Connect
supporting student participation

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"Action is the foundational key to all success."
-Pablo Picasso
This Issue:

Another year has passed – and, looking back, I hope that Connect has brought you another great set of stories about participatory practices in classrooms, schools, and education systems.

This completes 32 years of publishing Connect. Most of the back issues are now available for free via the Connect/ACER website. Please visit it (see p 28) and download issues of interest. I’ve been progressively adding the detailed contents of each issue to the Connect web pages and linking these indices to the PDFs, so that you can find exactly what you want.

But if you want the latest news and information about what’s happening around Australia – and in some cases, internationally – you’ll need to subscribe to ensure that the immediate year’s issues are sent to you every two months.

This issue: the usual diversity of stories and views, and perhaps a small subtheme of student initiatives in ‘training’ teachers, which continues from the previous issue. We start with a more detailed account of the Junior School Council Congresses that have brought together almost 600 primary school students from across Victoria to discuss and debate proposals about contemporary learning, the environment and local planning. There is such a wealth of material emerging from these Congresses (comments and proposals) that we have only been able to include a sample for your information.

Student participation in discussions about learning and teaching is continued in an article about the teach the teachers initiative that was recently conducted at one school: a ‘trial run’ for a process that could be replicated in many schools. Here students designed and led a professional development session in which they raised and discussed issues of concern to them: homework, respect, active learning, the purposes of education and so on. It provides a useful model of a collaborative approach to the core business of schools.

In turn, those ideas are reinforced by the talk provided by the Children’s Commissioner for Wales (Keith Towler) this year. He challenges much of the tokenism that characterises too many Student Councils, and provides strong evidence for the value of including students as active partners in determining the key elements of education: curriculum, pedagogy, even the employment of staff.

And the issue continues with some practical stories about practices in primary and secondary schools, including some public summaries of Student Councils drawn from schools’ websites; and a summary of the VicSRC’s work for the year.

I hope you can grant yourself some time to read these great articles – as schools wind down to the end of 2011! And we look forward to returning, refreshed and as enthusiastic as ever, at the start of 2012.

Roger Holdsworth

Next Issue: #193: February 2012
Deadline for material: end of January, 2012
Too frequently student conferences include participants from just a handful of students per school and do not engage the wider student populations. This is then promoted as being ‘the voice of young people’ – and this approach needs to be challenged. A further challenge for conference organisers is to offer students a decision making process that is at both legitimate and instructive. The Junior School Council Congress was created by Second Strike in 2008 to address these challenges.

Before each Congress, student delegates were required to conduct an opinion survey of at least 20 students in their school, other than themselves, around the topic of the Congress: 21st Century Learning, the Environment, and Public Planning. They were then charged with the responsibility of representing those opinions in the formal Congress session, which is itself modelled on Parliamentary procedures.

This year Second Strike and the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development entered into a collaboration to deliver several JSC Congress sessions across Victoria. The first was held in the Eastern Metropolitan Region at the start of September, then one in the Western Metropolitan Region and in Northern Metropolitan Region and in Hume Region (based in Benalla) towards the end of September. The culmination of the process came with a final State JSC Congress held in the lower house of State Parliament in November.

Thanks to the extensive support of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, each Congress was free for participants.

Altogether, the Congress process involved 583 student delegates from 60 schools, surveying over 3000 students (many delegates did not stop when they reached 20 responses). 54 motions were formally debated in these Congress sessions and a further 350 proposals were submitted. Though there was insufficient time to consider all of these within the Congresses, they will be included in the formal report for future discussions.

The formal Congress sessions were a culmination of many workshops and activities during these days. Getting-to-know-you activities, skill training workshops, opportunities to practise public speaking and workshops to share survey results, were all included. Some delegates gave formal presentations on the topic of the day, while many made speeches for or against the proposals within the Congress sessions.

One of the most enjoyable parts of Congress has been watching students develop ideas and arguments for action that would be effective on their topic – and then attempt to persuade the delegates to vote for their proposal.

In the following pages, the outcomes of each Congress are briefly described: some compiled survey results, some of the motions that were discussed, some evaluation comments and some of the brainstormed Puzzle Piece ideas. But this is just a small segment of all of these! To explore the Congress resolutions in full, view the report online at: www.second-strike.com

The Puzzle Piece Activity:

This activity is to encourage creative thinking about what students could change or create in schools. Each student was issued a large ‘puzzle piece’ on which to write one idea. The puzzle pieces were then linked together on the wall to form an ever increasing montage of ideas. The ideas didn’t necessarily have to be realistic, but they formed a great starting point for action.
Some Eastern Region motions proposed:

- That all schools should have interactive whiteboards in every classroom. (Katie)
- That individual school should spend some money towards canteens to include wider varieties of items to people’s dietary requirements and home grown vegies. (Chinmay)
- That teachers should have a day to learn about the new technology before it gets installed in class rooms. (Olivia Crofts)
- That government/councils should do something about housing prices because the prices are going up by so much every year. How are we going to buy our houses? (Victoria Ling Tori)
- That we should have the option to listen to music with one earphone while doing work. (Chirag/Aaron)
- That school should plant more trees to bring more wild life into the schools and make schools a more welcome and inviting place. (Sarah/Jaz)
- That government should allow schools more money for new and upgraded technology. (Ben Travers)
- That schools should, instead of computers, have i-pads, since i-pads have many more learning advantages, such as maths programs, academic programs, i-book, entertainment for spare time, and many other learning advantages. It also can connect to projectors and have programs like Microsoft Word. (Jack Donovan)
- That governments/teachers should have monitors for cleaning up rubbish because there is too much rubbish in the school yard. Teachers on yard duty should watch out for kids dropping their rubbish and if they drop rubbish, they should get a talking to. (Anarra Hume)
- That schools should have more soccer equipment. (Kyle Steele)
- That students should have a quiet room to relax and concentrate. (Sam Hamilton)
- That schools should have skate parks for students. (Matt Pham)
- That school should have swimming lessons for all year levels so kids can learn how to swim when they are young. It will help people so if they are in trouble in the water they won't drown. (Toni O’Sullivan)
- That celebrities should come to schools and talk in depth about what they do. (Riley Fisher)
- That Junior School Council should have 15 minutes after assembly so that JSC can speak to each student to let them have a say and speak their opinion. (Hannah Clifton)
- That schools should give the children, parents or teachers the chance to vote on all things, so that we're not just improving stuff that the staff that were getting stuff that everyone wants to have and we’re all happy but not getting stupid stuff like an Olympic swimming pool. (Elisa Maree Lorna Bradley)
- That the government should supply the schools with better internet. (Jack Sadler)
- That students should be equipped with some sort of technology to learn with or allowed to bring their own technology under their responsibility. (Sam Hamilton)
- That the government should provide public primary schools with i-pads because it can boost the education of public schools. It will be easier to control and more exciting. (Locky Bray)
what technology will do and should do for education...?

Nine schools from the Western Metropolitan Region participated in the Junior School Congress at Westwaters Hotel on Tuesday 13th September 2011.

Approximately 90 students from Years 5, 6 and 7 met to learn how meetings in Parliament are run and how motions are written, moved, discussed and passed. We were given an opportunity to express our ideas and thoughts on how to improve what’s happening in our schools.

The day was divided into four parts. Two workshops were held in the morning and one was held after morning tea. Some of the workshops included Public Speaking, Event Management, Controlling a Meeting and Getting To Know You. The last session was the Formal Congress where we had the opportunity to move our motions.

In the Public Speaking workshop, we had to talk on any topic in front of a group, and were given constructive feedback on our public speaking skills. We were given tips on how to talk without staring at people, controlling our nerves, being more fluent, using hand gestures and body posture, bringing personal examples into the speech, scanning the room and where to stand to make the best impact.

During the Event Management workshop, we had to think about how we would manage an event. We had to think about all the things we would need and do to run a successful event and then prioritise the steps from start to finish.

In the Getting To Know You workshops, we met students from different schools. The workshop helped us to relax by playing getting to know you games. Students shared information about themselves and their school.

During the Formal Congress, some of us got up to put forward our motions. Other students had the chance to ask questions about the motions we put forward and support or oppose the motion. At the end of each motion, the members of the congress voted for or against the motions.

Participating in the Junior School Congress gave us the confidence to speak in front of different people, meet new people. It gave us a chance to have our say about how we can improve our school and learning in the 21st Century.

Lucy 5A, Naomi 5B, Abby 6A, Gabby 6B, Priyanka 6C, Sam 7A, Cedya 7B, Briannan 7C, Michael 7D, Billie 7E

Some of the motions proposed:

I think that primary schools should have a L.E.A.P. program so you can have more advanced students in the same class so they can all work at the same level or pace. (Liam Blundell)

That the schools should un-ban rugby, but not anyone is allowed to play, therefore the students who want to play have to bring back a note saying they can play from their parents because parents are scared for their kids. (Mal Joud)

That the government should provide net books for grade 5 to 6s, so parents can rent them for a year and also included in the book pack. (Sophia Deng)

That the schools should not allow composite class rooms and we should be split with our year level. For example there are four grades of 1-2s: why can’t we make a grade 1 class and a grade 2 class? We would only use two teachers and two classrooms. (Katelynn Pearce)

That the Department of Education and the government should make more subjects compulsory – such as: vocal music, music, dance, arts and multimedia. The reason why is because I would love a career path in music but I find my school isn’t helping me. (Taylor Bonanno)

That the government should ban live exports to Indonesia because the way they kill the cattle is animal cruelty. But if they don’t ban it they should at least show them how to kill a cow. (Chenoa Moraes)

That government should make swimming compulsory to all schools starting from grade 2 till 6. I think you shouldn’t wait until high school for school carnivals and swimming events. The reason why I want this to go on because many deaths are caused by drowning. (Adriana Kastis)

That the government should make sure that all schools have specialized rooms. i.e art room, science lab etc. (Julie Nguyen)

That teacher should have the last hour of school to put towards a game more likely on Friday last hour to finish with a bang. (Katelynn Pearce)

Some Student Responses

What was the best part of the conference for you?

“Getting up and representing the school”;
“Listening to all the opinions”;
“I enjoyed sharing my point of view of various motions and trying to persuade the voters”;
“Hearing from people about the things that they would like to happen in the formal parliamentary part of congress”;
“Speaking in front of my peers”;
“The formal congress, games and activities”;
“I would have to say the formal parliamentary part of congress was the best part for me; I really enjoyed learning other students’ opinions and being able to say mine”;
“All day because I interacted with other students and had my own say”; “Having my opinion in congress: I enjoyed expressing what I had to say”.

Suggestions to improve the Congress?

“Have more time for more motions”;
“Not to talk while others are talking”;
“Quicker discussion and longer congress”;
“Have more time for more motions: less questions and speakers”;
“Shorten the parliament part of congress and put more a bit more fun into it”; “Make more time so everyone could speak”.

Recommend this to other students in your school?

“I think [this is a] once in a life time opportunity and it would be good for other people to get a chance”; “There are a lot of shy people at my school and this will be good for their confidence”; “Why! Because it is a really good time to like interact with students from other schools”;
“You get to build your skills and improve confidence, sharing my opinion was fun and made me feel like I was a part of something and particularly felt accomplishing”.

Puzzle Piece Ideas

• We could buy lots of books for our reading corner
• I would get new equipment for sports, art and other activities
• I would buy different types of fruit and veggies seeds to grow and sell in our canteen
• Playground for high school children
• Cafeteria in front of canteen for better seating
• Good Junior School Council congress room
• If my school received $1000 I would like to buy more recycling bins
• We can have a fundraiser for the homeless by sleeping outdoors with your friends
• If you had $1000 I would get more tables and chairs
• I would get more electronics for the school or charity
• Help out the children’s hospital because the children’s hospital is a foundation that needs help
Some Hume Region proposals:

That students should be able to make announcements over the speakers or TVs so people know of up-coming events. (Murry Filwood)

That the Department of Education should give all school with grade 5 and 6 students apple products such as i-pads and Mac-books. (Sarah)

I that all students should be able to have 15 minutes per day on all electronic devices to have for free time because a lot of apps are educational. (Sam Pell)

I that parents and school should block facebook so only at home they can use it so parents can monitor the friends and past times. (Molly 8)

That Wandis PS should have at least one sport lesson that lasts as long as any other subject, once a week, so we can be active and we can do more things in sport rather than just a couple of games. (Daisy Clarke)

I that all schools in the Hume Region should have a bigger and better play ground for all students to play on. (Lauren Browning)

That each student should have an i-pad provided by the government and schools can help fund-raise for books, apps and cases. The students can use i-pads to learn more and increase their skills. The benefits of an i-pad are better learning, they’re faster than computers and you can carry them around easier than laptops. (Rose Lynne Waters)

That the school principal should make every child have their own desks to work on so children don’t get distracted. (WD Patterson)

That schools should get weather proof security cameras. (Gus McKenzie)

That teachers should not be able to keep students in at play or lunch. We do not think it should be used as a whole class punishment. (Cassandra 5)

I that we should have a full size basketball stadium and an oval the size of the MCG. (Caleb)

That we should have a TV in a place like a library or multi purpose room. (Cassandra)

That principal should give the students their own password for the computer. (Thomas H)

That the school/teachers should make students with mobiles give them to the office/teacher and collect them at the end of the day. (Ollie Widett)

That principal should block websites that are inappropriate, and images. (Charlie Hill)

That students should help with more responsibilities around the school and help out more with running the school. (Tayla Corbo)

That principals should completely ban cameras from school because it is distracting in class and you don’t need them and they’re a waste of time at school. (Joe Hasmussen)

What technology works best for me?

- i-pad, internet, computer, smart board, more equipment, laptops
- Computer, internet, laptop, netbooks, i-pad on desk, reading corner, mobile phones, posters
- Computers, internet, smart board
- Mobile phones, i-pad, i-pod, computer, net book
- I-pad, mobile, internet, computer, smart board
- Laptops, i-pads, internet, smart boards, i-pods, cameras, phones
- Phone, i-pad, smart board, internet, computer, internet apps
- Computers, smart board
- Computers, interactive whiteboards, netbook
- Smart board
- Computers and internet
- Laptops, computers and i-pads, mobile phones, all work for them

Describe what you would like in a really good classroom, eg equipment, spaces, furniture, activities etc

- More sports games, everyone has a network, more comfortable chairs, laptops, i-pods. I would like a personal computer/laptop, plasma, i-pad each, everyone has a laptop
- Fun and learning, equipment to help learning, i-pad in each class, drink and food vending, i-pad each student, single desks, bean bags, more space, more sports equipment, leather seats, different rooms for different …
- i-pods, more space, smart board, soft chairs, big tables, computers, pillows
- Bean bags, wide spaces, computers, own desks, i-pads, kitchen, digital clocks, cushions, coloured furniture, sports equipment, armchairs, class pet, reading corner, open classes, posters, books
- i-pads, i-pods, comfortable chairs, more bean bags, couch and cushions
- Each child should have their own computer
On Being Speaker at JSC Congress 2011

The nervous feeling – of all those eye looking at me – was daunting. I was there on behalf of the VicSRC (Victorian Student Representative Council), knowing this was a big role. On top of this, I had to set a good example for Second Strike who had offered me this opportunity. This was my first time at any Congress, undertaking the role of speaker.

But, before I go on, I had better give you some background information on Congress. This is where motions are presented by students, debated, voted upon and either passed or defeated.

Students first broke up into small groups, with their facilitator explaining the basic rules and procedures of Congress. Following this, students wrote their own motions (you could feel the anticipation of being called upon in the air). Congress officially started when all students rose for the speaker (that was me) to announce the words: “I officially open this Congress!”

My role as speaker was to maintain order in the Congress. On this day I took great pride knowing I could show younger students I was only a few years older: giving them something to aspire to. Living in the 21st Century – are we really connected? and The Environment were the themes that united the motions that were debated, voted on and finally turned into resolutions (if they were passed).

The experience of this was both nervous yet exciting! There was a buzzing atmosphere in the room, with all the students slowly coming out of their shell and gaining confidence to share ideas. I went from being nervous to feeling respected – much like the President!

Alexis Leonhardt
Bundoora Secondary College

The Environment:
Northern Region Motions:

That schools should build worm farms so fruits can be composted and the wastes from the worms could be used for gardens. (Georgy)

That student leaders should encourage students to bring old phones to school then send them to the zoos. (Arshiya Merchant)

That all schools should get solar panels because it doesn’t use electricity. It uses our natural resources. (Bethany George)

That all schools should have a planting day every term and use recycled bottles to plant little plants in. (Chlo and Allen)

That the government should make any sign more understandable for preps. (Ethan Finnegan)

That principals should use the money in the budget to buy bins for general waste and recycling with little charts for prep/1 so they know what bins to put it in. (Jack Hoar)

That schools should buy plastic recycling bins. The bins should show which plastics can be put in with clear labels. (Shu Shu)

That schools should teach children what can be recycled with minimal harm and what should not be recycled. (Steven Wong)

That the Victorian government should fund all schools in Victoria so we can get solar panels. We want this to happen so we can save power and have a greener future. With the money we will save, we can get things like more water tanks, veggie patches and maybe even more sports equipment. (Dylan Beatie)

That all schools should have one hour a day where all computers are turned off, to save electricity. (Raheem Kenefick)

That all primary schools should have a rubbish free lunch day once a week where you use containers instead of paper and plastic bags. (Jack Shellnack)

That Findon Primary should have wind turbines so on windy days it can spin and help us save electricity. (Onn Khongnimit)

That some schools should share ideas with each other so we can all be on an even playing field by saving energy, power etc. (Keeley Holter)

That all schools should construct art sculptures made out of recycling material e.g a robot made out of coke bottles. (Jasmine Ivana)
On November 14th, the primary school student delegates to the State JSC Congress took over the Legislative Assembly in Parliament House, Melbourne. This Congress was officially opened by Richard Bolt, Secretary of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and closed by Shadow Minister for Education Hon Rob Hulls. The Minister for Education, Hon. Martin Dixon, attended in the middle of the day and spent considerable time in the student workshops listening attentively to the students.

The chief topic debated in this Congress, and the basis of the student-run surveys prior to Congress, was young peoples’ input into local planning and community creation. Space is a big concern to students, along with environmental impact and safety.

Afterwards, students said the best thing was: “the friendly way I could express the things that need improving in my suburb”, “expressing my ideas and my community and knowing something will actually happen”; “we were able to see what it was like in a room where all the laws were made” and “being able to share an opinion that will be passed on to the government”. They suggested that, in future, these Congresses should “try and fit in more motions so everyone can be heard”. And they would recommend it to other students “because it would be inspiring [to be] representing your school while learning to build up your confidence”; “it is a great opportunity to express feelings and to listen to other students’ opinions”.

At this final JSC Congress, students brainstormed issues in workshops and developed a total of 46 proposals. Of these, nine were discussed and five agreed to. The motions discussed were:

• That the state government should install barrier fences in all train stations around Melbourne. (Trent Ayling) Carried
• That the state government should open designated vandalism areas, including old cars, walls and smashing zones. (Jess and Luca) Defeated
• That every Primary School should build a vegie patch because it is healthy and people will learn to grow healthy food for when they are older. It will also help so the school doesn’t have many gardens. (Danielle S) Carried
• That the School Council should involve the students in decision making at schools and hold regular student-teacher meetings to discuss changes/problems. (Angelika Solomon) Carried
• That Victorian government should create a state-wide road standard that focuses on improved safety for all road users in all areas. (Kahlia/Luke) Carried
• That the local council should put more bins around the suburb/town. (Alicia Brown) Carried
• That state government should put more pet-friendly beaches and parks. (Lili Picciani) Defeated
• That the government should start a junior SRC which should meet up around every second school term to discuss ideas and possible changes we could make. The reason we should have this is to hear students’ opinions. (Ella Clough) Defeated
• That shires/councils should clean/do up buses/public transport and make them more appealing and get more people to use the transport, otherwise make public transport even more eco-friendly. (Ruebi Smith) Defeated

The JSC Congress series will return in 2012 with even more vigour and be available to even more schools. Plans are underway to offer a JSC Congress within schools as well as across regions. For the full report of the JSC Congresses and more information on the process and future plans, contact Second Strike or check the website: www.second-strike.com

David Mould info@second-strike.com
Teach the Teachers 2011

The general idea came from the 2011 VicSRC Congress. It was that students are more than capable of recognising effective teaching strategies, and that they have valuable insights to offer a school.

With this in mind, a resolution/action plan was passed at the Congress that the VicSRC “establish a ‘teach the teacher’ training course for individual SRCs to enact at their schools, around the ways students learn”. Often these resolutions undergo months (or years) of planning before reaching their implementation stage. But thankfully, a simple conversation was all it took for Melbourne Girls’ College (MGC) to give the concept a go. Former VicSRC Executive member and MGC SRC President, Kosheni Arulsothy, in discussing the outcomes of Congress with the school, somehow managed to capture the imagination of the Principal team, who said: “Go for it” and booked a 45 minute Professional Development session for the entire teaching staff.

So, at the start of Term 4, the SRC began asking the student body what they wanted to teach the staff. After consultation from the Principal team, the Head of Curriculum and Connect’s own Roger Holdsworth, the SRC settled on presenting the teachers with a series of questions that the students often never had a chance to ask. These questions started off as brainstorming during SRC meetings and were then refined and rephrased by a core group of 12 students. These questions were then put to the student body via a school intranet survey; this allowed students to vote for five questions from the brainstormed list of 23 – questions that they wanted asked ahead of any others. This information helped the SRC determine what themes and issues needed to be addressed in the PD session.

Over three weeks, the core group determined which questions would be put to the staff, either briefly in a massive carousel activity, and which ones would be included for greater depth in discussion groups. These students also received facilitator training from Second Strike Productions (courtesy of an MGC Parents’ Association grant) and worked in pairs to prepare for the session. Each pair chose a topic based on how they had grouped the questions. The topics were:

- Students’ attention in lessons (Focus and Distraction);
- Teaching style;
- Project/Tests notice and formats;
- Ideal Teacher;
- Learning (How and Why); and
- Attitude and Discipline.

Student Responses

- I think the whole process was amazing. It was perfectly organised and on the actual day it ran without trouble and the teachers just talked and talked and talked. You couldn’t even traffic conduct them. (Kiera Bulless, Year 7 and facilitator)
- What really surprised me was that, as a group, we decided that the solution to having too much homework was simply that, we – students and teachers – need to open the lines of communication. This was the main point that followed on from most of our questions as a solution to the students’ concerns and issues. (Samantha Landby, Year 8 and facilitator)

Teacher Responses

- I was very pleased to support this idea to have the girls learn an activity that engaged them in discussion about classroom issues. We often have dialogue about things that are not so important to our core business but this activity allowed us to hear the thoughts of girls about the central relationship they have with staff and their learning environment.

The information from the Teach the Teacher session will also assist leading into our 2012 year review, and strategic planning process. I am also pleased that we were immediately able to respond to the girls thoughts about their ‘ideal’ teacher by getting them involved with a teacher selection process.

Personally I felt energised to hear the voices of the girls. These experiences are fantastic for them to have but they remind us of the importance of the roles we have to tap into and nurture this talent. (Judith Crowe, Principal)

- Often we need to be reminded as teachers that it’s not what we do but how we do it. It made our group just revisit what we were doing in class and to remind ourselves of all the options out there that we can use to teach the girls. (Tonia Douglas-Scarfe, Teacher)

What Next?

The discussion groups recorded answers to the questions they were asked, and these results have been distributed to all staff for further comment. Unfortunately holding such an event this late in the year has meant we’ve lost the ability to efficiently report back to the student body. It will be one of the first tasks for next year’s SRC to disseminate the information to the school so that everyone knows what has happened and so we don’t run the risk of repeating ourselves and disengaging the teachers. However, feedback has been positive at this stage from all involved and the prospect of another student run PD session during Term 1 is being considered.

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December 2011

9
Teach the Teachers: A Student-Run Process

The process started with a simple idea: we should run a session where students teach the teachers. Simple in thought, yet to put it into practice without the appropriate planning would be extremely hard. Our first step was to understand what we wanted to get from the session and what we wanted the teachers to take away from the session.

We decided that we wanted teachers to hear what students knew about how we learn, but we also wanted to know what teachers thought about questions that we had about our education.

Sufi Salieh (Year 9) said: “As a group, our SRC wanted to represent the students at our school by trying to relate our teachers’ problems with our own. In doing so, we would then create a stronger understanding between both teachers and students. We also wanted to be reassured that both the staff and students of Melbourne Girls’ were ‘on the same page’ and both wanted to have a stronger understanding about each other’s issues and were willing to do anything to get to this stage. The teachers wanted to be able to have a better understanding of the issues amongst students throughout the school to ensure that they could improve the learning of their students – which will ultimately benefit them in the future.”

Aoife Hopkins-Lichtman (Year 7) added: “We had a goal to answer the thoughts and perspectives of the way teachers think, and about what we could do to possibly change those thoughts, or the ways the students think of the teachers. The students from the SRC also had a goal to benefit teachers and students by finding out what teachers thought of teaching and how students thought they should be taught. I think the teachers ‘turned over a new leaf’ and really tried to help the SRC get a better response. I think the teachers have really been motivated from this experience.”

Furthermore, the questions we were going ask the teachers had to be specific and important to all the students at MGC. All students were asked to send their questions to Mr Pretlove, our SRC support teacher. The questions were then put to a committee of students and voted on, in order to get the final few to ask the teachers. The questions helped us to format the session and know what type of discussion needed to take place in order increase the morale of the girls at our school.

From there we went on to decide the logistics of the session. We went through heaps of different ideas and debates, but eventually we decided on doing a carousel question game – similar to speed dating. Teachers formed both an inner circle and an outer circle; students read out a question and the teachers discussed their opinions with the teacher opposite them. The aim of this activity was to warm the teachers up and get them talking. We then planned that the teachers would break up into different groups, each covering an important topic and discuss our important questions. This was the plan that we had put together.

We selected 12 student facilitators to run the session. The facilitators decided on the number of groups each facilitator would have, the questions each group would cover, and how to record the information received from the teachers. This took three meetings, as well as a lesson on facilitating. These student facilitators learnt important skills and strategies to run the session effectively and with confidence. After being taught the basics of facilitating, the 12 students practised on the SRC who were pretending to be teachers.

After all the preparation and planning put in by the students and staff over the month, we were able to run the session smoothly. The session worked well because our ‘proper preparation prevented a poor performance’ and the session was a piece of cake.

The session itself was extremely enjoyable and beneficial for students and teachers. It helped the teachers understand the students’ point of view. The session also allowed the facilitators to understand the teachers’ perspectives.

I personally got involved in the session because I honestly really wanted to be able to make a difference in our school community. I thought it was the perfect opportunity to help everyone enjoy every minute of their school day.

What happens next?

The first step I would like to see happen is for the school to look at the teachers’ feedback from the ‘teach the teacher’ session we ran. We need to see if the teachers’ understanding of their students has increased and if they have changed anything since the session.

Furthermore, I really want this ‘teach the teacher’ process to become a permanent program run throughout schools in Victoria. I think it allows both students to understand teachers and also teachers to understand students.

Sam Landby
Year 8 student
Middle School SRC Vice President
2012 Middle School Captain
Seen and heard: learning through the eyes of pupils

Are we really listening to children and young people? It feels to me that we are standing at a crossroads. Our uncertainty on which way to turn has been fuelled by the latest PISA results; we look at some of our school buildings that are crumbling in front of our eyes; we face funding difficulties like never before in the public sector; we see safeguarding concerns being raised by our inspectorates; and we have an outspoken Education Minister in Leighton Andrews who wants radical steps to be taken so that children and young people can enjoy the benefits of a first class education...

So why am I banging on about the voice of pupils and students being heard when we have all these challenges in front of our education system in Wales?

I run an Ambassador scheme in primary schools across Wales and I have heard some of my former Ambassador children who have made the transition from primary to secondary school ask what’s happened to children’s rights. Where has it gone? And that represents a challenge I think for secondary school teachers who will more and more experience year 7 children arriving at their school used to the concept of experiential learning, used to having their voices heard and taking part in discussions to improve learning opportunities. Used to working within a child rights approach.

In stepping forward on that crossroads confident that the progress we are making with the Foundation Phase is equipping our children with the skills they need, we have to be able to maintain continuity so that all secondary schools can work within the same commitment to children’s rights.

Inherent in that is a commitment to a whole school approach and to listening and responding to the voices of children and young people. It is central to tackling their disengagement, it is central to understanding their emotional and social development needs, and it is central in preparing young people to take on the responsibilities of adulthood.

The evidence base that supports the engagement of children and young people in their learning is getting stronger with each published study. I have seen how effective practice can make a big difference:

- Schools that involve [student] councils in having a say over spending priorities and budget management see reductions in petty vandalism and graffiti.
- Schools that involve pupils and students in the recruitment of teachers and other staff see improvements in relationships between pupils and adults in the school.
- Schools that involve pupils more in establishing good and safe learning environments see teachers reporting increasing levels of job satisfaction.
- Schools that engage pupils in forming behaviour policies, including the formation of schemes to tackle bullying, see reductions in difficult behaviour.
- Schools that foster respect between pupils and staff create an environment where academic and vocational attainment levels increase.
- Schools whose leadership and vision is centred on a child rights approach that values and encourages everyone’s voice to be heard, provide a safe environment for learning.
- And when children and young people feel safe, the adults will to.

In April 2011 I attended a conference organised by the Powys Youth Forum, members of which are here with us tonight. The Youth Forum is known as YOB – Youth with an Opinion to Broadcast.

This year they conducted a survey of children in Powys about the effectiveness of their secondary [student] councils. They had responses from children in almost all of the schools and also responses from staff. Whilst the research showed that some schools are indeed standing at the crossroads, others are beacons of good practice and are driving forward, but quite a few haven’t yet even reached the crossroads. A pretty mixed bag.

The pleasing statistics is that 55% of pupils in Powys not on the [student] council said that [student] councils are very effective or quite effective, whilst 84% of [student] council reps said that the [student] councils are very effective or quite effective. Interestingly 84% of staff who responded also said that [student] councils are very effective or quite effective. The survey also captured comments of individual children about improvements to [student] councils. A key theme in those comments was that children want to have a say about matters that affect them and for those opinions to be listened to. If opinions are not listened to, then children felt that they aren’t valued. One child stressed:

Listen to the pupils’ ideas and actually take them into account rather than just push them to one side and do nothing about anything. The pupils are trying to make the school better for both teachers and other pupils, making it more enjoyable and safe.

The children who had been part of [student] councils valued the opportunity to have their opinions heard in school, making contributions to improvements in their school and they felt proud that they were able to demonstrate that they care about the future of their schools.

For a [student] council to be effective, it has to work within a whole school approach led by the vision and leadership of the headteacher and the governing body. A vision that recognises that children and young people do have a role in helping to shape and influence their own learning. [Student] councils are a key part of that. All schools now have them of course but it would be fair to say I think that they are operating with varying degrees of success. I meet with lots of [student] councils and the effective ones become apparent within five minutes of meeting with them. They talk confidently about their role, they quickly describe the things they have worked on and they reflect on the extent to which teachers respond to their ideas.

So, by way of example, I met one secondary [student] council who were pleased that their work on school dinners made a significant impact on improving choice and take up...
of healthy options. They surveyed all the students in their school to gauge their views and ideas on school dinners. They analysed the returns, produced a report and fed their findings on to the headteacher and the governing body. One of the governors at the school told me that, as a result of this work, they were able to change things and they have been pleased with the increased uptake of school dinners. What this illustrates is the extent to which an effective [student] council can drive through an improvement, but it also illustrates the respect with which the voice of the student has been heard and respected. Students, teachers, headteachers and school governors all respecting each other's roles and working together to drive up standards and opportunities.

By contrast, I have met other [student] councils where, within five minutes, it quickly becomes clear the arrangements are not so effective. They are not sure why they are there and will say "but heh, it's much better to be meeting you than doing double maths!"

In these examples the [student] council exists. The requirement to have one is filled and the box is ticked but there is very little connection between the way the school is run and the role of the [student] council. I have met pupils in those circumstances who have asked me why we bother with the arrangement at all. After all, they will say, "we have raised issues about the state of the toilets, or why girls can't wear trousers, and have made suggestions about different ways of learning but, to be honest, nothing happens. No one really takes any notice".

Every [student] council has a link teacher and when I hear things like this I ask that teacher for their view. In summary, I hear them reflect that it can be frustrating and, as a result, it becomes difficult to motivate pupils to stay involved.

So why is that happening?

Because, I would contend, that there is not a real and meaningful commitment to a whole school approach. Those schools for me are ones that could be characterised as being rather defensive and protectionist, where concerns about establishing and maintaining school authority override creating a safe, empowering learning environment. It's as if somehow discipline and rules have no place for children's voices. The adults know best and that will drive up attainment levels. That a good school is about repressing voice and that will drive up attainment levels. That is a good school is about repressing voice and driving up attainment levels. That is why no one is listening to you – you switch off, your self esteem takes a knock, you do not achieve and for some, that can lead to them becoming challenging or difficult to handle.

If you are a student in a school with poor leadership and you are sitting in a classroom or a [student] council meeting wondering why no one is listening to you – you switch off, your self esteem takes a knock, you do not achieve and for some, that can lead to them becoming challenging or difficult to handle.

If you are a student in a school with good leadership and you are sitting in a classroom or a [student] council meeting and people are listening to you – you engage, you become more confident, you respect the people around you and your inherent potential shines through...

So, where are we at in Wales today on pupil voice?

I have met children who have worked with the teachers in their school to make improvements to the school environment:

- Paint classrooms to brighten classrooms
- Making sure school toilets are hygienic by working with governors and research prices of hand dryers

Children I have met have also talked to me about how they have participated in making changes to the experiences that children have in school:

- Fruity Fridays, changing diet of pupils
- ideas that have been generated by pupils

Experiences where children have helped drive change in schools. And this is how it makes them feel:

- happy because it's helped others
- taking part in school life to make schools better

These are only a small sample of the activities which children are participating in across schools in Wales. You can see the pride they feel in making a contribution, how being heard and respected increases their confidence. I hope you appreciated hearing those experiences from the children directly. So much more eloquent than me, I know!

In 2009 I published "Listening and Learning ...The Right Story". The messages contained in this resource all come from children and young people. I sought their views on what makes a good learning experience, what they like about their teachers and what elements of school life could improve to help make sure each and every one of them can meet their full potential. If you haven't seen this publication, you can access all the materials on my website. It's full of quotes and ideas from children and young people about each aspect of school life. From their contribution we drew together their nine key messages.

I remember one young girl who, when I asked her what made a good teacher, took my hand and led me down the corridor. "This is Miss Jones", she said, "I love her because she is the best teacher ever."

Nine Key Messages

So, what are the nine key messages I would like you to take on board? Well, remember Miss Jones but also know that children across Wales have these messages for you:

- "A good teacher is fair": children have told me that a good teacher applies rules fairly and consistently and treats everyone equally.
- "We like learning in lots of ways": children told me they enjoy a variety of teaching and learning methods and really appreciate it when their teachers show creativity and imagination.
- "A good teacher is approachable and supportive": children said that they want to feel comfortable to ask their teachers for help and support.
- "Please listen and take our views seriously": children asking teachers to listen to them and for their opinions to be taken into account.
- "A good teacher makes the classroom a safe place to be": perhaps one of their most important messages. They want and need a balance between rules and care.
- "We like to be told when we're doing well": we all like this and children are no different. They tell me that positive feedback encourages them, helps them to focus and makes them more confident.
- "A good teacher shows respect": children tell me that teachers show them respect by making time for them and treating them as individuals. Teachers who do that also earn the respect of their pupils.
- "Great teachers inspire us": so many examples of this to draw on and children tell me they learn more when teachers enjoy teaching, have a passion for their subject and know their stuff.

"Great teachers are positive role models for us": if you are in any doubt how important teachers are in children's lives just ask them.
They tell me how important teachers are and that they want to look up to them and in so many cases they do. Like Miss Jones! Like Mr Spear and Mr Mills in my school days.

So nine key messages that capture a child rights approach in education. One that is fair, creates a variety of learning opportunities, is supportive and listens to children’s views, takes place in a safe school environment, provides positive feedback on achievements, shows respect for children and teachers, and where teachers inspire and provide positive role models.

In March and April this year the Welsh Government conducted their own survey about pupil engagement and had around 350 responses. With thanks to the Welsh Government I am able to share with you some of the headline findings from that research for the first time. The full report will be available shortly on the Pupil Voice Wales website: www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk. I would encourage you to read the full report as there are many and varied opinions shared by children in response to the questions.

47% of the children in that survey felt that everyone has a chance to have their opinions heard in school, with 28% agreeing that this sort of happens, and 25% saying that they disagreed that everyone has a chance to have their opinions heard in school. When asked whether things change or improve as a result of opinions being voiced, 69% of the children agreed, with 20% saying sort of, and only 11% saying that this is not the case. 85% of the children felt that it is important to be involved in decision making.

The research concludes that, whilst those children who responded to the survey were aware of their right to have their voices heard, there was a consistent theme that although mechanisms exist for young people to have their say in decisions that affect them, there is a perception that this only has surface value and, in reality, no-one is listening to what they are saying. This finding hit me hard – children still reporting they are not being heard.

The research concludes that the children recognised that:

- pupils use their school facilities and are in their learning environment every day, so have a good idea of what needs to be improved
- changes made can benefit future generations
- pupil engagement provides them with skills that will be useful to them in future employment, personal skills, confidence and development
- improving the conditions and general well-being for pupils, ensures that their learning environment is a pleasant one that they are happy to attend

Let’s hear from some more young people:

The school doesn’t really listen to what pupils have to say, they just assume what we would say.

The only reason for a school is to educate young people, so if those young people aren’t enjoying or getting what they need from school, then the whole program of schooling is completely pointless.

We are listened to when they talk to us, but they do not talk to us very often.

If teachers listened to us, maybe they would have more of an understanding of how we like to learn and listen. Many small decisions get made on the [student] council, but I don’t think any big decisions are influenced by the pupils.

Yes, we have lots of opinions and our opinions are just as important as everyone else’s and the future’s going to affect us more than any other generation.

In 2011 the Welsh Government published its second ever Children and Young People’s Wellbeing Monitor. Whilst that is primarily a statistical document, the Welsh Government commissioned research to capture the experiences of children and young people. In the section about being listened to and treated with respect and having their race and cultural identity recognised, there were a number of observations about mechanisms such as [student] councils.

One young person said:

It’s so hard to get your feeling across to someone and for them to totally understand, because at the end of the day they are so much older than you are and it was probably a lot different from when they were in school.

As Ruby, who was 13 years old, said: You are less important than everyone else.

All this suggests that in some schools we must have some barriers in place – a lack of confidence perhaps in pupil voice.

There may be those who are thinking that my emphasis on pupil engagement is another task to be added to the many other tasks that you are being asked to undertake, such as raising standards and attainment levels. However I would stress that, as Esgyn have identified, pupil engagement and pupil voice must be central to effective teaching and learning. This way of working builds pupil confidence, boosts their self-esteem and skills and ultimately improves their educational attainment.

Having your voice heard is the right of every child, and the Welsh Government has been unequivocal in its position on children being rights holders. Some may see this as threatening when children are asked to participate in reviewing learning in classrooms or interviewing prospective teachers. As I said publicly earlier this year, I have seen at first hand how a number of schools are taking forward embedding the UNCRC into their schools. Pupil awareness of rights and engagement helps create a positive learning environment and raises children’s awareness about their rights in their everyday lives. If education is about hooking children into learning for life, they must have their views heard by those around them. It fosters an atmosphere of mutual respect.

I am, though, keenly aware that some may see such pupil engagement as undermining teachers’ authority, characterised when people say things like:

We don’t want to develop a classroom culture of pupils saying, ‘I know my rights, you can’t do this to me’, because that would be a retrograde step and result in chaos.

I challenge statements like these. Children’s rights are not a weapon in the classroom to set adults and children against each other. Instead I would urge us all to understand children’s rights within the wider context of human rights. These are the values that define our democratic society. But why are some adults so worried that, in allowing children to participate in decisions, our authority will be undermined? The evidence I have seen from schools where everyone is engaged and understands the rights-based approach is that children learn that their opinions are valued and that the feedback they receive helps them to understand that compromises may be sought. They begin to understand how decisions are made. Surely we have to be able to do this with children throughout their school life so that they are able to learn skills of negotiation and benefit from the gains in self-esteem and engagement in learning. Ultimately this is the building block upon which democracy is built. And when we get this right in schools, we are helping children to understand what citizenship is all about. We cannot allow the fear of rights which comes from a perspective of misunderstanding to mean that children are not afforded the opportunities to participate in school life, whether at the level of individual child, classroom or school.
We have to get this right and it does take some effort, but when it works, it pervades the whole school and is not to be found only in isolated pockets or classrooms. This is where school leaders play a crucial role for me. It is those leaders who have a vision and understand that children can be one of the expert groups in the school. They find ways to listen and respond to the opinions of their learners and they ensure that the whole school community is moving forward together.

Would we, as adults, accept that the health service we use or even private businesses would not want to hear our feedback? The best companies and organisations listen carefully to their customers and constantly review their practice to ensure the highest levels of customer satisfaction as possible.

Schools that have successfully embraced the concept of children reviewing the learning that occurs in their classrooms report that they have gained feedback from the children, perspectives which have been different to those of adults. In one secondary school I was told that the children make the linkages between the curriculum areas and are able to feedback about the inconsistency in teaching approaches. This is being fed back to staff who are considering how they can make changes to ensure greater consistency. In one primary school, pupils from across the age range were involved in reviewing the reward and behaviour system and again highlighted the inconsistencies. By working with teachers, school leaders and the governors, the children have helped devise a revised system which has had a positive impact in the school this year.

In relation to staff appointments, there has been considerable debate around this issue and I would put forward a perspective that you cannot ask children to participate in such important decisions in people’s lives without providing them with a clear structure and training so that they are able to understand the process. I would stress that many schools have been involving pupils in this process for a number of years. One who sees the benefit of pupil voice in this process is Tonypanyd Community College Headteacher, Byron Williams, who said that:

“They’re good at it. Their questions are pertinent, they understand the formalities and can identify candidates’ strengths and weaknesses.”

So, where next?

“It’s all about relationships and citizenship – democracy is built on people respecting each other and listening to everyone’s views.”

It’s a win win situation. It does not cost the earth. But if we get this right, if we can hold on to the values we are setting, and we adults do that with confidence, we will provide a platform for our children and young people to thrive.

It’s all about their nine key messages.

Listening to them and working together will be the key to our success in supporting every child and young person in Wales to be the best they can be.

I hope I have shown tonight the variety of ways in which children today are participating in their schools in Wales. We have seen examples of how schools are harnessing the power of their own pupils in relation to learning and how this is having a positive impact on the learning that children experience in their school. We have heard how children are indeed the experts in understanding their own learning.

However we have also seen through research that not all children and schools have reached the same point. We have a clear vision from the UN Convention and also the Welsh Government that children have the right to have their voices heard, yet we still have schools where pupil engagement is limited to the [student] council which may or may not be effective when seen through the eyes of pupils.

It is a question of believing in this as an important concept within the work of the school and recognising its value.

I would like to leave almost the last word to these primary school leaders who talk about the impact of pupil participation in their schools:

- children more positive about school and about learning, and key skills have drastically improved
- wellbeing and pupil voice intrinsically linked; school’s a sanctuary; important pupils have a voice, listened to and ideas taken on board. No financial element to this – we have strategic ideas that everyone can use and benefit from.

As the Deputy Head of Connah’s Quay, said:

“When the school does suit them and that is very important. We know what is important to them by asking them, not just thinking that we know. Whilst she acknowledged that there may be risks in taking such an approach, she stressed that those are minimised through the training provided to the pupils and ensuring that they are trained as to how to give effective feedback.

We have to remember that not all children in Wales today feel that they are able to participate in decisions in school.

I feel that it is vitally important not to pay ‘lip service’ to these issues - young people should be heard effectively and listened to. This is often not the case. Just because a [student] council is in place doesn’t mean that all young people’s views are taken into consideration - the vast majority of young people are never consulted on issues that affect them.

But we do have some wonderful examples of good practice in Wales and it’s those that we need to build on. We all want every child and young person in Wales to achieve their full potential. Getting them truly involved in all our school communities across Wales will be the route to our success. We can trust our children and young people. They have so much to say, so much to learn, and so much to contribute.

I was really interested in what the Powys Youth Forum members had to say, so I asked what pupil engagement should look like in schools:

Well, it’s pupils and teachers working together really. Respecting each other and working things out.

That’s it – the magic formula explained in one sentence.

Diolch yn fawr iawn.
Thank you.

Keith Towler
Children’s
Commissioner
for Wales

www.childcomwales.org.uk/

A full recording of this lecture is available from: www.gtcw.org.uk/gtcw/index.php/en/the-wales-education-lecture

(Note that the UK refers to ‘school councils’, where Australia refers to ‘student councils’ and hence the word [student] has been substituted throughout. Information about this lecture was provided by School Councils UK: www.schoolcouncils.org)

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Students as Education Decision-Makers

Starting in the kindergarten classroom and extending throughout the rest of their educational experiences, students can - and should - be actively involved in decision-making.

Meaningful Student Involvement: Engaging students as partners in educational planning, research, teaching, evaluating, decision-making, advocacy, and more.

Possibilities for Students as Education Decision-Makers

- Students choosing and designing curriculum
- Students participating in new building design
- Students as members of local and state school boards
- Students writing grants
- Students creating and enforcing discipline policies
- Students participating in personnel hiring and firing

Examples of Students as Education Decision-Makers

Old School Practice/New School Thinking:
In Anne Arundel County, Maryland students have participated as voting members of the district board of education for more than 25 years. The student member is a high school senior who votes on all issues, including all areas of the school budget, discipline, and fiscal issues. In addition, every advisory, curriculum, and study committee, along with special task forces in the district includes students, working on everything from grading policies to alternative learning.

Developing Democracy
Federal Hocking High School, located in rural Stuart, Ohio, gives students an equal place when faculty hiring decisions are made, when curriculum is chosen, and when class offerings are determined. Former principal George Wood said: “Students often find themselves preached to about values instead of practising them. That’s why our efforts have been to focus on practice rather than exhortation. Everything we do, including classroom teaching practices, school governance, students’ experience both inside and out of school, assessment, even the organisation of the school day, is done with an eye toward developing democratic community.”

Positive Possibilities for Practice:
A recent report from the Kentucky Department of Education about student involvement was a national survey of student involvement in state-level decision-making. The young person who conducted the research found that only 20 states nationwide engage students in their boards of education in some way. He also found that only five states give students voting rights on the state Board of Education, and just seven states include more than two student advisors. The rest of these positions are non-voting, and most of the positions across the nation are appointed by adults without student involvement.

Students Want to be Involved:
A study in Tennessee found that the majority of students want to be involved in more than 14 areas of school decision-making, including selecting textbooks and instructional materials, selecting a new principal when there is a vacancy, consulting with the principal when other vacancies are filled, deciding what is to be taught, deciding which teaching methods will be used, deciding how time will be used during the day, and determining how available funds are to be spent.

Links to Local Examples of Students as Education Decision-Makers
- Indiana Students on School Board (www.in.gov/legislative/hdpr/R34_02252000.html)
- California Law Mandates Student Representation (www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/calawquery?codsection=edc&codebody=35012)
- Rockville, MD: 25 Years of Students on Board (www.mcps.k12.md.us/schools/sga/pdf/sa/newsletter/year1999-00/vol1no2.pdf)
- Vermont School Boards with Students (www.vtvsba.org/download STUDENTS.htm)
- Washington State Student Representative (www.sbe.wa.gov/memb1.htm)
- D.C. Student Representative Bio (www.k12.dc.us/dcps/boe/boebio/boebios.html#alston)

Resources for Students as Decision-Makers

- Guide to Students on School Boards (www.soundout.org/Guide.106.html)
- Student Voice in School Building Leadership (www.soundout.org/article.105.html)
- Who Makes Decisions in Schools: Tracks the flow of decision-making from individual students to the President of the United States. (www.soundout.org/howdecisions.html)

From:
www.soundout.org/decision-making.html

More about Student Action Teams, including some linked mini-case studies, at:
www.asprinworld.com/student_action_teams
Our exciting voyage with the VicSRC began at Congress 5 in 2010 where the Student Executive for 2010/2011 were elected. Not long after Congress we attended a two day strategic planning and training camp enabling us to establish our own vision for the VicSRC, as well as set goals and develop strategies to tackle the tasks for the year to come. At camp we were also assigned portfolios from the resolutions passed at Congress, as well as operational portfolios to assist with the day-to-day running of the VicSRC. These portfolios became the focus of our work during our Executive term and many of the outcomes of this work are outlined below.

During our Executive term, the VicSRC continued to hold both Metropolitan and Regional Student Conferences. Conferences provide an opportunity for students to gather in local groups and discuss issues they are facing as both students and SRC representatives. Thank you to Erin Young and Roger Holdsworth, our conference facilitators, for their excellent delivery of the conferences and for their passion and dedication throughout the whole process.

Throughout the year, the Executive attended and participated in many significant forums and events. We were very pleased that two of our Executive members, Liz and Shaf, were asked to MC the DEECD Innovations Showcase in May. This was a great privilege and a fantastic opportunity for Liz and Shaf to MC and to deliver a keynote speech in front of 1,000 people! It’s fantastic that the VicSRC has created a name for itself and opportunities like this have been offered to us. It’s also great that teachers, principals and DEECD staff get to hear directly from students.

Since the publication and distribution of Represent! in early 2011, it has been encouraging to receive phone calls from schools requesting more copies and letting us know how useful the resource has been for them. Represent!, our SRC resource kit for students and teachers, was developed to help SRCs to realise their full potential by encouraging meaningful student representation in schools. The kit contains suggestions for SRCs to work more effectively and be further integrated into the decision-making mechanisms within their school. The VicSRC is keen to build on this new interest in our work and continue to provide high quality resources, events and programs to support SRCs and the important work they do in schools.

Our SRC Recognition Awards, running for the second year in 2011, recognise and appreciate the achievements, effort and dedication of individual school SRCs. There are awards created to recognise different aspects of working with SRCs: the Connect Award for Integration, the Second Strike Award for Enterprise, the VASSP Award for Informed Representation and the new VISTA Award for an Outstanding SRC Support Teacher. The winners and runners-up of these awards were announced at Congress by the Minister for Education, the Hon Martin Dixon.

The environment was a key focus of this year’s Executive, who dedicated an entire edition of the VicSRC Student Advocate newsletter to promoting environmental sustainability within schools. The Executive continues to liaise with other environmental networks run by young people and promote the VicSRC Environmental Resource Kit, which was originally published in 2009.

A very exciting project for the Executive in early 2011 was the launch of our new and improved website! Executive members Elizabeth Kalas and Chloe Lazzaro worked hard to conceptualise a new, user-friendly and fresh website, brought to life by our talented website designers. The revamped website now allows better
communication between the VicSRC and schools, as well as providing SRCs with online resources and up to date information around events, news and key issues.

The VicSRC has also been part of an important consultation process with the State Government throughout 2011, around putting in place new education policies. It’s fantastic that the VicSRC is able to represent students at such a high level and we hope that the feedback we have given will result in more student-centred policies in the future.

Throughout the year the Executive also focused on issues raised at Congress such as drug, alcohol and gambling education, supporting sexual diversity in schools, graffiti and vandalism prevention and promoting students being on School Councils.

The biggest event of the year is always our annual VicSRC Congress held in August. Over three days, 96 students from 31 schools discussed and debated ideas and issues of concern at our formal congress style proceedings. The proposals presented to, and passed by the Congress then became Resolutions for the newly elected Executive to successfully complete. The Executive also ensure that there is plenty of time at Congress for students from different schools to get to know each other and have lots of fun through group bonding activities, games night and quiz night.

The VicSRC was also fortunate enough to have the Minister for Education, Martin Dixon, in attendance at Congress, where he observed students in action at workshop and visioning sessions. Minister Dixon concluded his visit with an address to Congress and a lively question and answer session. We thank the Minister for his time and hope that he will come back to Congress in 2012!

In closing, the Executive would like to sincerely thank:

- The VicSRC Supporters Group, particularly Roger Holdsworth, David Mould, James Tonson, Scott Duncan, Georgia Kennelly, Lou Mapleston and Holly Burr for their generous contributions and support throughout the Executive year.
- The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development who provide our funding and assist us to achieve our goals.
- The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) for their ongoing support.
- Linda Randall at YACVic for her wisdom and guidance.
- Erin Young for her great facilitation skills and enthusiasm for student participation.
- All SRCs that have continued their memberships with us and all our new member SRCs.
- All schools, students and SRCs that have hosted, participated and assisted with VicSRC events.
- And finally Kate Walsh, VicSRC Coordinator, for her continued dedication and support in assisting the Executive with achieving their goals.

Tiffany Chapman
on behalf of VicSRC Executive 2010-2011
Podcasts and Possibilities for 2012

JUNIOR SCHOOL COUNCIL CONGRESS 2011:
It was great once again to be out and about meeting with SRC teachers at the inaugural Junior School Council Congress at the Victorian Parliament House. The Education Minister, Hon Martin Dixon MP even visited our session and commented on our work as SRC Teacher Advisors. These conversations led to us sharing some great resources that teachers were unaware of and a rich discussion that enabled us to hear first-hand the experiences of those working in the field. Topics focused on the structure of different Student Councils, elections versus selection of student representatives, and finding time for SRC students and teachers to meet. The conversation led to the sharing of a number of solutions and ideas for possible resources that VISTA will look into developing in the future.

VISTA PODCAST GOES TO AIR!
In another achievement for VISTA in 2012, we launched the VISTA Podcast. With three episodes covering topics like ‘VicSRC’, ‘SRC Models and Elections’ and ‘running effective meetings’, it’s a fantastic professional learning resource. Why not download it to your iPod, iPhone or MP3 player and listen to it on your way to work?

To listen, 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/

WHAT CAN WE DO FOR YOU?
VISTA is an organisation that aims to support SRC Teacher Advisors. As we enter the Christmas holiday period, this is the time that our executive works to plan our future directions for 2012. If there’s an event or resource you would like us to look into, drop us an e-mail at vista@srcteachers.org.au so we can look into it!

JOIN THE VISTA TEAM IN 2012
As you reflect on your own professional achievements and the achievements of your Student Council throughout 2011, have you put some thought into your own professional growth and goals for 2012? Something to consider could be to involve yourself with the VISTA Executive. Our organisation currently receives no additional funding other than fees charged through our memberships and relies heavily on the support of our members to keep the organisation functioning and running. The time commitment is very low (one or two meetings a term) and would enable us to take our work further. If this is something you would be interested, please e-mail us at vista@srcteachers.org.au

From all of us at Team VISTA we would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We hope you enjoy your (well deserved) break and return fresh and ready in 2012 to help make the Student Council at your school the best it’s ever been!
**WE Lead** is a yearly expo that provides students and community organisations of an opportunity to connect with the school, raise awareness of social issues and create new opportunities to get involved.

**WE Lead** was facilitated by the year level captains at Brentwood Secondary College in Melbourne's eastern suburbs, and run solely by student volunteers. This supported the central idea of the leadership expo: students helping, learning from, and sharing responsibility and leadership with one another.

**WE Lead** was held this year on September 21st, with students from all year levels participating in the creation of a wide array of stalls, entertainment, and of course, food supplies. Every stall was wonderful, and each table had something new and exciting to offer.

This year we also had several organisations come to Brentwood from outside the school to promote important social issues such as whaling, poverty and the environment. These organisations included Sea Shepherd, World Vision, the Salvation Army, Monash Youth Family Services, Rotary, Best Chance and Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Students from the Glen Waverley South Primary School also attended.

If there could be one theme or motive for this event it was that of ‘inclusiveness’. The benefits of this event were to promote student leadership and continue to encourage young people to be active in their school community in order to develop global citizenship, positive personal development and ongoing skills.

The most prominent student groups from Brentwood were undoubtedly the SRC, V-Gen, the Green Team, Performing Arts and face painting. The LOTE table was also exceptionally busy, and had hordes of students all queuing up to buy the fabulous German pretzels on offer.

One of the most thrilling attractions of the day was the electricity generating bikes, kindly supplied by Future Spark. Students had the opportunity to ride bikes that were connected to an electricity generator, and to create energy that was then used to provide the power for the music and video presentations.

It was a great day, with the students soaking up the wonderful atmosphere and enjoying a break from the usual routine of school life. Student participation will no doubt increase greatly after the **WE Lead** expo, with many people signing up for leadership groups or student participation clubs.

When we asked some staff and students for their thoughts, one staff member stated it was “a great celebration of the school and the students’ achievements, while providing a carnival like atmosphere.” Another staff member also mentioned that “a lot of the students were involved in **WE Lead** and the stalls were really relevant to the student’s needs. All the leadership teams had a stall, as did external organisations.”

This year’s **WE Lead** expo was an unquestionable success!

Jovana Vukanovic

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**Building Relationships with Glen Waverley South Primary School**

We think “leadership is when someone has the ability to listen and respect others in order to make something amazing happen.”

What does leadership mean to you?

As part of the student leadership program at Brentwood SC, 20 students from years 7, 8 and 10 recently went across to the Glen Waverley South Primary School to promote student leadership opportunities at Brentwood and develop leadership skills to the Grade 5/6 students.

Before going to the primary school, our teacher Raquel Woods organised a training program for the selected students. We were introduced to the activities that we later taught to the primary school students. Through a series of games we explored the qualities of leaders and how we can replicate their positive attributes in ourselves.

On the day of **WE Lead**, we were given a group of five students to show around the school and promote the co-curricular groups we have to offer such as the Green Team and V-Gen.

Overall this was a great learning experience for both students at Brentwood and Glen Waverley South Primary School.

We are looking forward to being Peer Support Leaders next year!

Eliza Darby, Anna Badley, Kristen Valiotis and Luisa Greco, Year 9
Our JSC and Student Leadership Program

Our school has a vibrant and enthusiastic Junior School Council made up of elected girl and boy representatives from each year 3 to 6 class who are selected for JSC. We meet regularly to discuss issues of importance to the children of our school including fundraising for social service.

This year we have held a number of very successful 'Out of Uniform days' to raise money for the State Schools Relief Committee's Winter Appeal and other community supporting appeals. Children in our JSC also learn about how meetings are conducted, discussing issues and the process of voting to make a collective decision. Members of our JSC wear a badge which informs everyone of the important role they hold in our school.

Here is a detailed explanation of how our JSC works:

**Student Leadership Program – Junior School Council**

Two Junior School Councilors are elected from each year 3 - 6 class. In 2010 there were 24 JSCs. The School Captains also form part of the Junior School Council. The Junior School Council meets regularly at lunchtimes under the guidance of two classroom teachers. To equip our Junior School Councilors with the Leadership skills they need to fulfil their role effectively, these children also participate in Leadership Skills programs held during the year and taken by our school Social Worker.

Some of the responsibilities of our Junior School Councilors include:

- Presenting Student of the Week certificates at whole school assemblies.
- Acting as Tour Guides for visitors to the school on important occasions such as open days/evenings and school celebrations.
- Organising fundraising events to support various charities/special causes.
- Representing Eltham North Primary School at special ceremonies (eg Remembrance Day at Eltham RSL).
- Consulting with children in own classrooms and reporting school-based concerns to the Junior School Council.
- Planning for the improvement of school facilities (eg new playground equipment).

The Leadership Skills Program aims to assist children to develop an understanding of the role of effective leaders, their own leadership strengths and areas to develop further, the ability to plan and organise events effectively and public speaking skills.

It was decided to specifically teach leadership skills to our Junior School Councilors as their roles and responsibilities were becoming more demanding and complex. Increasingly, these students were required to engage in public speaking events (eg reading and presenting Student of the Week certificates and making announcements about fundraising events at whole school assemblies) planning and organising special events. The Leadership Skills Program focused on developing common understandings about effective leadership, organisation skills, communication skills and public speaking and provided practical real-life opportunities to practise these skills.

The Junior School Council Leadership Program is very effective and extremely popular. The growth in self-confidence and leadership abilities demonstrated by our Councilors is significant. The students are willing to attend a meeting during their lunchtime and have initiated some very worthwhile projects - including designing, costing and organising the construction of a new adventure playground.

The children take their responsibilities very seriously and are in regular contact with the Principal or Assistant Principal with proposals for improvements to the school operations. Many parents have reported on the benefits to their child of being a Junior School Councilor and participating in the Leadership Skills Program.

**Recent Student Voice Initiatives:**

**Gathering the opinion of our students 21 July 2011: Student Opinions about school** (from School Council News – Term 3 ‘Student Voice’)

Recently we surveyed all of our children from Prep to Year 6 in a bid to collect ideas based on the themes of: community, school life, making a difference, and school and community aspirations. We asked students to respond to the following five questions:

**What do you like about our school?**
- I like how we all get along. I like how nice our teachers are. I like we spend a lot of money to learn.
- Prep hallway rainbow.
- I like that our teachers are kind and it is easy to make friends as 95% of our school's children are happy to help.
- Interschool sports, literacy circles and buddy program.
- How the day is set out.
- Everything, teachers, clubs at lunch, pupil of the week, music lessons lots of building, fruit snack, basketball court, playtime, maths, computers.
- Having specialists and learning new things.

**How could you help a neighbour?**
- As a school, who would you like us to help in our community?
- What is the thing that you would most like to change at our school and why?

School Council are currently developing a case for support and gathering data and insights from students so that we can approach government funding bodies, trusts and foundations for a range of school-based community projects. With this information we will create testimonials and evidence which can be used in grant applications. Children have great ideas and are not inhibited when sharing their thoughts. Sometimes this freedom of expression leads to great things, so it was important to engage our students in the process.

Generally there was overwhelming support for a new pool, a canteen, more sports equipment and an oval. Our children responded positively to all the questions and showed great empathy and compassion for the environment and their 'neighbours.'

Here are some golden quotes from our great students:

**What do you like about our school?**

- Everything, teachers, clubs at lunch, pupil of the week, music lessons lots of building, fruit snack, basketball court, playtime, maths, computers.
- Having specialists and learning new things.

**If you had $10,000 to spend on your school what would you do with it?**
- As a school, who would you like us to help in our community?
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How could you help a neighbour?

- I think we could use the school to host free dinners for people who do not have a house or enough food
- We could lend the school to clubs after school
- If their house got damaged I would let them live with us
- Share
- Help build a stick teepee
- Put out a fire if their house was on fire
- Call 000
- By showing them and explaining to them what the task is if they come into the room late or they are stuck

If you had $10,000 to spend on your school what would you do with it?

- Water fountain and a flower garden in the 3/4 area
- Jet packs to fly around
- Fresh sand in the sandpit
- Use the money for lunch orders
- Buy more celery for our experiments
- I would spend it on sports and art equipment, also books and toilets
- 200 grass seeds and a new sports stadium
- A bodyguard to be head of the school and a piano for every class
- I would buy the school
- 10,000 flowers, 80 pencils and 1 cupcake

How could you help a neighbour?

- Make a charity
- Give them help if they are not sure what to do. If they don't have a ruler or sharpener let them borrow it
- By helping them cross the road
- If the kinder garden wants to get more toys get some for them
- By aiding them
- By helping their garden grow big or show them some more stuff from their memory
- I would try and help other schools like us because some schools don't have a lot of money to spend
- Feed the chickens
- If they brought a cubby house I would help them put it together

As a school, who would you like us to help in our community?

- Read old people a story and give them a walking stick
- Local doctors
- Help fruit and vegetable shops
- Probably poor people and to help people with problems like physically or mentally weak people or people who are really busy with no time to look after their family
- The Royal Children's Hospital for them to get appliances
- I would like our school to help clean the river outside our school
- The farmers
- People that can't walk and can't see
- I would like to help people in the war because they fight for our country
- Former librarians, former teachers and former artists
- I could help charities in need eg Salvation Army, Breast Cancer Foundation and quite a few others
- Our local kinder garden
- Remote areas in need
- Fires, floods, orphanages, earthquakes

What is the thing that you would most like to change at our school and why?

- I want people to stop being mean because it will be an even better school
- Paint colour, it has been around for a long, long time since I was three
- Bullying because everyone deserves the best whether they are rich, poor, black, white, 5 or 15
- The chairs are very old, squeaky and hard
- The people because all the people don't like me and people already have friendship groups and don't allow others
- Change the codes, make them easier
- I would like to change the tan bark to real grass
- There is nothing that I would change because ENPS has already got many new things on the way and I know that I am privileged to be able to go to this school
- I would like the school to work with the kinder kids across the road as it would be fun and help them prepare for school
- The playground is too small no offence
- Put a roof on the atrium
- Too much homework given out in the school: spelling, reading log, reading, environment, mathematics, projects, reports!
- I would most like to change our toilets because they are smelly and feel really dark when you go in and also the heaters, most of them don't work and maybe some better mirrors.

Describing Our Student Councils on the Web

Many Primary Schools provide descriptions of the Junior School Councils (JSCs) or Student Representative Councils (SRCs) on the school’s website - and some JSCs/SRCs have their own webpages. Here are some examples of the ‘public faces’ of Student Councils.

Exford PS: 

The Junior School Council is a group of students elected by their peers on an annual basis, usually two students from each class (Prep to Year 6 students). The purpose of the Junior School Council is to provide the students of the school with a forum in which they can express their opinions and suggestions on the day to day running of the school. After discussion at a Junior School Council level, recommendations are passed on to the staff and the School Council for further action.

Our JSC decide on and organise the fundraising for charity each year, as part of their leadership training and community responsibility. One of our teachers works closely with this group throughout the year. Meetings are facilitated by the staff member and run by our School Captains.

The Junior School Council has initiated several enterprise projects, such as the daily icy pole (99% fruit juice) canteen during the warmer months and various other activities.

The composition of the JSC varies from year to year, as a result of changing class configurations, with a balanced representation of all areas of the school.


Cheltenham East PS: 

The Junior School Council is an opportunity for students to experience leadership at school, and to have an input into the development of the school.

The children in each class from Prep to Year 6 are elected by their peers for a twelve month term of office. The Junior School Council meets with the nominated teacher once per month and is chaired by the School Captains. They discuss any items raised by the children of the various classes, as well as performing a range of fundraising and awareness activities for charity. Recent activities have included Harmony Day, Red Cross Bushfire Relief Appeal and our Jelly Baby Day to raise funds for Juvenile Diabetes.

On 2 March we held “Hats for Haiti Day”. Students (and staff) were encouraged to wear their favourite hat and provide a gold coin donation to support the Haiti Earthquake Appeal. We raised nearly $700 which has been forwarded to the Red Cross. Well done everyone!


Hawthorn West PS: 

Students are elected by the student body in their classroom. One student will be elected per semester from each class. JSC representatives from Grades 3-6 will liaise with students in Level 1 and Level 2 so that they can have some input into the initiatives being put forward by the JSC. Students cannot be on the JSC for two consecutive years and cannot hold this position more than twice in their school life at HWPS.

Roles of the JSC:

- To be positive role for the other students in the school
- To provide a voice for the students in their grade regarding matters that affect them and regularly report back to the students in their class
- Attendance at meetings and implementation of initiatives
- Manage social service

Student Committees

All students in Grade 6 will be involved in the committee representing their house. This will provide all Grade 6 students to have an opportunity to take on a leadership role and make a significant contribution to HWPS. The main focuses of the committee will be Sport, Environment, The Arts, Social Service and ICT. The committees will be lead by the teacher in charge of each house which will help provide guidance to all students. During this time there will be opportunities for specific ongoing leadership/mentoring for all students in Grade 6.

Roles of the Student Committee

- Co-ordinate, lead and drive house initiatives
- Sport- sport competitions, tabloid sports, athletics carnival, round robin events, sports clinics
- Environment-rubbish free lunches, recycling, composting, planting and maintaining the sustainable playground, looking after the chickens
- The Arts- Art exhibitions, competitions
- Social Service- raising money for charities, visiting local nursing homes and kindergartens, liaise with JSC
- ICT-competitions, mentoring role in classrooms
- To be positive role for the other students in the school
- Provide extension opportunities for other students in the school

These are just ideas; the students will develop these according to their interests with support from staff.


Kew East PS:

The Junior School Council (JSC) at Kew East Primary School meets every Monday at lunchtime. The members represent Levels 2, 3 and 4 in the school.

At the beginning of the year, potential students give a small speech, explaining why they would like the job of representing the class, how important the role is to them and why people should vote for them. The class members then vote for who they would like to represent them for the year.

The JSC is made up of two representatives from each of the Level 2, 3 and 4 classes. In 2010 this represents 16 classes or 32 representatives.

Connect 192:
The President and Secretary are voted for by the JSC at the beginning of the year and are always Year 6 students. The Vice President and Assistant Secretary can be Year 5 or 6 students. To apply for these positions, all potential candidates plan a short, persuasive speech. After giving the speech to JSC members, a vote is taken.

The JSC President and Secretary meet with the Principal every month to report on what has been achieved, or any issues that have been highlighted for attention. They also report to the School Council at least once a semester to keep them informed of decisions made and action taken.

JSC organises fundraisers each term in order to regularly support charities. The fundraiser days have themes, such as Opposites Day, Pyjama Day and Sports Star Day. They are very popular with the school and even the teachers join in! Our biggest annual commitment is sponsoring a World Vision child in South America. We also annually send money to the State Schools’ Relief Fund and other charities which the representatives decide on. We sell Anzac and Legacy badges and organise grocery drives for needy families at Christmas.

Apart from deciding on fundraising events, it is the JSC representatives’ job to ensure that any issues their peers have brought are brought to JSC for discussion and action. One development in particular that has led to is the introduction of bike racks in our school. Each year, JSC representatives actively demonstrate the school value of ‘responsibility’ by being a part of the important and active role JSC has in running our school.

http://www.murchps.wikispaces.com/Junior+School+Council

Murchison PS:

Elections for Junior School Councillors occur at the start of each school year. The elected Junior School Council representatives with their teachers conduct classroom meetings.

Each class reflects on what is going well at Murchison Primary School, what is not going well and what improvements could be made.

The children’s recommendations are then taken to School Council meetings.

Junior School Council at Murchison Primary School is DEMOCRACY at work.

Newstead PS:

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


Warragul PS:

Junior School Council is seen as an important and valuable opportunity at Warragul Primary School, inviting students to have a voice within the school and develop organisational and good communicative skills.

In recent years the Junior School Council has raised a lot of money for numerous causes and supported many foundations. Changes around the school have also come about due to the students’ efforts and organisation, including the recent installation of goal posts. The Presentation of badges acknowledges the students enthusiasm and input. We aim to continue the presentation of badges to the Junior School Council members in future years, and want to take this opportunity to thank past representatives for their hard work and the standards they have set.


http://www.murchps.wikispaces.com/Junior+School+Council


December 2011
Green with E.N.V.Y.

A group of 25 passionate students from across Victoria met for the first time at CERES Environmental Park on the 6th of October. The students formed Victoria’s first environmental youth group: E.N.V.Y: Environmental Network for Victorian Youth. ENVY is a new youth group that is aspiring to develop leadership in environmental and social justice issues.

The students are planning a 2012 conference, a camp and possible collaboration activities with VicSRC.

If there are any students or youth across Victoria interested in joining please contact Anna Vella at Copperfield College or Lorna Brooks at Mill Park Secondary College.

Anna Vella
Science Teacher and Environmental Education Officer
Copperfield College - Sydenham Junior Campus
Tel: 03 9361 3888
Email: vella.anna.a@edumail.vic.gov.au

Pupil Voice Wales

This is a website for teachers, senior leaders, governors, children and young people. It contains information, training materials and good practice examples to help you make sure that all pupils in your school have opportunities to take part in making decisions about their learning and their school community.

At: www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk you can find out:
• What pupil participation is
• Why it’s important, and
• What it can do for you and your school community.

On the site, there are lots of resources to help you do pupil participation better. These include a Good Practice Guide, Training materials, and Resources for children, young people and professionals.

Last but not least, there are some brilliant examples of children and young people making a difference to their schools and communities, including video clips, consultations, case studies and competition entries.

Switched On To Learning Reprinted!

The Connect publication Switched On To Learning: Student Initiatives in School Engagement has now been reprinted and copies are available again from us (see Catalogue enclosed). This is a 52 page cartoon-style book for teachers and others, written by grade 4, 5 and 6 students from two Melbourne schools as an outcome of their Student Action Team investigating and acting to improve students’ engagement with school.

The initial print run of 500 copies (produced with the support of the CASS Foundation) sold out and Connect has reprinted copies and is making them available at the same low price.

Actually ... there was an error on the cover of the first print run – and this has been corrected with this new printing. Can you pick it? If you can tell us what this error was, we’ll send you a (corrected) copy of Switched On To Learning absolutely FREE. E-mail us.
Commonwealth Youth Forum

Youth Development Fund

Commonwealth Youth Forum Calls for the Establishment of an Independent Youth Led Governing Body to Oversee a Youth Development Fund

Young people from across the Commonwealth of Nations descended on Fremantle in Western Australia recently for the Commonwealth Youth Forum (CYF). The event brought over 130 young people together, representing different parts of the world, to discuss youth issues and provide recommendations to world leaders at the Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM) based on the views, experiences and urgent needs of today’s young people.

From Victoria, there were four young delegates: Raquel Woods (student leadership facilitator and secondary school teacher at Brentwood Secondary College); Lucy Doolan (Indigenous trainee member of the Ngurta Werkitya project from the regional Victorian town of Mildura); Zebib Teclai (secondary student and emerging community leader); and Francis Ventura (university student and human rights activist). They returned home excited and ready to deliver the collective message of over a billion young people worldwide to Victorian young people.

“The forum was an amazing opportunity, I feel honoured to have been part of an international decision-making process and share the experience with the students at my school through social media. The forum further reinforced the importance of creating meaningful opportunities for youth participation and voice in schools and how young people need to be proactive in their communities to tackle issues at a national level,” Raquel Woods remarked.

“As the youngest delegate, I was able to learn about various issues impacting in youth development around the world, which gave me a greater appreciation and understanding, and also ways that young people can be empowered to take responsibility and ensure a better future. I will use these skills in my community work”, Zebib Teclai said.

A primary message of the CYF was that young people do not feel a connection with the Commonwealth because they cannot see the benefits provided to them. As such, there was a unanimous call by CYF delegates for the Commonwealth of Nations to establish an independent youth-led body to oversee a ‘youth development fund’. This fund would ensure that young people were able to design and administer programs relevant to their concerns and needs.

“As a direct descendent of the Wiradjuri Nation, I am extremely proud that I was able to represent not only the young people who are descendants of the first Australians, but all Victorian young people. It was an absolute privilege to speak on behalf of many diverse and disadvantaged young people who may never get the opportunity to have their voices heard or who may not have found their voices yet. I have taken a lot valuable knowledge and skills away from the forum and look forward to sharing my experience with my community”, Lucy Doolan said.

Francis Ventura pointed out that “young people are the world’s greatest asset. Some call us naive, but I’d label us as optimistic. If we are given a chance, we can create a world without poverty, racism and war. Despite our different cultural and religious backgrounds, we managed to work together for the purpose of a common humanity”.

December 2011
## Connect Publications: Order Form

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**Contribute to Connect**

Anyone may submit an original article to be considered for publication in Connect provided he or she owns the copyright to the work being submitted or is authorised by the copyright owner or owners to submit the article. Authors are the initial owners of the copyrights to their works, but by successfully submitting the article to Connect, transfer such ownership of the published article to Connect on the understanding that any royalties or other income from that article will be used to maintain publication of Connect.

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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. There are also links from the indexes of recent issues to their archived PDFs (see below).

**Connect is now also archived and available electronically:**

research.acer.edu.au/connect

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

**www.informit.com.au**

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

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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:**

- **Briefings** (Independent Schools Queensland, Spring Hill, Qld) Vol 15 Issue 7; August 2010
- **Catholic Education Today** (Catholic Education Office Melbourne, Vic) August 2011
- **Inspire** (DEECD, Melbourne, Vic) Issues 9, 10; Oct, Nov 2011
- **Parents Voice** (Parents Victoria, Wandong, Vic) Vol 38, Issue 4; September 2011
- **Research Developments** (ACER, Camberwell, Vic) No 26; Summer 2011-2012
- **TLN Journal** (Teacher Learning Network, Abbotsford, Vic) Vol 18 No 3; Spring 2011
- **YAPRap** (YAPA, Surry Hills, NSW) Dec 2011 - Jan 2012
- **Yikes** (YACVic, Melbourne, Vic) Vol 9 Edition 5; Nov 2011
- **Youth Affairs Council of Victoria Annual Report** (YACVic, Melbourne, Vic) 2010-2011

**International:**

- **Rethinking Schools** (Milwaukee, WI, USA) Vol 26 No 1; Fall 2011

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**Friends of Connect**

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

**Sustaining Subscribers (two years):**

- Peter Mildenhall
- Kangaroo Ground (Vic)

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**Is Your Connect Subscription Up-to-date?**

The number on your Connect label tells you the issue with which your subscription expires. Please renew promptly - renewal notices cost us time and money!
Back issues of Connect from 1979 to 2010 (that’s 31 years!) are now all freely available on-line! Thanks to the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), back issues of Connect have been scanned or up-loaded and are now on the ACER’s Research Repository: ACEReSearch.

You can find these issues of Connect at:

research.acer.edu.au/connect

The left-hand menu provides a pull-down menu for you to select the issue number ... browse; the front cover of the issue is displayed, and you can simply click on the link in the main body of the page to download a PDF of the issue. Recent issues are also searchable by key words.

Availability

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

This ensures that Connect maintains its commitment to the sharing of ideas, stories, approaches and resources about active student participation.

Let us know

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

Most importantly, please USE this resource.

All back copies of Connect to be available on-line for free!

research.acer.edu.au/connect/