Morgan and Streb, 2001:158) believes that genuine education comes from experience. This style of education is also supported by Bruner’s theory of discovery learning (Margetts and Woolfolk, 2010) which encourages students to discover inter-relationships and fundamental principles by themselves through practice. The opportunity to learn and succeed in a personally designed project with an authentic outcome is higher than traditional lessons and tests. Experiential learning also increases student engagement and reduces behaviour management issues as students feel ownership for their learning. This is further supported by state, national and international examples of effective student voice as mentioned by Maneifield et al (2007).

Changes in curriculum documents and frameworks reflect the commitment of education authorities to use student roles to improve education efficacy. The Department of Education has a handy starter kit for schools and teachers to incorporate student voice in the form of Student Representative Councils (DEECD, 2011). The Department recognises listening to student voice as an integral part of student wellbeing.

The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority has identified Civics and Citizenship as a domain in the strand of Physical, Personal and Social Learning (VELS, 2011). The Victorian Institute of Teaching requires its teacher members to engage in effective teaching practices by knowing their students’ learning styles, and using their interests and experiences to make learning more meaningful and relevant (VIT, 2011). This leads to effective learning by including a democratic aspect to lessons, where students have a voice and choice in their education.

The DEECD promotes learning environments to encourage independence, inter-dependence and self-motivation as one of its Principles of Learning and Teaching (DEECD, 2011).

The Australian Curriculum has included critical and creative thinking along with ethical behaviour as part of general capabilities required from Australian students (ACARA, 2011). Development of these capabilities can be strengthened by using active student voice and roles to create higher order thinking and reflective practices among students.

Programs developed by various organisations, national and international, have come forward to create platforms for schools and teachers to seamlessly incorporate student voice into effective learning. These programs often include various aspects of the school curriculum. Programs such as the Student Action Teams, ruMAD and the Design for Change Challenge give a structure of activities and curriculum that guide teachers to enable and empower students to make significant changes in the community. Such programs can be used in conjunction with Project Zero’s Visible Thinking Routines or De Bono’s Direct Action Thinking Tools to engage in higher order thinking. These can result in greater self-esteem in students and tangible benefits for the community.


As explained earlier, tokenism and deferred citizenship leads to exclusion of student participation from central issues of school and community life. The passivity of the student role can be transformed by creating and supporting student roles of community value.

The SRC starter kit from DEECD can be effectively used with the VELS requirements of Civics and Citizenship to build on inquiry-based learning programs to incorporate a ‘hands on’ curriculum. Programs like ruMAD and the Design for Change Challenge are good examples of incorporating multi-disciplinary learning to find solutions for real world issues. Websites like School Poll provide web-based software for conducting school polls and surveys and assist in administrative activities for such tasks. Professional bodies like the Victorian Institute of SRC Teacher Advisors (VISTA) provide support and a discussion platform for teachers to better support Student Councils. Discussion forums such as Connect and Bullying No Way provide an effective medium to spread the word and exchange ideas. Such ‘hands on’ curriculum options can lead to student engagement and enhanced critical thinking skills.

Impact of student roles and voice on my role as a teacher

Hargreaves (2004) considers student voice as a means of improving relationships between the teacher and the taught in ways that enhance learning. Supporting active student voice can be initially challenging, but always rewarding. The class may not look, feel or sound like a traditional class, but it can be a productive classroom. Respecting student voice is about students and teachers listening and respecting each other’s views. It is also about, as Hargreaves (2004) describes, replacing cacophony with the right acoustic balance with strong leadership.

In my class, students will be given certain autonomy in the classroom as long as they fulfil given requirements of the curriculum. Students will be encouraged to use practical and relevant experiences to demonstrate their learning. So if an upper primary class is studying about the consumption of electricity, they will be encouraged to
not only assess the use of electricity in their homes and school, but also come up with solutions to reduce the energy bill. Student discussions will be used to critically analyse the solutions. After applying their solution in their homes, students will choose the most effective solution to be implemented by the school.

Students here can take responsibility for the project and also monitor the change in electricity consumption.

Such examples of maximal citizenship will help students learn about a relevant topic and use relevant tools. Discussions on feasibility of solutions will encourage critical thinking from the students and thus create a rich platform of higher order thinking. By giving ownership of the task to the students, I will be able to ensure active student engagement in their learning. Students will see a tangible outcome to their learning. This will increase their awareness about being a constructive member of the community. Such examples of real roles for students eliminate the challenges of tokenism, deferred citizenship, lack of autonomy and lack of purpose of learning; they create a ground for mutual respect between the students and the teacher.

Such a style of teaching will also require me to share control over lessons with students. It will require me to perfect the art of the two-step participation as explained by Holdsworth (1998). By being inventive and seeking authentic assessment along with a readiness to leave ‘safe’ territory, I will be able to make my classroom a rich learning ground critical thinking skills.

While implementing such inquiry-based learning programs, I will have to be especially conscious of avoiding favouritism. Ensuring that I involve the less articulate or marginalised students into roles and responsibilities, the learning program should help elevate their self-esteem and also show them their worth in the community.

Although I expect student roles to increase the efficacy of my lessons, I also understand that it will take time and practice to form such an approach within the given limitations of time, curriculum and assessment requirements. Hargreaves (2004) advises me to think big but start small. He recommends starting off with a small group of students on a limited agenda. Such steps can lead to a more democratic, but well managed classroom.

It is easy to encounter challenges as pointed out earlier, but as a teacher who believes in constructivism, and in being a facilitator of education, I believe I can face these challenges, keeping my end goal in sight – which is to help students see the big picture.

Meneal Khushu
Pre-service teacher
The University of Melbourne
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References:
Victorian Institute of SRC Teacher Advisors, Retrieved on 06/06/2011 from srteacher.vit.vic.edu.au
The 2011 VicSRC Congress was a big, enthusiastic and productive three days in August at the Oasis campsite! Student delegates from over 40 schools were addressed by the Minister of Education, workshoped visions for the future of education, debated resolutions, presented awards for SRC achievements, and elected a new student Executive to put these into action.

And they had a great time, with talent quests, trivia nights, operatic and multi-accented reports and celebrations of SRC initiatives.

Reports elsewhere in this issue of Connect outline some of the students’ discussions around education futures, and about SRC achievements in schools. A full Congress Report will be produced by the VicSRC and circulated to all participating schools, as well as being made available on the VicSRC website. The VicSRC pages in future issues of Connect will also contain more information about the implementation of Congress decisions.

Formal Decisions: Resolutions

The following resolutions were agreed by the formal sessions of Congress and will, in this priority order, become the business of the new Executive in 2011-2012:

**Teacher-Student Relationship**
That the VicSRC create a resource to strengthen interaction and relationships between students and teachers.

**Parent Education**
That the Government provide some sort of resource for schools to help better educate parents about the Victorian schooling system. This resource could include funding, professional facilitators and/or kits.

**School Councils**
That the VicSRC place high priority on student representation within School Councils and advocate for a student vote.

**National Curriculum**
That the VicSRC investigate the current and future National Curriculum and its effects on students’ satisfaction.
Training Course on Learning
That the VicSRC establish a ‘teach the teacher’ training course for individual SRCs to enact at their schools around the way students learn.

Electronic Textbooks
That the VicSRC investigate the logistics of adapting textbooks and educational resources into an electronic format and that the results of this investigation be presented to the State Government.

Teacher Selection Panels
That the VicSRC encourage schools to include student opinion and voice on teacher selection panels.

Environmental Case Studies
That the VicSRC promote the idea of being environmentally friendly, through the publication of case studies of active/successful SRCs in this area.

SRC Constitutions
That the VicSRC strongly encourage schools to utilise the resources available in Represent! to create their own constitutions.

Environment Resource Kit
That the VicSRC update the Environment Resource Kit in order to have up-to-date information to promote environment action within schools.

Laptops
That the VicSRC support access to laptops in schools from Years 9–12 for every student.

VicSRC Student Executive 2011-2012
The following students were elected to the VicSRC Executive for 2011-2012:

- Denara Amat (Year 11, Melbourne Girls College)
- Rachel Cerar (Year 9, Braybrook College)
- Sammy Chapman (Year 8, Casey Grammar)
- Tiffany Chapman (Year 10, Toorak College)
- Tim Eric (Year 11, Frankston High School)
- Marlee-Alice Gorman (Year 9, Princes Hill Secondary)
- Lachlan Hugo (Year 10, Blackburn High School)
- Justine Jaramillo (Year 11, Narre Warren South P-12)
- Jake Kearns (Year 7, Maffra Secondary College)
- Sean Law (Year 10, Sunbury College)
- Alexis Leonhardt (Year 8, Bundoora Secondary College)
- Samantha McClelland (Year 11, Balwyn High School)
- Ellie Patterson (Year 10, Melbourne Girls College)
- Olivia Pearce (Year 8, Maffra Secondary College)
- Edison Ponari (Year 10, Bundoora Secondary College)

The VicSRC receives funding support from the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and is auspiced by and based at the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic). It can be reached there on 03 9267 3744 or, for the cost of a local call from outside Melbourne on 1300 727 176; or by email: vicsrc@yacvic.org.au

Voting for the new Executive (left); Outgoing Executive with the Minister (below)
Our Significant Achievements

At the recent VicSRC Annual Congress, Connect asked student delegates about their SRC’s most significant achievements. Their responses were provided on the first day of the Congress … and subsequent discussions about students’ visions for schools may have then further developed and broadened what they saw as ‘significant’.

Balwyn High School

This year we have managed to change the structure of our SRC to encourage greater student voice, rather than only running events as we have done in previous years. This has been done by increasing the number of students on the SRC, encouraging focus groups on issues, opening up our meetings to the whole school and developing a better meeting structure, with minutes of meetings distributed to all.

The new structure has led us to change our focus to one of informed representation which, in turn, has resulted in changes to our school’s facilities and teaching practices. For example, there is a planned review of our Year 9 sporting programs, the installation of new facilities such as tinted windows, and the redesignation of staff toilets for student use following our building works.

We were able to achieve these changes because of the structure of our SRC, with representatives collecting input from their year levels and bringing it back to the wider body at weekly meetings. From this stage, the student executive is able to delegate tasks by creating focus groups on particular issues and monitor their progress via regular meetings and the school email system. These focus groups usually consist of students from multiple year levels and have a direct connection with a member of the Principal team. This efficient set-up has allowed us to approach each task with enthusiasm, knowing that our voices are taken into account in the way in which our school is run.

Samantha McClelland, Reihaneh Ghazninferooy and Vincent Lau

Bellarine Secondary College

In four years, we went from no real SRC to over 120 members across two campuses, two student votes on School Council and a huge say in school life. To go from nothing to such a big organisation is something to be proud of. It was achieved through hard work and commitment.

Blaise White and Steph Walton

Blackburn High School

Recently, our school had a model proposed for the structure of school life in 2012. Because of the SRC, our student body has had many opportunities to express their opinions about the change and, in fact, to design the new program for the school.

Without the SRC, this might not have happened. So our newly formed SRC has given the students a voice that they’d never had before. We gave the students an opportunity to contribute their ideas on the model, and this discussion actually changed some of the students’ points of view about the changes from ‘bad’ to ‘good’.

We have a highly dedicated team of passionate representatives, who want students to have a strong voice. We gave all students a detailed explanation of the new program, and accepted all feedback positively - without discrimination.

Darren Lee, Lachlan Hugo and Madeline Coleman-Bock

Braybrook College

Our athletics day chocolate bar sales started with me carrying a different box of 50 chocolate bars around the school, selling them to raise money for medical supplies in Asia. I raised $500. I then became more involved with the SRC and organised for the SRC to sell 750 bars of chocolate on the athletics day. The money has gone to fund our SRC portfolio so we can pay for other activities.

This initiative has given our SRC portfolio a kick-start so we can now support many other activities such as knitting blankets for freezing children in developing countries. It has brought out the best in so many people: students were willing to volunteer and donate their time to a good cause.

Stephanie Lam

Selling raffle tickets for Harry Potter posters raised money to help the people who are dying because of the famine in Somalia. Children our age aren’t getting the necessities of life like food, water, access to medical centres, houses etc. We live in a lucky country where we don’t have to worry about whether we are going to be alive the next day, or whether we have food and water.

The raffle hasn’t concluded yet, but I am sure we will succeed because of our will and determination to help kids and others to survive.

Ettayeb Ettayeb

Bundoora Secondary College

We set up and ran a World Cup style soccer tournament, both girls versus girls and boys versus girls. Students entered a team of up to 14 and played other teams. All year levels were allowed to sign up. We were raising money for the school to buy new sports equipment and also promoting exercise and sports activities to students.

This activity brought all the students together and involved them in a sport they enjoyed. Soccer skills became better, students met new people - and we raised money. Now our gym is glowing!

The leadership team all helped with setting it up. It wasn’t just one person doing all the work, but a team effort. We had meetings to organise the event, taking time out from lunchtime. A team of students put the nets up and supervised the games while others sold tickets and advertised the event. Some bought trophies and medals for the winners and runners-up. Others packed up. Most of all we had fun together!

It shows that, if you work as a team, you can get far.

Edison Ponari, Alexis Leonhardt

At the beginning of the year, our school participated in the world’s great shave. We had over 15 students and teachers who shaved their head and many also spray-painted their hair. We raised awareness and over $200 from these brave efforts. This was a hard thing for many to do: we had one girl who shaved her hair off for her mum who has cancer.

We had a lot of school support from teachers and students; getting the teachers involved was a key. We made it a well known event throughout the school. It was well organised: it was our best fundraising event, everyone got involved and showed the active
Elisabeth Murdoch College

Our SRC’s most significant achievement would have to be getting the local U3A (University of the Third Age) to come each week and mentor some of our students who may have problems with reading or writing - or have problems at home. We saw the people who were getting mentoring improve at school. It was a great feeling to know that we've done something that has changed them. This is still an on-going process.

Lachie Gray

Our SRC was involved in the Connect-you Photovoice Project. This involved our SRC getting cameras, and going around our school taking photos of things that either make us feel socially connected or socially disconnected. We will then choose our best two photos which will be on display at a competition at an arts exhibition in Frankston.

Holly Walker

Epping Secondary College

By getting the whole school involved in creating change and solving problems without conflict, we have organised fundraising and other different events. Our SRC can actually show what we had done and what impact we had made. The clue was persistence: trying harder to push ahead and complete what we set out to do.

Jake Cracknell

Every year we sponsor a child through World Vision. We write letters and draw pictures for the child and, every month, we receive things from them too. We have never missed a year.

The important reasons and lessons for us from this were about helping others, and also about experiencing what it’s like to be them, and to learn from them.

Courtney Lee Brown

Forest Hill College

Our student group is called IMPACT. We organised and implemented a school mural this year. It surrounds the canteen. IMPACT invited other students to have a voice on what went on the mural, and the opportunity to contribute to the painting of it. This gave non-IMPACT members an opportunity to get involved by using their artistic and imaginative skills. The whole school was involved - and now the canteen looks amazing!

Forest Hill IMPACT

We have fundraising activities several times each year. We organise events such as dress-up days, lunchtime sausage sizzles, trivia nights, bake sales and BBQs each term. All the money that we raise goes to small organisations that are often forgotten - that don't get as much attention as other organisations do.

These activities also make students become more aware of others in the community who need our help - we feel the link between ourselves and the surrounding community. And we work together as one team to achieve our goals.

Annabelle Woo and Sally Manning

Frankston High School

Our biggest achievements have been raising money for all sorts of charities through free dress days, sausage sizzles and cup-cake days. We raised much-needed funds and also raised awareness of different charities and of our Student Leadership Council (SLC). We had a great team of people who were passionate and willing to help out to make a successful day.

Darcy Hill and Laura Macneil

Our Disaster Relief Week involved a fundraising activity every day for a week, including a successful free dress day. We raised over $2000 to help people in the floods in Queensland and the earthquake in New Zealand, as well as buying disaster boxes (that contain the basic things that humans need to survive) for Japan. Through this, we did something to help other people globally and this gave us a sense of self worth. We all joined in to help as a team, respected and helped each other, and the hard work really paid off.

Zoe Crouch and Jordan Hay

Kensington Community High

Kensington Leadership has organised lunchtime activities for our students. We don't have many things to do around the school during lunchtime, so we thought that, to get people more active, we would organise activities for the basketball court. We had plenty of support from teachers and the Principal and we were really determined to get this up and running.

Tamara Adnum

Melbourne Girls College

One girl has created a project to help in the world. She contacted a Cambodian orphanage and organised to send them donations of things that could help start a business. Donations include gardening tools, stationery and things that are necessary for earning money. These will be collected by students in every class. The project hasn’t been completed yet, but the organisation and logistics have mostly been established.

People’s lives are being significantly helped. They will be able to support themselves and their families financially.

From our success (or from our productiveness so far) we have learnt to be organised and to have everything thought of. The project isn’t entirely finished yet, but already many important lessons have been learnt.

Pia Lauritz

Mentone Girls Secondary College

Harry Potter week included cake stalls, a screening of Harry Potter movies and musical, a Harry Potter quiz and a free dress day themed around Harry Potter. It raised over $2000 for four different orphanages in Cambodia. This ran over a week and was enjoyed by students.

Amy Deng, Alexia Maroudas and Imogen McLean

Narr Warren South P-12 College

Improving our Student Voice Council’s organisation, and optimising our decision-making process, has been a significant milestone on our path to efficiency and becoming autonomous from the adult involvement in our decision-making processes.

Our ideas are turned into actions because of this improvement, as we are becoming a more independent body without teacher supervision. This is succeeding because of the persistence and determination of our student leaders. We saw the problem and took action on it.

Lachlan Warner and Justine Jaramillo

Trafalgar High School

Changing the school’s timetable for 2012 from a 6-day timetable to a 4-day timetable has been a big achievement. There were lots of problems with scheduling Year 12 SACs and study times. We succeeded because there was a lot of movement against having the 4-day timetable.

Cameron Coster

Yarra Hills Secondary College

We organised a footty fete to raise money to fix up our toilets and to make a pathway where there was mud - so it isn’t slippery.

In past years, the SRC hadn’t really worked and we hadn’t achieved anything. But this year we were successful in organisng something that will benefit our school. I guess we succeeded because we actually put our minds to it and committed to something that will benefit us.

Ella Harrison
Visioning Education

What sort of schools and education do students want? Delegates to the VicSRC 2011 Congress in August took part in a ‘visioning’ session where they discussed possible future changes to schools and education systems. They started by watching some student views in the Education Foundation’s DVD of What School Kids Want and then brainstormed a list of topics in response to the question: ‘what is a school?’ These topics formed the starting points for ten discussion groups.

The issues raised in these groups were diverse and often appeared on sheets as ‘mind-maps’. They each led to practical ideas that students could consider (and some of these became resolutions for consideration by the Congress the next day). When the sheets were compiled into a ‘mosaic’ about future education, other students added post-it notes to agree or disagree with the points suggested and to add further ideas.

Any linear transcription of the sheets will fail to convey the complex discussions, but the following may indicate the scope of the visions that students can develop in a short time about what schools could be...

Learning

Good learning needs:
- change and variety: being adaptable; subject choice; student interests to be considered
- enthusiastic teachers: creative teaching; passion; motivation; communication; real world experiences
- students to be seen as individuals who learn differently: orally, visually (pictures), through textbooks; try to suit all students
- technology such as smart boards
- teachers learning from students
- equality

Practical ideas:
1. An easy idea: Students are given a problem that may crop up in real life: something that you could solve using many types of approaches. This could happen especially in maths and science: using a realistic problem. It would give you the option and independence to choose what you work with and how you go about doing it. It should be a big problem that could have obstacles so as to give a problem that will take a while to solve by using the subject and logic.
2. Medium ideas: Courses to help teachers exchange ideas with each other; forums where students train teachers in the best teaching methods; pushing teachers to use already existing forums; more variety in excursions; case studies of good teaching exercises.
3. Harder ideas: Equal funding for all public schools; equal access to technology eg laptops, for all schools; learn what we want to learn earlier ie begin setting us up for Uni courses we want; getting different topics in subjects.

Respondent notes:
- Students teach students
- More colour in classrooms: not so like jail!
- Best teaching methods? But everyone learns differently!
- Not all students know or are mature enough to plan out their life in Year 8
- Don’t these (case studies) already exist?
- Great ideas!

Teaching

Teachers knowing content and wanting to teach, means:
- putting themselves in students’ shoes
- being willing to come to school
- being passionate!
- knowing the subject
- no intimidation
- catering for student needs
- new ideas for examinations in oral, reading, writing
- practical learning
- real world applications and excursions
- discussions
- it should be more than just a job
- honesty and integrity
- expansion of teaching methods
- life experience
- providing first-hand experiences
- understanding how you learn
- having empathy
- getting more teacher feedback
- people teaching people
- having respect

Practical ideas:
1. More funding for practical, real world teaching and excursions
2. More or better teacher training – with student involvement
3. Students teach the teacher how they want to be taught

Respondent notes:
- Second best idea!
- Teachers: don’t wing it.
- More questions in class for students to actually think, not just the teachers ask and answer it themselves... wait for the answer from students!
- Students teach the teacher: Is this offensive to teachers - do students know?
- How would you implement this for each of the thousand of individual students?
- I’m loving it: teachers being reviewed by students semestery
**Student-Student Relationships**

In the future, there should be:
- improved awareness of bullying: cyber, physical and mental
- acceptance of others’ morals and beliefs
- students knowing each other from meeting each other, not from generalisations
- acceptance of how others learn
- group work with people you don’t generally talk to
- clubs in schools for students with similar interests
- more working with others, using others’ strengths and weaknesses

**Practical ideas:**
1. **Workshops:** Teachers learning about how to tackle bullying and develop strategic consequences; student forums; raising awareness and self-awareness
2. **Social events:** camps; students coming together and doing something for the community; extra-curricular activities; ... and this leads to ...
3. **Acceptance:** working together with other students (with their strengths/weaknesses); acceptance of morals and beliefs and individual learning styles

**Respondent notes:**
- How can we control what students do to others? ... How? what can we do?
- Have ground rules: if you break these... detention
- Less comparisons between people eg wealth doesn't matter, friendships do matter
- Places for students to meet up after school that are not supervised by the teachers

**Relationships: Teachers & Students**

In future, relationships should:
- be positive and optimistic (both ways)

**Teachers should:**
- understand the style of learning for each student
- have no favourites
- care about the school environment/ethos
- receive feedback

**Teachers and students should:**
- both be passionate

**Practical ideas:**
1. A seminar for teachers and students (in separate groups) with a focus on developing a positive attitude to positive attitudes, and this would also involve trained professionals
2. Ways of seeing that teachers get feedback from students and that we see the results. Why can’t we see the data from students - have this getting back to students?
3. Schools should understand the different styles of work and have classes with the same learning styles

**Respondent notes:**
- I love these ideas: great communication
- Sharing ideas
- First name basis
- Enthusiastic teachers = enthusiastic students and better environment - more enjoyable
- How do you make a teacher enthusiastic?
- How would this happen?
- It would be hard to find enough students for a whole class with the same learning styles
School Environment/Ethos
In future, there should be:

- more subject-oriented curriculum and better buildings
- students given the chance to do VCE earlier
- more accelerated programs
- every year level should have a common room
- open learning spaces
- spaces that are interesting and engaging
- resources within specific rooms for particular subjects

Practical ideas:
1. **Resource Kits**: provide information about the 'perfect classroom' – that informs schools about what should be in the classrooms for particular subjects (and includes where to get it)
2. **Garden/Farm**: organic foods for the canteen; school canteen prices that are affordable and healthy
3. **Common Room**: all students have a room to mingle and relax in the school environment, not just the VCE students

Respondent notes:
- funding? - costly
- requires loads of funding for such structures to be in place. Fees of private schools would go up, government increase taxes to pump more money to government school; especially difficult for city areas
- certain amount of people to classes
- recycle bins (for plastic etc) available
- have appropriate classroom size that sets a good mood for learning
- Resource Kits: no such thing as a 'perfect classroom' - all learn differently, but proper equipment would be good
- good colour scheme
- Canteen: get recycled cutlery for the canteen eg recycled cups and plates ...
- ... do you mean non-disposable?
- You can't want both - costs ...
- Common room: Great idea! Common rooms are usually for Year 10-12 and would be really great if Years 7-9 were involved for once
- Year level common rooms would not be good for students - social interaction more inclined to be alone

School Structures
In future, there should be:

- diverse learning styles and abilities: student to student teaching, hands-on learning etc
- timetables that fit what students want to study, not the other way round
- class sizes that aren't too big
- 'friend' teachers in junior years as well as VCE
- a diverse range of subjects
- reflection on learning: ‘what did we learn today?’
- out-of-school-hours help
- choosing your teachers: students involved in hiring

Respondent notes:
- **Practical ideas:**
  1. Class sizes not too big; reflection on learning; out-of-school-hours help and tutoring
  2. Train teachers to be more like 'friends'; timetables fit to students’ wants; a diverse range of subjects; students involved in hiring teachers
  3. Diverse learning styles

Decision-Making and Representation
In future, there should be:

- Principals who provide coordination, are able to be accessed easily, who don't restrict ideas, and are easy to approach and have a conversation with
- student involvement in activities and input to curriculum: not just academic but also including music, sport, SRC etc
- equal representation within year levels: homeroom classes; set number of SRC representatives per year level
- time: include representation opportunities in the curriculum: as an elective with strategies for becoming effective leaders, including speaking and running meeting
- leadership structure and interest areas: community; suggestion boxes; timetable meetings and secondary meetings to get actions done; open meetings up to everyone; advocate leadership

Practical ideas:
1. Leadership (and how to lead) as part of the curriculum, such as an elective. This would include public speaking skills, organisation, professional development days etc
2. Principals and other leading teachers becoming involved in student voice, such as sitting in on SRC meetings
3. Have a structure in place and timetabled for meetings, SRC development and initiatives; from small scale to wider SRC to decisions to Executive to leading teachers

Respondent notes:
- **Practical ideas:**
  1. Leadership (and how to lead) as part of the curriculum, such as an elective. This would include public speaking skills, organisation, professional development days etc
  2. Principals and other leading teachers becoming involved in student voice, such as sitting in on SRC meetings
  3. Have a structure in place and timetabled for meetings, SRC development and initiatives; from small scale to wider SRC to decisions to Executive to leading teachers

Respondent notes:
- Wow - best ideas!
- Time: what do you mean?
- Students help decide teachers? Good ideas!
- Elective: What if people don't want to lead? ... Then they don't take that elective
School Resources

In future, there should be:

- upgrade on school resources to make them easy to use and provide equal access to all students
- Government help to create equal opportunities for all schools - for students and teachers: training to effectively use all resources
- unlimited broadband within schools
- school self-funding of school events; community support; internal school support for students and teachers
- student input into the expenditure
- alternate method to purchase school books, including subsidies
- varied teaching methods available to students to assist with learning; and specific time periods in which schools have to have resources
- parent interaction to assist with the school eg gardening; covers all areas of communication: mail, net etc
- standard benchmark levels so all schools have at least the minimum resources for different areas eg PE, music, arts etc
- more resources for VCE/Year 13 students - as you advance you get improved resources

Practical ideas:

1. Promote interschool communication and share of resources: student and community input; promote surveys to determine what students and teachers want and need
2. Expenses and subsidies: implement varied teaching methods; broadband; giving the schools the opportunity to self-fundraise
3. Implementing the standard benchmark for resources: implement the availability to improve resources for VCE/Year 13 students

Respondent notes:

- How will you fundraise?
- Where do you get all the money from?
- No blocked websites; free to access anything
- Wifi access to school networks
- Equal amount of benefits between private and government schools

Community and Partners

People involved in schools include teachers, parents, local businesses and organisations, other schools (primary, secondary and tertiary - and interschool relationships), School Council, local Council, neighbouring community, public transport; students, police, fire-fighters, health services.

People not involved in schools include other states and random individuals.

What makes people part of a community:

- dedication
- involvement and interaction that is beneficial to education
- geographic neighbours
- money and donations

Practical ideas:

1. School event to attract members of the community to interact and get involved: local Council, School Council, students, neighbouring community
2. Interschool events to get students to interact with each other. These events spread over games to social stuff: students, teachers, other schools
3. School Forum that interacts with the community, to evolve and improve the image that the school has in the community: students, parents, teachers

Respondent notes:

- Events: what kind? How would you apply this?
- Nearby Unis as well?
- Partnership with broader community eg Rotary Club, community organisations
- Parent-teacher relationship: they should be cooperative together to watch over their students

Extra-Curricular Activities

In future, these should:

- come out of students’ interests
- be practical activities eg theatre studies, sports teams (inter-school sports), music
- professional sport and theatre studies and involve tutoring
- be clubs eg glee, acting, cultural and religious clubs, eisteddfods
- lead to understanding
- involve schools in clusters or amalgamating to build social activities and friends
- build social connections across genders
- provide transport

Practical ideas:

1. Clubs. Need to consider: levels of interest, funding and support, time, recognition and encouragement
2. Practical activities: communication; organisation for students and community; advertising; time; recognition; competition and funding

Respondent notes:

- Amazing: no improvement needed
- With gender clubs etc - don’t you think this is a bit exclusive or sexist?

The Minister reads the student visions
Students say: People at my school care about...

Specific personal qualities or ways of relating:
- Loyalty
- Communication and caring
- Health
- Respect
- Communication
- Friendship
- Honesty

Global issues:
- World peace
- Poverty
- Global poverty
- Third world countries
- The environment
- Environment
- People with AIDS

Human rights:
- Human rights
- Equal rights; equal rights through the school and community
- Inclusiveness
- Equity
- Feeling safe and not being scared to be yourself and an individual

Resources and school improvement:
- School improvement ‘for the better’
- Getting better resources; better resources for students
- Better sports equipment

Student voice:
- Voicing our concerns
- Speaking up about things
- Being involved and having a voice!
- Getting the school involved
- SRC

Student wellbeing:
- Making the school a better place to be
- Having a positive impact on student wellbeing and environment
- Caring teachers and caring students

Education and opportunities:
- Education
- Opportunities

Community:
- Getting the community involved

Other:
- Diabetes research funding
- Bullying
- Fundraising

(These ‘headlines’ were collected on post-it notes from students at the VicSRC Congress 2011 by Linda Randall, YACVic in response to the simple heading: ‘People at my school care about...’)

SRC Recognition Awards

The VicSRC has organised a series of statewide awards for Student Councils for the past two years. See the VicSRC website for more details: www.vicsrc.org.au

In 2011, these Awards were presented to winners at the VicSRC Congress by the Minister for Education, Hon Martin Dixon:

Connect Award for ‘Integration’
1: Bendigo Senior Secondary College
2: Nossal High School

Second Strike Award for ‘Enterprise’
Lowther Hall Anglican Grammar School

VASSP Award for ‘Informed Representation’
1: Balwyn High School
2: Heatherwood School

VISTA Award for ‘Outstanding Teacher Adviser’
1: Lowther Hall Anglican Grammar School
2: Hopetoun Secondary College
The New South Wales State SRC held its annual statewide student conference at the start of August, 2011. In place of a debate between competing resolutions where some ‘won’ and others ‘lost’, the Conference Working Party decided to implement a different model for generating and prioritising students’ ideas. They called this the BIG IDEA session. The following documents explain the approach.

The next issue of Connect aims to include a full description of the Conference, including reflections on the outcomes and processes of this BIG IDEA session.
The BIG IDEA Session - Procedures

Overview
- Each region will prepare one BIG IDEA for the BIG IDEA Session.
- The BIG IDEA Session will take place for 90 minutes on Thursday afternoon.
- Each region will draw a number (1-10) out of a hat to determine presentation order. 1 goes first, 2, second, etc.
- Regions can fine tune and finalise their BIG IDEA during the preparation time provided on Tues, Wed & Thur morning. The BIG IDEA should be written as simply as possible. Sample BIG IDEAS are listed on the next page.
- On Wednesday afternoon each regional team will hand in their one BIG IDEA.
- All BIG IDEAS will be published and distributed to conference participants before the BIG IDEA Session (ideally on Wednesday evening).

What is the BIG IDEA Session?
- All conference participants will participate in the BIG IDEA Session (90 minutes).
- Regions have 9 minutes in total including 2 minutes for question time.
- The suggested timing is:
  - Up to 7 minutes to pitch and explain the BIG IDEA. (A warning bell will ring at 5 minutes and a continuous bell will ring at 6 min & 50 seconds).
  - 2 minutes must be provided for questions from participants.
- Regions may adjust these suggested timings, eg a 4 minute presentation and 5 minutes of questions, but 9 minutes is the absolute maximum.

So, what might be a suitable BIG IDEA? A BIG IDEA should:
- relate to ways to 'improve the quality of life in schools for all students through student leadership' (from the constitution of the NSW SRC)
- be worthy of support by both rural and metropolitan students in NSW Government schools
- require action of the NSW SRC within their term of office (one year)
- relate, if possible, to the conference theme
- fit within general Department of Education and Training guidelines.

How is the voting done?
- Each individual participant will vote for their favourite 3 BIG IDEAS in a secret ballot by marking X, X and X on a ballot paper. A sample ballot sheet is provided.
- Ballot papers will be collected at the end of the BIG IDEA Session and votes will be counted by the BIG IDEA Team to determine the TOP 3 BIG IDEAS.
- The announcement about the TOP 3 BIG IDEAS will be made on Friday morning.

Who is in the BIG IDEA Team?
- The BIG IDEA Team is made up of five members: two students from the Conference Action Team, one student selected from the conference and two staff members.
- The BIG IDEA Team reviews all the BIG IDEAS. If two ideas are very similar, regions may be asked to consider sharing or modifying their ideas and co-presenting.

What might be a suitable BIG IDEA?

Sample BIG IDEAS:

XXX Region’s BIG IDEA is:
1. To encourage SRCs in high schools to meet with student leaders from nearby primary schools to help build positive connections.
2. That each region holds a regional student leadership forum, event or conference in 2012 to share effective practice in the operation of SRCs.
3. That draft guidelines be developed to assist schools with fair student election processes.
4. That the NSW SRC collects examples of effective practice on ways to engage students in school life during their senior years.

Remember, there is no need to re-invent the wheel. Before you ask for something to be created such as a new resource, please make sure that it doesn’t already exist and consider whether students will use it. You can, of course, build on actions already taken by previous NSW SRCs in other years.

BIG IDEA FAQs:

- Can a region use a powerpoint presentation to help clarify an idea? Yes, but the presentation should be loaded before the session starts and should be limited to about 4 slides.
- How many students should speak? Up to 3 or 4 speakers would be best as when there are constant changes of speaker it can use up a lot of time.
- Can a student in the audience pass comment rather than ask a question? No.
- What sorts of questions are suitable?
  - Can you please explain more about... can you clarify what XXX means please
  - Has the region considered the cost of this idea?
  - Is there any data to support this idea?
  - Has this ever been tried before?
- Which region will present first and second ...? Each region will draw a number (1-10) out of a hat. This should occur on the day before the BIG IDEA Session.
- How do participants vote? In order to make things as simple as possible, each participant will mark 3 crosses on the ballot sheet: Each vote carries the same value.
- Should voting be done as a regional team or as an individual? As an individual.
- Can I vote for my own regional idea? Yes.
- What happens to the other 7 BIG IDEAS (not the TOP 3)? Regions are encouraged to use any BIG IDEA that wasn't chosen as one of the top 3 as a regional project.
**Sample Big Idea Ballot Paper**

**MARK X IN 3 BOXES ONLY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Idea</th>
<th>Region</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Hunter/Central Coast. This is one of my favourite 3 BIG IDEAS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Illawarra/South East. This is one of my favourite 3 BIG IDEAS</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. New England. This is one of my favourite 3 BIG IDEAS</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. North Coast. This is one of my favourite 3 BIG IDEAS</td>
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<td>5. Northern Sydney. This is one of my favourite 3 BIG IDEAS</td>
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<td>6. Riverina. This is one of my favourite 3 BIG IDEAS</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. South Western Sydney. This is one of my favourite 3 BIG IDEAS</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Sydney. This is one of my favourite 3 BIG IDEAS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Western NSW. This is one of my favourite 3 BIG IDEAS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Western Sydney. This is one of my favourite 3 BIG IDEAS</td>
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</table>
The Victorian Junior School Council Congress is set for 2011 – but with a difference. Second Strike and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) are collaborating to host more than one Congress to give the opportunity for more students to participate.

The JSC Congress is a formalised parliamentary-style conference for Grade 5 and 6 students who are involved in their school JSC, Student Action Team, SRC (Student Representative Council) or are interested in student representation. Before attending the JSC Congress, student delegates conduct a survey of their student body on the topic of the Congress and are ready to discuss the data they collect. The students then participate in workshops that create and shape their motions before submitting them to the formal Congress.

The formal Congress procedure is a simplified version of state/federal parliamentary rules for debate. The seating layout is the same; there is a Speaker of Congress appointed; each delegate has the opportunity to speak for or against motions, prior to a vote.

The beauty of the partnership with the DEECD is that the Regional Offices are hosting the Congresses and will be the key body taking receipt of the outcomes of each Congress. They have each committed to the topics and are keen to help students turn the successful resolutions from Congress into action.

The Congress resolutions will also be brought back for follow-up at the State-wide JSC Congress to be held at Parliament House, Spring Street, Melbourne on the 14 November.

The Congress is the chance for primary school students to show that they are just as capable of standing up to represent their peers as anyone else. The Congress is also an opportunity for students to be involved in a formal debate to sway the opinions of others. The skill development Congress fosters is then applicable to the school curriculum as well as within the JSC. Past Congress resolutions have impressed teachers, Principals and politicians with their sophistication.

An on-line professional development seminar will be arranged for teacher advisers supporting JSCs. This will provide teachers with ideas and activities to prepare their students for Congress and to make best use of the outcomes once the students return from Congress. A teachers’ meeting will be offered at Congress with the support of VISTA, the Victorian Institute of SRC Teacher Advisers.

Dates and locations are:

**Eastern Region:** 2 September, 2011  
**Western Region:** 13 September, 2011  
**Northern Region:** 22 September, 2011  
**Parliament House:** 14 November, 2011

For more information, contact David Mould at Second Strike:

info@second-strike.com
The Journey Towards a VicJSC

The VISTA Team has had a hectic few weeks lately with several projects on the go. Here’s a quick snapshot of what’s been happening:

**VicSRC Congress 2011**

It was great to put faces to the names of SRC teachers at the recent VicSRC Annual Congress held in Mt Evelyn during 5th-7th August.

VISTA was able to distribute advance copies of our newest resource, the **VISTA Compass**, to the secondary teachers who attended. The **VISTA Compass** is a CD-ROM featuring templates and resources we have collected; we are sharing these with you to help you find your way. We hope to make these available soon to all VISTA members. Any new members to VISTA will be receiving a copy of the **VISTA Compass** as part of their membership pack. Plans are already underway for the 2nd edition – **VISTA Compass 2.0**, so if you have a great resource to share, e-mail it through to us at vista@srtcteachers.org.au

VISTA was also able to present its inaugural secondary SRC Teacher Advisor of the Year Award to Lowther Hall Anglican Grammar School. We look forward to sharing more details about our award winners in upcoming editions of Connect.

**VISTA Podcast Goes To Air!**

In what we hope will be the first of many events, the inaugural episode of the **VISTA Podcast** went to air a few weeks ago. This new format means that you can have access to professional development at a time and location that suits your needs. Featuring interviews with experts and those working in the field, regular segments such as **Student Voice** and **Striker’s Corner**, as well as discussions about all things related to Student Councils, the **VISTA Podcast** is essential professional development for any SRC Teacher.

You can download and subscribe to the **VISTA Podcast** from **iTunes** (http://tinyurl.com/vistapodcast) and send us your feedback via http://vistapodcast.global2.vic.edu.au/

**DEECD Innovations Showcase Recording Now Available**

Earlier this year, VISTA President, Scott Duncan presented at the DEECD Innovations Showcase on **Student Voice**. His presentation featured a snapshot of Student Council activity from across the state, examples of Student Councils undertaking projects that involved shared decision-making between the SRC and other school groups, as well as some tips and free resources to get your SRC kick-started. Copies of the presentation slides, as well as an audio recording of the session, can be downloaded from www.education.vic.gov.au/researchinnovation/showcase/showcase2011.htm

**VicJSC Update**

In the last edition of Connect we shared with you our vision for a statewide primary school Junior School Council for Victoria (VicJSC). Thanks to those of you who got in touch and expressed your interest and support. We’d love to hear from your students about what they believe a VicJSC could achieve and why their voice needs to be heard. For more information, visit our website at http://srcteachers.ning.com

Whilst you are there, check out the video sent to us from the SRC at Bentleigh West Primary School about why they believe having a VicJSC is important.

To get involved with the VicJSC Project:
- Add your details to our Ning Network
- Create a video of your students showing support for the VicJSC and let us know about it
- Drop us an e-mail at vista@srtcteachers.org.au

VISTA currently receives no additional funding to operate its programs and relies heavily on memberships to support its programs. Visit our website or e-mail us for details on how to join.

vista@srtcteachers.org.au

http://srcteachers.ning.com

August 2011
**Meaningful Student Involvement: USA**

**Students as Classroom Teachers**

To teach is to learn twice” is an adage at work in a growing number of classrooms across the nation. Professional teachers are finding allies among their students, as the effectiveness and possibilities of students teaching their peers, younger students, and adults is becoming increasingly evident in research.

- **Possibilities for Students as Classroom Teachers**
  - Students teaching regular lessons in their classes
  - Students serving as teaching assistants
  - Students partnering with teachers or peers to deliver curriculum
  - Students teaching peers or students in lower grade levels
  - Students teaching adults and facilitating professional development

- **Examples of Students as Classroom Teachers**
  - **Pedagogy for Peers**
    - (www.sunynassau.edu/users/cohen11/Teaching/STUDENT%20TEACHING%20GRAMMAR.htm)
    - After teaching her ninth grade students the basics of composition, English teacher Kathleen Shaw of Basking Ridge, New Jersey, had the class teach each other about grammar devices, with the question in mind, “Can they explain grammar to someone else?” Shaw writes, “Best of all, the students learned important lessons through the assignment. They clarified some grammatical points their classmates might have been confused about, they had the thrill of creating something new, they compromised with their partners and they experienced speaking before a large group. Maybe they even gained a little more respect for their teachers”.

- **Technology in the Trenches**
  - (www.genyes.org/)
  - A national nonprofit organization based in Olympia, Washington, promotes the role of technology in education by engaging students as partners in educational planning, research, teaching, evaluating, decision-making, advocacy, and more.

**Students at the Centre**

(www.msp.ca/10_studentvoice/10_voice.html)

The Manitoba School Improvement Project teaches students about learning, including multiple intelligences, brain-based learning, learning styles, and emotional intelligence. Students work with teachers to have a voice in their own learning, and in the direction of their classroom. The program, working in three urban high schools, has seen students – with the support of school administration – propose entirely new structures for giving students a say in classroom issues and directions. The changes include cross-grade groupings, and student training in facilitation and leadership skills.

**Serving Up Learning**

Students at Vashon Island (Washington) High School conducted multiple teacher in-service trainings on service learning. The student/teachers, ages 12-18, taught teachers, school administrators, city officials and other community members about service learning for two three-hour sessions. The student/teachers incorporated multiple teaching styles, attempting to appeal to the diverse learning styles participants came with. Lively dialogue, initiative activities, small group facilitation, brainstorming and action planning were all included in the student-planned, student-led trainings.

**Raising Educational Stars**

(www.breakthroughcollaborative.org/)

The Breakthrough Collaborative, based in San Francisco, California, is a highly successful after-school program for students of color. They believe so strongly in the effectiveness of students as teachers that their tagline is “Students Teaching Students.” The organization shares the following anecdote: “During one of the first summers, several high school students who were acting as teaching assistants took over the classroom for a math teacher who had fallen ill. When the teacher returned, she observed that her students were working harder for the older students than they had for her. By coincidence, this ‘experimental’ teaching model sparked the interest of the younger students who loved having the high school students as their teachers and mentors. Suddenly, seventh and eighth grade students who never believed it was cool to be smart were reciting Shakespeare, learning the Pythagorean Theorem and studying the laws of physics. [Breakthrough] was a booming success”.

**Programs Featuring Students as Teachers**

**Breakthrough Collaborative**

(www.breakthroughcollaborative.org/) Breakthrough is a national program that teaches students to be teachers in after school and summer school programs.

**Generation YES**

(www.genyes.com/)

This organization provides two students-as-teachers curricula to schools to support technology literacy. TechYES engages students as technology teachers for their peers; GenYES trains students to teach teachers how to use technology in the classroom.

**Moving to the head of the class: students who teach in summer programs learn, give back.** Cervone, B. (2001) WKCD News Series 1(2). Providence, RI. What Kids Can Do. [PDF: www.whatkidsando.org/featurestories/10%20movingtothehead.pdf]

**Tools for Students as Classroom Teachers**

- Overcoming Barriers to Student Voice (www.soundout.org/banners.html)
- A History of Teaching in America: “Only a Teacher” is the website from a PBS series about teachers in American history. There’s a timeline, stories, and a lot of information about teaching from back in the day up to present. (www.pbs.org/onlyateacher/)
- Rage and Hope: Critical educators “draw from their own personal biographies, struggles, and attempts to understand the stubborn contradiction in the context of the contradictions of schooling and capitalism” (www.edb.utexas.edu/faculty/scheurich/proj3/index2.html)
- A Different Kind of Teacher: John Taylor Gatto proposes that teachers become anti-authoritarian and completely inclusive of student thought and ability. (www.educationreformbooks.net/)
- The Open Directory Project: This collection of links focuses on curriculum design guides. (dmoz.org/Reference/education/K-through_12/curriculum/)
- Motivation Tools: This site addresses project-based learning and alternative approaches
to learning and motivating students. (www.motivation-tools.com/youth)

- Educator’s Reference Desk: Offers links to a variety of info about teaching, including lesson plans, tips, research, and more. (www.eduref.org/cgi-bin/res.cgi/Teaching)

- Theories of how people learn: Dozens of links to basic info on learning theories that describe different ways people learn. {tp psychology.org/theories.html}

- How to create lesson plans: A dense guide with interesting thoughts about how lesson plans are written for any class you might be in. (www.adprima.com/lesson.htm)

- What is collaborative learning?: Students and teachers working together to create new knowledge and understanding. (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collaborative_learning)

- What is cooperative learning?: People working together with specific roles to create new knowledge. (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cooperative_learning)

- Alternatives to grading: Different approaches to assessing student learning. (www.freechild.org/grades.htm)

- Learning style assessment: Identify what your dominant way of learning is on your own. (www.unc.edu/learn_styl_ass.html)

- Learning Environments: Where you learn affects what and how well you learn. This shows why that matters. (www.nwrel.org/msec/just_good/9/ch5.html)

- New ways to learn: Examples of schools where students are given more control over their learning and where they teach real-world lessons. (www.edutopia.org/getstarted/students.php)

- Project-based Learning is a way to teach students where students work together or alone to create, do, and reflect on a project. (www.edutopia.org/php/keyword.php?id=037)

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Perceptions of Student Voice

Keeping An Eye Out: How Adults Perceive Students

Adults who work in schools have many different motivations to become teachers, counselors, administrators, and school support workers. However, few motivations are as strong as our perceptions: if we actually perceive of students as needing us, we can pretty much justify doing anything in schools.

The way adults see young people in schools determines how adults treat young people in schools; and the way we treat them determines the outcomes of our activities with them. It can be hard for adults who are in the middle of busy lives to stop and reflect on the ways we perceive students. This article is a tool that can help make that easier.

Over the years, I have reflected a lot on my perceptions of young people. After working in schools, nonprofits, government agencies, and throughout communities for more than 20 years, I have critically deconstructed my actions and assumptions, and worked with others to reflect on their perceptions of young people.

Through these reflections, I have seen five basic ways that adults in schools perceive students. These ways determine how teachers, administrators, counselors, and other school support staff treat students every single day. That determines how schools feel to students, and this, in turn, fosters student engagement.

**Perceptions of Student Voice**

In the following table, A represents adults’ perceptions while S represents student voice.

<table>
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<th>Perceptions of Student Voice</th>
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<tr>
<td>Apathy:</td>
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<tr>
<td>The first way in which adults can perceive student voice is with <strong>apathy</strong>. This occurs when adults deliberately choose to be indifferent toward students. This is different from <strong>antipathy</strong>, where one person does not know the other person exists. However, in schools adults implicitly know student voice exists. Our conscious choice not to perceive it is what determines our apathetic perspective. This can happen throughout school decision-making affecting both individual students and entire schools. Both students and adults can (and do) express apathy toward student voice.</td>
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| Pity:                      |
| Pity happens when adults perceive student voice from the top down, seeing it as a ‘nice thing’ to do. Pity makes adults completely superior to students in all ways, including intellectually, morally, and culturally. Adults view students as |

From: www.soundout.org/teaching.html

In the on-line article, examples are hyper-linked to their extended stories. In this print version, there should be enough clues to enable you to search for papers, publications and resources.
completely incapable of providing anything for themselves, and see students as fully dependent on adults. By positioning adults in positions of absolute authority, pity dehumanises students by suppressing their self-esteem and incapacitating their self-conceptions of ability and purpose.

**Sympathy:**
Perceiving students with sympathy is alluring to many adults. Sympathy disengages students from actively creating knowledge or resources by singularly positioning adults to give without acknowledging they are receiving anything in return. Sympathy is another top down perception. It allows adults to give to students what they apparently cannot acquire for themselves, whether material, time, money, or otherwise, and to do that from a position of compassion.

**Empathy:**
Reciprocity is at the core of an empathetic perception of student voice. This viewpoint allows adults to see students are giving something as well as receiving it. Each person acknowledges the other as a partner, and each person becomes invested in the outcomes of the others’ perception. Empathy is rooted in equity and reciprocity.

**Solidarity:**
Complete solidarity comes from the perception that students are not different from adults simply because of their age. Instead, it allows for complete equity by fully recognising the benefits and challenges of student voice, and engaging students and adults in complete partnerships. These relationships between adults and students operate from a place of possibilities rather than deficits.

**Considerations**
There are many important considerations to recognise about our perceptions of student voice. Following are two of the most important:

- Adults do not maintain one perception of all students all the time. While there are predominant perceptions, there are also exceptions to the rule. When confronting challenging perceptions, it can be important to acknowledge the exception, if it is positive.
- These perceptions are not about “good” and “bad” – they just are. Adults simply cannot operate in complete empathy towards students all the time; likewise, students should not be expected to care for every single adult they ever meet.

**Reflections**
Using these perceptions of student voice as a starting point, the challenge for adults becomes whether we can consciously, critically, and creatively reflect on our attitudes, behaviors and, ultimately, our perceptions. While we do this it is our obligation to keep an eye towards further developing our practice in order to be more effective in the work we do. Acknowledging how we see students can be the road to changing how we treat students. Isn’t that the goal of all student participation work?

Adam Fletcher
SoundOut
adam@commonaction.org

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**VISTA Wine and Cheese Nights**
The Victorian Institute of SRC Teacher Advisors is continuing its series of Wine and Cheese Nights for SRC Support Teachers in 2011. They will be held on Thursday nights in Kew in Melbourne:
1st September • 20th October • 24th November

**Contact:** [vista@srcteachers.org.au](mailto:vista@srcteachers.org.au) or check [srcteachers.ning.com](http://srcteachers.ning.com) for all the details.
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School Councils UK Resources

School Councils UK is an organisation based in England that provides training and resources to Student Councils (they’re called ‘School Councils’ there). See: www.schoolcouncils.org They have an on-line shop for purchase of materials, and some free resources available through their website.

Here are some recent examples, from their newsletter, of resources they provide:

Video-clips on what some Schools and Student Councils have been doing

We’ve included some links below to three great examples of Student Council action. Do take a few minutes to have a look at the videos. Share them with your Student Councils to inspire them and perhaps encourage new ideas.

http://youtu.be/vijtYa9IXlQ
How Buckingham Primary School used the Learning Platform to produce a School Newspaper and also to involve the whole school in the Student Council.

http://youtu.be/J4h9vz39QZU
A brilliant Election/Manifesto video by Patrick Wilson for the Poltair Student Council elections.

http://youtu.be/HfhQnrduHi
A film produced by Deptford Green students in 2007/2008 showing how their Student Council was about to change.

Free Downloadable Resources

We’ve noticed from the responses to our survey that many schools are not aware that you can download lots of great resources from our website – completely FREE OF CHARGE. You don’t have to be a Member of our Network to access them, you don’t even have to log-in. All you need to do is visit:

www.schoolcouncils.org/category/free-downloads/

Student Initiative

Winter Sleep Out

This Winter Sleep Out is a student-led project that aims to raise awareness about and also money for homeless people who live on the streets of our cities.

I am a student at a Melbourne secondary school and I am hoping to get a whole heap of schools involved next year - all over Victoria and even Australia. What we all would do is sleep somewhere that someone who is homeless would typically sleep, or even just sleep at school without any heaters on and windows open. This way, people would get an idea about what being homeless is about and how it feels to be homeless.

I know of many people who are homeless; and because someone started doing Winter Sleep Outs, some of them have been able to get off the streets and now they are very successful people. I am so proud of them. So now I want to help everyone else who is homeless get off the streets and become happier with life.

When someone is homeless, they can feel worthless and like they are not worth speaking to. So many people just ignore them, so they sit there and wonder: ‘Why does no one talk to me? What is so wrong with me that people don’t want to talk to me?’ Please, just please help out these poor people and get involved in the Winter Sleep Out for next year. We’re starting to organise this early.

I hope I can get enough schools involved so that, together, we can also raise at least $5,000 to donate to a range of charities that we all think of together. It would be great to get as many schools involved as possible so we can raise more money and donate more to these charities.

If you have any questions, please email me: fairy-princess-is-an-angle@hotmail.com and I will answer all of them.

Tamara Adnum
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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.
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Local and Overseas Publications Received

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

Australian:
Generic Youth Development Framework: A Discussion Document (Youth Research Centre, Melbourne, Vic) Ani Wierenga and Johanna Wyn, August 2011
Inspire (DEECD, Melbourne, Vic) Issues 6, 7; July, August 2011
Parents Voice (Parents Victoria, Brunswick, Vic) Vol 38 Issue 3; June 2011
Research Developments (ACER, Camberwell, Vic) No 25; Winter 2011
Research eLert (DEECD, Melbourne, Vic) July 2011
Student Advocate (VicSRC, Melbourne, Vic) Vol 5 No 3; July 2011
TLN Journal (Teacher Learning Network, Abbotsford, Vic) Equal in Dignity and Rights: Mental Health in Education. Vol 18, No 2; Winter 2011
Yikes (YACvic, Melbourne, Vic) Vol 9 Editions 2, 3; May, July 2011
WYPIN Newz (WYPIN, Footscray, Vic) Vol 1 Issue 5; June 2011

International:
Personalised Education Now (Nottingham, UK) Issue No. 14; Spring/Summer 2010-2011
Rethinking Schools (Milwaukee, WI, USA) Vol 25, No 4; Summer 2011

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