Connect

supporting student participation

Number 194-195
April 2012
ABN: 98 174 663 341

“An Option to Change the World”:
Students as Researchers
Making a Difference

Learning Partnerships:
Students Teaching Teachers

Student Leadership:
Peer Activity Leaders,
Systems Leaders, SRCS,
Local Youth Voice Forum

VISTA:
SRCS: Beyond Fundraising

VicSRC:
Congress 2012;
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NSW State SRC:
25 Years On; OAM

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Resources:
• Enviro Inspiro! 2012
• ENVY: Renewable Energy
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• Second Strike Training and PD
• Switched On to Learning reprinted

Developing some practical models of participation ...
This Issue:

A big double issue of Connect to take you into the winter term. If we’re away for some of that time, apologies if there are any delays in providing ordered publications etc.

I hope that this double issue provides you with plenty of interesting articles to keep you inspired. A theme emerges here of student participation in discussions and debates about curriculum and pedagogy – led both by Student Councils (that are going beyond their traditional ‘fundraising and socials’ limitations – and deciding that they want to be serious partners in school development), and the Learning Partnerships Program at The University of Melbourne (previously featured in Connect in issues 154-155, 162, 175 and 191), but also involving the continued work at Nanango State High School in Queensland. What are the implications of these approaches for you?

Connect from Print to Digital

In the last issue of Connect, I flagged an intent to stop producing print copies of Connect after issue 200 (which will be due about this time in 2013) and to make copies available freely on-line after that. The (few) comments received in response have been supportive, so I am continuing to think about the implications of this decision. One, flagged here in a note on page 35, is that Connect should not pursue subscriptions beyond issue 200. Secondly, those who have paid subscriptions beyond that point will receive a letter asking them to opt to make the balance a donation to the work of Connect, or to receive a Connect publication that will discharge subscription obligations. All subscribers - and any other person or organisation - will also be asked to provide us with an e-mail address, and this will be used for notifications of the availability of issues of Connect.

The intention will be (I think) to produce PDFs of Connect issues, that can be downloaded from the Connect/ACER site. Every two months, the subscriber e-mail list (which can be joined for free) will be notified about a new issue and provided with a link to its address.

Why free? Well, I’ve always had a commitment to providing these stories to the widest audience ... and publishing Connect in print has never made a profit ... in fact, never paid me anything. Subscriptions and donations have simply covered printing and postage costs. Without these expenditures, we’re in no different a position, so copies will be freely available.

In about 12 months, I’ll also add the last six current issues of Connect to the website - about one a week - until all are there. Talking of which, with the 2005 Connect publication Student Councils and Beyond almost completely sold out (and no intention to reprint it), I’ve just added PDFs of this whole book (and also sections of it) to the Connect website: www.asprinworld.com/Connect – check it out.

Roger Holdsworth

Next Issue: #196: August 2012
Deadline for material: end of July, 2012
In her evaluation of a ‘students as researchers’ project at Nanango State High School, a Year 9 student wrote that she would recommend such a project because: “it will give (students) more of an option to change the world and make a difference”. This was a sentiment shared by all but two of the students.

What optimism lies in those words: “an option to change the world”!

What had she experienced that led to this statement?

This article will follow the journey of these Year 9 student researchers at a mid-sized rural high school in South-East Queensland, looking at the process, the conclusions they reached and what lessons we can take from the experience.

Students as researchers

In 1993, Suzanne SooHoo wrote that “we overlook the treasure in our own backyards: our students” (SooHoo, 1993: p 390). She argued for a process in which “students became active partners with their teachers and principal in reforming classroom and school conditions” (p 392). ‘Students as researchers’ is a process of students researching issues of concern to them, making recommendations to school staff and acting on them. It takes students from a passive role in schools and makes them partners in the process of school change. It acknowledges that students “are often bright, vibrant young people who have much to offer” (Nash & Roberts, 2009: n.p.).

The guiding principles of students as researchers are best expressed as:

- the desire to hear what young people have to say is genuine;
- the topic is not trivial;
- the purpose of the consultation is explained to the pupils involved;
- young people know what will happen to what they say;
- they are confident that expressing a sincerely held opinion, or describing a feeling or an experience will not disadvantage them;
- feedback is offered to those who have been consulted; and
- when actions are taken and decisions made, young people are able to understand the wider context in which their views are to be placed. (MacBeath, Demetriou, Rudduck & Myers, 2003: p 9)

Critically, the students must be trained in the processes and ethics of research and be fully aware that there will be real results from their efforts, that they will be listened to with respect and their recommendations given due consideration. They must be given feedback and all decisions based on their research (whether their recommendations are accepted or not) be fully explained to them.

The school and class context

Through 2011, the school had been looking at issues common to many schools, such as bullying, litter, vandalism and attendance – but doing so mainly by consulting staff. My question was: “Why not ask the kids?”

I was teaching a Year 9 English class at the time and this was a perfect opportunity to enlist the students of 9C as student researchers, as well as teaching them many research, analytical and presentation skills. Some of them were also exhibiting behaviour common enough in the second year of high school: disengagement and disruptive behaviour. I believed that a program such as students as researchers might just help to re-engage them with their school work. At the same time, I was supervising an enthusiastic and very competent pre-service teacher, Cat Bobledyk, who readily (and bravely) agreed to take up this unusual challenge as part of her practical experience. She took the lead in running the program with my guidance.

The process

We began by asking the students to discuss issues that were important, emphasising that nothing was off-limits. It quickly became obvious that, as well as the issues identified, another loomed prominently in the minds of the students of 9C: the school’s mobile phone policy, which essentially bans students from having mobile phones at school. At their insistence, we happily added this issue to the list of possible research topics. We also were at pains to emphasise that this work had real potential for change.
in the school, and that it was not just a class assignment. At this stage, however, the students were sceptical about having any real influence on school policies. This mirrored the feelings of a group three years earlier (called STARs – see articles in Connect 179 [October 2009] and 182 [April 2010]) who also initially felt there was little they could to make a difference, “because that’s what ten years of schooling has taught us” – as one pessimistically intoned.

We then discussed these issues, asking students what they could do about them, hoping they would develop a plan of action themselves rather than being told what to do. It was important that students should have ownership of the process and that they, as much as their teachers, were in control. We asked questions to create their own plan of research:

- What can we do about these issues?
- What do we need to find out?
- How will we find the information?
- What will we do with the information?
- Who will we tell?
- How will we tell them?

Students chose the issue they were most interested in, though some manipulation was required to get groups of four or five students, which caused some dissension. Setting up groups for a task like this is always fraught: does the teacher make the choice to ensure mixed-ability groups, or allow friendship groups (usually the students’ preferred option)? We opted for something between these, and the students chose to research bullying, littering, vandalism and graffiti – and mobile phones.

A letter was sent to the students’ families explaining this variation from the normal curriculum, detailing the hoped-for learning experiences and the opportunities for the students to make a difference to the school. It is important when undertaking such a project that parents and other adults are informed of the purposes and outcomes.

We spent a number of lessons training students in research methodology and ethics through a series of workshops based on a training package of scenarios, awareness-raising, role plays and discussions (Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, 2007) that familiarised the students with the role of the researcher, developed a code of conduct, and taught the basics of questionnaires, interview skills, and a research framework. One problem here was the students became restless in their eagerness to get out and start interviewing: “Can’t we just go to classes and do the interviews?” one student plaintively asked.

The groups began writing their questionnaires and surveys, including deciding on the number and make-up of interview subjects (age, gender etc). Once we had checked these and made suggestions for improvement (such as eliminating leading questions), they were photocopied and the groups were ready to step beyond the classroom. We tried to ensure that each group made arrangements with the teachers of the classes they wished to visit before actually doing so, but this did not always happen and led to some tensions, particularly as some classes were ‘hit’ by repeated requests to conduct interviews and surveys. This disruption to other classes can be a problem with students as researchers projects and while we actually doing so, but this did not always happen and led to some tensions, particularly as some classes were ‘hit’ by repeated requests to conduct interviews and surveys. This disruption to other classes can be a problem with students as researchers projects and while we tried to minimise it by alerting the staff to our project, it still caused some problems.

Another issue that arose was the problem of groups of students going about the school only lightly supervised. Even though we had a teacher, a student teacher and a teacher aide, there were certainly times when the survey groups were way off task, and this was sometimes resented by other teachers. These are all issues that have to be dealt with carefully and sensitively in any such project: communication with other staff is the key to a smoother ride, and we did not always do this well.

Following this phase, the students analysed the data – another area where students need support, as they cannot know intuitively how to go about this difficult task. We should have provided more direct help here than we did. Students need to be taught skills such as interpreting surveys, creating graphs, selecting significant information, and conducting statistical analysis. We assumed too much here, but the students muddled through, though not without some frustration.

At the mid-stage of the process, both Cat and I felt that many students had lost their way and could not see where it was all leading. Off-task and time-wasting behaviour was becoming common, groups were unfocussed and conflicts were arising. Once the more interesting, social task of conducting interviews was over and the harder grind of data analysis was underway, many students began to lose focus. So we asked one of the deputies to talk to the class about the importance and authenticity of the work they were doing. This seemed to have some effect.

Finally, after about six weeks, the groups were ready to write their reports and prepare presentations for members of the school administration. Here was
another area where Cat and I assumed too much knowledge on their part as we found that the PowerPoint slides and the oral reports did not always match up. Nevertheless, the presentations were successfully and quite professionally completed, with all students taking part. After quite an arduous process, they were proud of what they had achieved. One wrote: “We have produced a wonderful speech and PowerPoint and have worked hard to complete it”.

**Reflection**

There were a number of differences between this project and the earlier one, the most critical being that, in STARS, all students were volunteers, while the Year 9 students were part of an in-class assignment. The STARS’ students also saw themselves as a little bit special, whereas to a number of the current group, it was simply another (if somewhat different) bit of school work. While both projects aimed to change the school and the degree of commitment to the task in both cases varied widely among the students, we had more behavioural and off-task behaviour in the current project than we did in STARS. On the other hand, we did not have the problem we had with STARS of students having to give up lunch hours to conduct their research, as this was conducted in class time.

Any students as researchers project is not undertaken lightly. It takes time and careful planning. It can be highly stressful and at times can be bogged down and going no-where. It can lead to disruptions to school routines and thus some issues with other staff. Timelines have to be carefully managed, and there are always problems of keeping students on task and managing conflicts within groups.

It is essential that the students receive feedback on their work, and an explanation about which recommendations will be adopted or not. This was effectively accomplished by the school administration.

Despite the difficulties and frustrations, it is very rewarding work for both students and teachers and can lead to real changes in the school, empowering the students in the process.

Or, as one student wrote:

*this is a great program for students ... as it not only helps peers and staff to understand ... it helps change the school for the better and is a great way for students to give their opinion.*

**Recommendations**

Some of the more interesting findings were:

a) Students found there was less graffiti than they expected. Most occurred in class time when students were bored and teachers should be made aware of this.

b) In order to combat bullying, they recommended developing “bullying workshops to teach people how to stick up for themselves, without becoming bullies, and how to talk to someone about their problems ... as not everyone has the courage to speak out”, setting up a ‘trust buddy’ mentor system and increasing the number of teachers on playground duty in areas where bullying often occurred.

c) With phones, the students recognised that the policy was unenforceable, as 98% of students had brought phones to school. They recommended that students should not be punished by a blanket ban; secondly, they recommended that the school should recognise the great asset modern smart phones are by developing strategies for using them to enhance learning.

d) Littering was acknowledged as a major problem. Suggestions included creating a worm farm for food scraps, a reward system for students picking up rubbish, and cleaner bins.

A final report was presented in an hour-long discussion with the principal, and a number of their recommendations are being considered. The phone issue remains a contentious one, however.

**References**


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Good Teachers Are Good Learners

It has been widely recognised for some time now that the active participation of students in primary and secondary schools is essential to improved educational outcomes. That includes participation in school governance, through student representation in Student Councils and similar bodies, and their active participation in a range of classroom and curriculum approaches.

However, there is no simple formula for that participation, and teachers must be continually inventive about the ways in which they can support, develop and encourage that participation. Faced with the many challenges and demands of teaching, keeping such participatory approaches at the forefront of our work can be challenging. How do we ensure that our practice is innovative, rigorous and up-to-date? How do we make sure that we are not simply ‘going through the motions’ and repeating practices that are tokenistic or limited? How do we challenge ourselves to go beyond supporting the participation of only a few students, or of limited roles.

We ourselves are learners in this context. We are learning to develop practices that extend and challenge not just our students, but also ourselves. We do that in two main ways:

First, we learn from knowing about other people’s practice. We build on their stories and resources – and also their mistakes and stumbles – from their own classrooms and schools.

Secondly, we learn from reflecting seriously on our own practices. We do this to improve and extend those practices. We make time to document what we are doing, think about outcomes, and refine directions based on the evidence we collect about those outcomes.

Those are the motives behind continued publication of the Connect magazine for over 32 years. Maybe those intentions weren’t all that clear when, in late 1979, I started writing up some descriptions of teaching and learning practices that I’d been involved with. I think I just wanted to respond to requests for practical information about these participatory practices: how to set up a cross-age tutoring program; how to register a student-run community newspaper for cheaper postage.

But the experience of publishing Connect and particularly as others (students, teachers and others) contributed their stories, reinforced my ideas about how changed practices develop: change comes about because we have practical information that we can relate to and which enables us to implement similar approaches; change comes about as we think about and critique the steps we are already taking.

But I also recognised the difficulties and impediments in the way of serious reflection and learning. I’m not a ‘natural’ journal keeper: I don’t just sit down and write up notes about what I’m doing and what I’m thinking. For me (and I suspect a lot of other people) that reflection happens in a more sporadic and disorganised way. That’s the reality of school life – it’s busy and interrupted and contested.

So I might sit and scribble a few notes to myself now and then, but I realised that I also reflect best when I can see a purpose to that reflection. Hence something like Connect can provide an ‘external’ reason for me to reflect: in order to share what I’m doing with others. There’s nothing like keen interest from others to hear my story, and a deadline that forces me to write it, to focus my mind.

And now, from the ‘other side’, I can also see the value of having an editor who commissions or asks for that story, who offers to enable sharing of it, and who can also be a ‘first reader’ – to ask the obvious questions or clarify the obscure reference. And an editor who is passionately interested to learn about what is happening in classrooms, and about the forces that shape, promote and constrain students’ participation.

I’d love to have you actively along on this learning journey.

The practical details: Connect is published bi-monthly with a focus on the active participation of students in primary and secondary schools. The current year’s issues are available by subscription, but earlier issues are now available on-line for free. Details of subscriptions and access are available at: www.asprinworld.com/Connect along with information about other Connect publications and Student Action Team approaches.

To share your reflections in Connect, you don’t need to ask if I’m interested. Just e-mail me r.holdsworth@unimelb.edu.au with an article (photos and other graphics are useful too) and ask for any support you need to develop the story.

Roger Holdsworth

More about Student Action Teams, including some linked mini-case studies, at:

www.asprinworld.com/student_action_teams
The Learning Partnerships Project brings trainee teachers and doctors together with school students to participate in shared workshops around the themes of health, wellbeing and learning.

The purpose of these workshops is twofold. For the university students, these workshops provide an opportunity to rehearse their communication skills with the young people who will make up their client group. Given both groups of professionals (doctors and teachers) will be required to communicate with young people around sensitive social and emotional issues that are likely to impact on their learning and wellbeing, it is essential that they have the opportunity to explore and rehearse the subtleties of how to open up communication. These workshops also allow the professionals to receive feedback, coaching and insights ‘from the horses mouth’ so to speak, as the young people comment honestly and insightfully about the communication approaches that put them most at ease.

For the school students, having the opportunity to contribute so meaningfully to the improvement of the medical and teaching professions provides them with a chance to take up real roles and to occupy the position of expert and teacher, so rarely afforded to them in the day-to-day school context. The training that the school students undertake in preparation for these workshops also contributes to their learning in the domain of health, and develops their skills in Drama or English (depending on where the program sits within their own school curriculum).

The Learning Partnerships Project was designed by Associate Professor Helen Cahill and was later the subject of her PhD. Helen saw an opportunity for young people to contribute profoundly to the training of professionals who would be engaging with young people. This was an opportunity for a radical role reversal in which young people would gain and enjoy a sense of their own great (and often untapped) capacity to contribute to the world. Equally, the professionals in training would greatly appreciate guidance on how to fulfil their roles effectively.

Since that time, the Learning Partnerships Project has become a stable part of the Adolescent Health unit taught by the Centre for Adolescent Health to medical students at the Melbourne Medical School (The University of Melbourne). The project has also operated as part of the Graduate Diploma of Education (now the Masters of Teaching) at The University of Melbourne. In 2011, the Learning Partnerships Project was run for the first time as part of an elective subject called Promoting Student Wellbeing. In this context, the work was used to explore the impact that different social/health issues could have on a young person’s learning. It also gave participants the opportunity to identify the ways in which teachers could support students coming forward and asking for help.

One class of school students came forward to work with each of the four classes of university students undertaking the Promoting Student Wellbeing subject. In 2011, these classes included Evan Watts and his Year 9 English students from Eltham College city campus, Sonja Filipovic and her Year 10, 11 and 12 ESL students from Bayside College, and Ryan Miller and his Year 8 students from Thornbury High School.

In preparation for the joint workshops, all the school students completed two to four sessions of training during their subject time, in which they were familiarised with both the content and methods to be explored and used on the day. One teacher, who was familiar with the Learning Partnerships work and its methodology, was able to conduct the training sessions himself and then facilitate the actual workshop. Where teachers were new to the work, either Helen Cahill or myself went into the school to conduct the training workshops. This served to familiarise both students and teachers with the methodologies, and
the classroom teachers were then able to facilitate the joint workshops on the days they ran.

The workshops themselves were scheduled to run during the *Promoting Student Wellbeing* class (a two hour block). Situating the *Learning Partnerships* work within the school/university timetable is a very important element of this program as it makes the work a legitimate part of the curriculum and therefore, something that is sustainable.

The workshops involving training doctors often occur within the grounds of the participating schools themselves to give the doctors a sense of the adolescents’ world. However, given that the training teachers are already familiar with the school context and spend ample time in schools while on teacher placements, this set of workshops was held on The University of Melbourne’s Parkville campus. Having the school students come into the university (for many of them, for the first time), can add an important extra dimension to the experience of the *Learning Partnerships Project*. Visiting the university and forming a positive and participatory association can open possibilities in the minds and aspirations of school students for whom this pathway would otherwise not have been considered. For this reason, the majority of schools who come into The University of Melbourne for the *Learning Partnerships Project* combine their visit with a tour of the campus and a lunch break at Union House.

After a brief warm up activity in which the participants introduce themselves, the workshop facilitator asks the group to form pairs containing one student from either cohort. The pairs begin playing the *Complaints Game*.

First, as a couple of teachers in the staff room, and then as a couple of students, the pairs vocalise the kinds of worries, disappointments, and frustrations ‘typical’ to each of the groups. Around the room there is a lot of dynamic action: shaking heads, shrugging shoulders, sighing, frustrated tones - these scenes are not hard to improvise, the scripts are close at hand. And of course, participants enjoy the opportunity to play up the stereotypes and inject the scenes with an element of melodrama.

There is a message here, however, about perceptions (or misperceptions) stemming from traditional and limited roles of the ‘student’ and the ‘teacher’. These limited, two-dimensional roles begin to be fleshed out as groups of participants are asked to discuss how these scenes compare with real life. The discussions give participants an opportunity to dig deeper - each cohort gains insight into the kinds of worries and concerns that teachers and students really have.

School students are surprised to hear how teachers commonly worry about their students’ welfare, about the standard of their own work, about their desire to be liked by their students. And the training teachers are similarly moved by the students’ descriptions of wanting to be liked and accepted by their teachers, about wanting to do well at school and to produce good work. These awakenings to the real and underlying hopes and concerns of the ‘other’, serve to highlight the fact that teachers and students are more often working towards the same goals rather than working against each other.
During one of the four workshops, the Complaints Game was followed by a role play activity in which a student came to ask a teacher for help around a bullying incident. Pairs role-played this scene simultaneously. They then swapped roles and played it again to feel the experience of both positions (the student and the teacher). Then, as a group, participants explored the kinds of barriers and enablers that could either stand in the way or help facilitate this help-seeking encounter. Using an anti-naturalistic technique called Hidden Thoughts, participants were asked to consider the unspoken hopes and fears lying behind the actions of each of the two characters. Understanding and empathy were built and approaches that were more sensitive and targeted were trialled. The subtleties of communication were explored as a volunteer couple performed their own scene for the class. Advice and coaching was provided by the school students, and different approaches and techniques were trialled and rehearsed by the training teachers.

In other workshops, similar methodologies were used to explore different issues connected to student wellbeing, effective communication and help-seeking. The workshop with ESL students from Bayside College provided guidance on how to work well with students who are from different language and cultural backgrounds. The Eltham College students focused on helping teachers understand how to handle the issue of overdue school work and breakdowns in student engagement. Workshops completed at other times have focused more specifically on helping students connect to environmental issues or music education.

Primary school students have also been involved in these partnerships, and Bern Murphy ensures that students of primary teaching at The University of Melbourne have access to this valuable methodology for learning.

While the activity described above uses the mode of role-play, there are many and varied participatory modes that can also be used to achieve the same outcomes. Group brainstorms around, for example, ‘what gets students stressed’ and ‘what teachers can do to help’, followed by a ranking activity where groups rate the teacher responses from most helpful to least helpful, can also generate effective discussion, feedback and coaching.

Overall, the Learning Partnerships Project shows us how young people can contribute profoundly and directly to the process of professional training and professional development. One school has used this model for a professional development forum in their own school. Similarly, the work has been used as a tool for consultation in community contexts, exploring issues facing young people. Other schools or community organisations may adapt the partnerships approach to their own context and needs.

For more information on the Learning Partnerships please contact Helen Cahill at the Youth Research Centre at The University of Melbourne: hwcahill@unimelb.edu.au

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Student Leadership:

Peer Activity Leaders, SRC, Systems, etc

“This year, I have been given the privilege to be school captain for St Macartan’s. I like being school captain because you get loads of special opportunities and you can help the school with your ideas.”

Bethany Hansen, 2012 School Captain

All students are St Macartan’s Primary School (in Mornington, Victoria) are encouraged to show and develop leadership skills. The opportunities include daily class jobs, line monitors, running a lunchtime club, training to be a peer activity leader (PAL), becoming your class’s student council representative (SRC), being part of the schools sustainability team (systems management) or being a Grade 6 school leader.

Within the classroom, children have responsibility for things including recording the room air temperature, collecting the class message box, sorting the recycling, answering the phone, feeding the class pets and many more. These jobs change regularly and highly sought after!

Each class from Prep to Year 6 in the school also elects a person to sit on the school’s SRC. Children nominate themselves and their peers vote for a representative that they feel will represent them well, as well as who is able to help make school wide decisions. The SRC students meet and discuss warm and cool feedback about school, ideas for fundraising and the representative also surveys their classmates on a range of issues. Discussions from SRC meetings are then fed back to their peers through class meetings that they chair.
Many students have also independently set up and run dance clubs for younger students at lunchtime. Lots of good negotiating, modeling, explaining and patience are required by these self-made leaders.

More formal leadership roles ramp up as the students reach the senior school, with several roles available to them. Grade 6 students can nominate themselves to be a school leader. They then have to prepare and deliver a speech outlining their qualities, before their peers vote for 23 school leaders. In past years we have had almost 90% of students trying out for this prestigious role. From within the 23 students, a male and a female school captain are also chosen by the senior school teachers. The school leaders have many opportunities to assist their peers, teachers and the school community including daily chores, becoming members of student action teams (eg systems, communication, health and wellbeing). In addition, they are trained to conduct tours of our school. They also work closely with the sustainability team to prepare and deliver information sessions, both in school and in the wider community.

In addition, the Grade 6 leaders head the **systems management teams**, which are divided into four areas: water, waste, energy and biodiversity. Their varying responsibilities for these roles include:

**Water:** Monitoring the water quality from the swales and checking pH and nitrate levels.

**Waste:** Measuring the rubbish, recycling and food waste. These leaders are also responsible for organising the rubbish-free lunch challenge.

**Energy:** These children audit the air temperature logs taken from the classroom each couple of hours (responsibility of a child in each classroom P-6 to record temperature). They also promote and lead Earth Hour held each year within the school, as well as report back to the wider school community through

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**ENERGY TEAM REPORT ISSUE 1**

This energy team report was compiled by Mitchell, Noah, Toby, Sofia, Shannon, William, Angus and Lauren.

On Wednesday, Mitchell and Noah went to different classes to collect the temperatures from them. There were a lot of different temperatures but the highest was 21.5°C. The temperature outside was 9.5°C. It was a very cold day and the temperatures were recorded at the end of recess. Room temperatures were generally below 20°C because the heaters are turned off during recess time. The temperature for each class is shown below:

*Graphs showing room temperatures and energy consumption over time.*


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[Image of a chart showing room temperature at 11.30am August 26]
newsletters, assemblies and the school’s sustainability website: www.smmornington.com.au

**Biodiversity:** The goal of the biodiversity team this year is to use microscopes to help monitor the invertebrates in the school’s swales and establish baseline date for vertebrate species.

The **systems leaders** mentor the P-5 children who are part of the **systems teams**, developing their competencies in each of the systems areas. Last year our systems leaders also led the first **Student Leaders Conference**. Thirteen primary schools came to St Macartan’s for the day to participate in various leadership activities. The conference aims were that the students would return to their schools more confident about sustainability and ready to make a difference.

The senior school children are also provided with the opportunity to volunteer to mentor the younger students at lunchtime in the Sustainability Centre as part of the school’s gardening club. Their roles include teaching the younger students how to care for the animals, harvest produce and propagate plants. Each year we are finding that, through this mentoring program, the skills of the younger children are continually developing and, by the time they reach the senior school, they are well versed in leadership.

Last year, St Macartan’s introduced the **PAL program** to the remaining Grade 6 children who were not given a formal leadership role as such. The **PAL program** aims to develop the leadership skills of senior students as well as providing structured activities for younger students at lunchtime. The PAL leaders complete a training program that gives them the skills and confidence to run small group activities including skipping, ball games and other equipment. They then give up part of their own lunchtimes to work with our younger students. The **PAL program** not only enhances relationship skills between peers but also enables the school to target students at risk who require extra support on the playground.

All these opportunities are designed to give the students self-confidence, opportunities to think quickly and to speak in public, and strategies to solve problems. Students develop an appreciation of the thought processes needed to make decisions that affect others. In addition, supporting school and community children and adults, develops cultural understanding and empathy.

Students at St Macs are a confident, friendly and happy bunch. Come for a tour one day or look on our website and you’ll see just that!

Sarah Chappell  
**Student Leadership Coordinator**  
St Macartan’s PS
It is expected that all leaders within the St Macartan’s Community undertake their leadership position with the sole focus of ‘making a difference’ within their community.

As a student leader at St Macartan’s, it would be expected that students would:

1. Acknowledge, use and develop their personal skills and talents to support the vision of the school;
2. Show initiative by generating ideas that lead to improvements in our school environment;
3. Take responsibility and be accountable for planning and organising the various areas of student leadership;
4. Contribute positively to the team goals;
5. Participate fully in all student leadership areas;
6. Be prepared to learn, take a risk to learn new things and make mistakes;
7. Celebrate team and school achievements.

The Communication Leader’s Role is to:

Communicate initiatives and school activities to students, parents and wider community. Promote our school within our school and wider community. Keep the whole school community informed of goals and achievements in this area.

The Communication Leader’s Responsibilities are:

1. Collate and coordinate newsletter items from each area of the student leadership team.
2. Create and file documents, images and videos.
3. Contribute to the development of the school websites.
4. Regularly meet and develop reports for Student Development Team.
5. Report to the school community via assemblies, unit gatherings and classroom sharetimes.
6. Conduct school tours.
7. Be responsible for developing and presenting presentations.

The Systems Leader’s Role is to:

• Help manage one of the system areas: Water, Energy, Waste and Biodiversity.
• Collect, collate and interpret data from each of the system areas.
• Generate ideas on how to improve and further develop system areas.
• Promote further awareness and understanding of each of the system areas.
• Keep the whole school community informed of goals and achievements in this area.

The Water Systems Leader’s Responsibilities are to:

1. Monitor and record collection and usage data from tanks and reticulated water supply.
2. Enter data into files for use by students, parents and community (SETS, spreadsheets).
3. Interpret data collected eg tanks, water bills, SETS data.
4. Report to the school community via whole school and class assemblies, website and newsletters.
5. Regularly meet and develop reports for Student Development Team.
6. Increase awareness in the school community of the importance of water as a resource and strategies we can implement to use water wisely.

The Energy Systems Leader’s Responsibilities are:

1. To monitor and record collection and usage data from Solar System and electricity from the power grid.
2. To interpret data collected eg solar displays, electricity bills and SETS data.
3. To monitor and record information collected from classrooms and offices related to temperatures in buildings over the year.
4. To develop ideas that will decrease our energy use.
5. To enter data into files for use by students, parents and community (SETS, spreadsheets).
6. To report to the school community via whole school and class assemblies, website and newsletters.
7. To increase awareness in school community of the importance of alternative energy systems and how we can develop strategies that reduce our energy consumption.
The waste systems leader’s responsibilities are to:

1. Oversee the collection of rubbish from classrooms.
2. Take food waste to recycling area for compost, chooks and worm farms.
3. Oversee the maintenance and care of the chooks and composts.
4. To organise rubbish-free lunch days.
5. Enter data into files for use by students, parents and community (SETS, spreadsheets).
6. Monitor and record waste data from regular waste audits and SETS data.
7. Report to the school community via whole school and class assemblies, website and newsletters.
8. Increase awareness in the school community of the importance of waste reduction and how we can develop strategies that continue to reduce our waste.

The biodiversity systems leader’s responsibilities are to:

1. Conduct a yearly audit on the development of diversity within our school grounds.
2. Collect information in the form of photos, checklists of evidence of plant and animal species in the school environment.
3. Identify the range of plant and animal species in our environment.
4. Enter data into files for use by students, parents and community (SETS, spreadsheets).
5. Monitor and record biodiversity data from regular audits.
6. Report to the school community via whole school and class assemblies, website and newsletters.
7. Increase awareness in school community of the importance of biodiversity and how we can develop strategies that continue to encourage the development of biodiversity.

The social justice leader’s role is to:

- Promote activities that raise awareness of social justice issues.
- Keep the whole school community informed of goals and achievements in this area.

The Social Justice Leader’s Responsibilities are to:

1. Actively seek community groups that could help support us in social justice activities.
2. Develop and assist in the running of school fundraising activities.
3. Report to the school community via assemblies, unit gatherings and classroom share times.
4. Regularly meet and develop reports for the Student Development Team.
5. Conduct school tours.
6. Be responsible for developing and presenting presentations.

The Health and Wellbeing Leader’s Role is to:

1. Develop, promote and implement wellbeing activities in the school.
2. Keep the whole school community informed of goals and achievements in this area.

The Health and Wellbeing Leader’s Responsibilities are:

1. Organise and assist in activities that raise awareness of health and wellbeing within the school.
2. Regularly meet and develop reports for the Student Development Team.
3. Be responsible for organising and monitoring sporting equipment for student use.
4. Write reports on student involvement and achievements in PE and sport.
5. Report to the school community via assemblies, unit gatherings and classroom share times.
6. Conduct school tours.
7. Be responsible for developing and presenting presentations.

©St Macartan’s Primary School

St Macartan’s Primary School is in Mornington, Victoria.

For further information, contact: Katrina Tewman, Student Wellbeing Coordinator: ktewan@smmornington.catholic.edu.au or Sarah Chappell, Student Leader Coordinator: schappell@smmornington.catholic.edu.au
Primary Schools’ Youth Voice Day

Students from five Mount Gambier primary schools held their inaugural Youth Voice Forum on Wednesday, March 28th.

This was a valuable opportunity for students to experience the potential of their voices in the management of their schools and to share ideas on how they can operate successfully. We had a fantastic day with 55 students attending from five Mount Gambier based primary schools. The schools that attended were Melaleuca Park Primary, Reidy Park Primary, MacDonald Park Primary, Mulga Street Primary, and Mount Gambier North Primary.

The students took part in activities to report how Youth Voice functions in each school and to dream about the possibilities they could enact to strengthen their opinions and ideas to be heard within the overall decision-making structures of their schools.

Before the day, each SRC was asked to prepare a report on how it was organised and what it did. These reports are included here (see next pages).

Forum Activities

Some of the activities that were covered included the following sessions:

1. Why would we keep SRCs going in schools when the time could be better spent learning?

   There was a five minute discussion in mixed groups, and then each group presented one idea to the whole group. Some of the responses about the importance of the SRCs were:
   • “Helps with communication skills eg through running assemblies.”
   • “Improves students’ organisational skills.”
   • “Lets students have a say and share their views.”
   • “Students can make decisions.”
   • “Leadership Skills are developed eg by taking visitors around the school, helping to run class meetings and by being Peer Mediators in the yard.”
   • “It builds student confidence, helping you prepare for work eg through speeches, application writing, and learning how to put ideas out there.”
   • “Helps to get ideas and put them into action in schools.”
   • “Encourages younger students to apply.”
   • “Gives us experience in sharing opinions.”

2. Dreams/Goals

   In school-based groups, students discussed: “What would you like to achieve?” They came up with the following ideas and shared their dreams for 2012:
• **Social Activities:** table tennis, sports tournaments, a school radio station, play music at recess and lunch;
• **School Grounds/Buildings:** A Rage Cage (a special place to play soccer and basketball), purchase more play equipment;
• **Helping others:** A Friendship Tree (a spot to go to in the yard if you need a friend or help; peer mediators can then assist students), reading circles (read to younger students in the library at break times), Community Groups;
• **Celebrations:** Walk or Ride to School Day (we could apply for a Road Safety Grant to help with this);
• **Beyond Our School:** Bingo Night, Family Fun Day, visit other schools, learn about High School.

The students also explored the qualities of good leadership and developed skills to practise back in their own schools. They looked at **12 Qualities of Leadership** and thought of examples of how they had used these in the past and could also use them in the future.

**Catherine O’Dea**, Student Counsellor at Melaleuca Park Primary School and **Simone Badenoch**, Student Counsellor at Mount Gambier North Primary School ran the forum with the assistance of **Moira Neagle**, Youth Development Coordinator.

The intention is to form an ongoing **Mount Gambier Youth Forum** that will meet regularly. It is hoped that student voices will contribute to the wider decision making of their community. Each table came up with a suggestion for a Group name and the students voted on these and selected: **SLUG (Student Leaders United Group)**.

Feedback from the students indicated that they were all happy to meet up again. They wanted to know when the next day would be. They also suggested that different schools could host these days, so that students could all see the variety of student action projects happening in other schools. Students also asked if High School SRCs could be invited to future forums and it was also suggested that representatives from the **Youth Action Council (YAC)** at the Mount Gambier City and Grant Council be invited to speak to the group about ways that students and young people can make a difference in our community.

**Reidy Park Primary School**

Our **School Leaders** are used in running school events and assemblies. We consist of six students from Year 7.

To become a leader, we had to write a letter to the board of the middle school, made up of a number of teachers and members of the leadership team. They chose a top 12 (six girls and six boys) to have a private interview. Six were chosen by the panel to read a speech to all year 6s and then the rest of the year 6s voted on our two captains.

This year, we have two school captains and four leaders. The number can vary each year, depending on the quality of leadership shown in applications.

Every Tuesday at 1pm, the students meet with a teacher for as long as they are needed for. During Assembly weeks, students meet after lunch. Students run the meeting. Reporting back to other students happens during assembly. Each person is selected to pick up various jobs at assembly. During the other week when we do not have assembly, general issues are discussed to be reported to staff and the principal.

Through the **School Leaders**, the school was able to raise money for projects in the schools and other nominated charities. Students were able to attend Leadership conferences in Adelaide and various other workshops in Mount Gambier.

The hardest things about being a **School Leader** include public speaking and managing time. The best things about being a leader of the school include being able to have pride in our job, completing important jobs around the school and suggesting what can be done to make Reidy Park Primary School a better place. We think that being a role model to other peers is the most important part of the job.

For further information, please contact **Moira Neagle**, Youth Development Coordinator: 0409 243 078 or **Catherine O’Dea**, Melaleuca Park PS Student Counsellor: catherine.odea@melparkps.sa.edu.au
A t McDonald Park School we have an SRC – a Student Representative Council. It is broken into three groups: the Junior Primary representatives are called Little Leaders, the Primary section is the SRC, and the year 6-7s are called SSC: Senior School Council. The older students support the younger ones.

Our SRC exists to ensure student voice: to voice student opinion and issues, and to provide information to the students. It makes decisions based on feedback from students and advice from teachers and leaders.

Each class is represented on the SRC by two students. All grades are represented because all students are valuable contributors to the school environment and decision-making process. It promotes authentic student voice to involve all grades.

To become an SRC representative, students put forward their name as a nominee. They then either write an application addressing why they would be a good choice, or they give a speech in front of the class. The rest of the class vote. An SRC representative should be able to communicate well and this is shown in their application or speech. A vote endorses the element of student voice. However, the bad part is that it can be popularity that is the decider.

We meet fortnightly on Friday mornings: the Little Leaders at 9.15, then the SRC at 9.45, both with the Counsellor. The SSC meets at the same time with the Deputy. This time slot is allocated to whole school assembly on alternate fortnights, so it is a time when a learning block is not planned in class, so representatives are not missing valuable learning. It is held during this time and not at lunch as it is considered valued and educational.

Each fortnight a chairperson and minute taker are rostered. The chairperson follows a format and runs the meeting while the minute taker records. It is quite formal. Minutes are read from previous meetings, correspondence entered, and reports given from class meetings. The SRC discusses issues that have arisen from class meetings, then makes decisions, speaks to relevant staff or leaders, and organises fundraising events.

After meetings, the Counsellor photocopies the minutes and puts them in teachers’ pigeonholes. The teachers then each give these to the representatives who put the minutes in their folder. During class meetings, the representatives report back about the minutes from the SRC meeting.

The Counsellor also takes minutes for the younger students to ensure that no information is missed and supervises the minutes taken by the older students. However, the students run the meetings with supervision from the Counsellor. It is a student forum, so the students take total ownership over it.

The SRC has raised money for various charities and causes. It has been instrumental in particular aspects of the school including playground areas and sports equipment.

Caitlin Barrett and Amelia Harris (Year 6) said: “SRC is a great opportunity for primary students to be involved in changing the school environment. SRC meetings let kids share their class discussions and concerns. We liked being an SRC representative because of the responsibility for making a difference. SRC is a valuable committee to have because it makes our school a better place to be.”

Mount Gambier North Primary School SRC

O ur SRC is a way for students to have a say in the things that they want to happen in our school. When we meet, we discuss issues and ideas brought up by other students. We try to have lots of those ideas put into action.

At North we have two SRC committees: one for the lower primary (R-4) and one for the upper primary (5-7). There are seven classes represented in the lower primary (R-2) and five in the upper primary.

Each class has a vote on who they would like to have for their SRC members (male and female). The vote is fair – but some people only vote for their friends, so then it only becomes a ‘popularity poll’.

Our SRC meets every fortnight for a lesson (45 minutes) during class time. We normally have two teachers running the meetings but sometimes the role is half given to students. This gives students a chance to be leaders while the teachers keep us on track. We report back to classes through class meetings, which is also where the ideas are sourced from.

The hardest thing about being on the SRC would be missing out on our PE lessons and catching up on work. The most exciting part would be being able to have a say in what happens in our school.
At Mulga Street Primary School we have a Student Council with a class representative from 15 of the 17 classes. The Reception classes are not included at the start of 2012. There is a proxy for each class in case the representative is absent or has left the school.

There is also a Student Executive group who supports the Student Council. This is made up of the two school captains, two vice captains, two principal representatives, one indigenous representative and two Year 7 Waste Watch Warriors – making a total of nine senior students.

The Student Council exists to:

• give a forum for student voice and leadership within the school;
• lead and/or support class meetings to help students work through issues that may arise in the class or yard;
• take ideas to the Student Council and onto the Student Executive for consideration within the school eg supporting a particular charity, casual days, discos, contributing to working bees, purchasing new equipment, lunch time activities etc;
• work in with buddy classes, especially supporting students in younger classes and in the meeting forums;
• contribute to reporting back to their classes, staff and the governing council; and
• contribute to newsletters, run surveys etc.

There was once a Junior and a Senior Council, however in the last year this was combined in response to feedback from students and staff from the previous year.

Student representatives are voted in by their class peers. Students on the Executive, apart from the Principal Representatives, need to apply and go through a selection process, including an interview. Although it is ‘scary’, an interview makes the process fairer so it is not the most popular students being selected.

The Student Council meets three to four times a term, for about 30-40 minutes in class time.

There is a roster for Chairperson, minute taker, timer and observer. Sometimes there may be other roles eg preparing for a school disco. The students run the meetings with support from the deputy principal. There is training and a script for this. We read through the minutes of the last meeting, discuss any business arising or follow up reporting, sometimes move a suggestion or motion, second it and vote etc, so we can learn about meeting procedures. At other meetings we may have a guest speaker, training or do a workshop.

Some things we have achieved are:

• suggesting we have a school beanie and have students wearing hats in Terms 1 and 4, instead of the whole year;
• raise money for the year’s chosen charities;
• school discos; and
• suggesting new equipment for the school eg helping the Christian Pastoral Care Worker select toys and games for lunch time activities.

At the beginning of the year the class teachers usually run the class meetings and show their class how they are going to conduct them for the year. The older classes are more independent with this. Sometimes older student council or student executive members can help with this. We would have to say that they are not run the same way across the school.

Sometimes the teachers forget there is a student council meeting on. We have a system where older students collect their buddy now so that we do not waste as much time before getting started.

The hardest things are missing out on something going on in the classroom if there is something special on. This year we are moving to morning meetings on Wednesdays so it doesn’t run into specialist lessons, excursions etc.

The most exciting things are contributing to the school in a number of ways, having students’ names in the newsletters, helping run special events, giving experience for those who want to apply for Student Executive positions, and the end of term or year celebrations – great food!

This report was prepared by the 2012 Student Executive, as the Student Council had not yet met and the new representatives had limited experience.
Our Student Leadership Team exists to make decisions for students. It also gives us opportunities to represent our school and help with jobs. The Team helps with group decisions for the school, and gives a student voice in school decisions.

It is made up of six Year 7 students – because we are older and have more experience and know what is going on in the school. We have to write an application and then have an interview if our application is shortlisted. If you don't get shortlisted, you can sometimes feel as though you're not good enough, but it is good practice for future job applications and interviews.

The Student Leadership Team meets once a fortnight during class-time for a hour. Normally we have a special book that tells us when our student leadership meetings are on. We take turns at the various roles like chairperson and secretary. We normally get into a meeting and discuss the issues bought up at class meetings that we help run across the school in each class once a fortnight. Students run the Team meetings because it gives us more leadership and confidence for the future to speak out anywhere eg in public places.

We report back to students by meeting with them at class meetings. We also report to the principal, other teachers and through the newsletters and at assemblies.

Some of the decisions we have made for students include the Melaleuca Park Showcase, and introduction of a warning bell to encourage people to get back to class on time.

Here is what we've said about the hard, exciting and fun thing about being on the Student Leadership Team:

- "The worst or hardest thing is getting everything ready for assemblies."
- "The best thing is getting to meet people."
- "The most exciting thing is helping to run things but it is also hard to speak at assemblies."
- "The most exciting thing is being a good role model for the whole school. It is good to go to community events."
- "It is just fun doing what we are doing, going to public events, being role models."
- "It is also fun to be part of the decision making process in our school."

Qualities of Leaders

This is part of an activity around Qualities of Leaders:

1. In small groups, students recorded examples of good leaders and why. They listed as many leaders as they can that others within the group believe are a role model or an effective leader and why they think this. They developed a mind-map of qualities each person possessed, what they admired about this person and why, and examples of how they showed these qualities.

2. In groups, students then brainstormed the characteristics of a quality leader. These were shared with the whole group, with each group role-playing one of their qualities. The main qualities were listed on the whiteboard and those that came up most frequently highlighted.

3. Students were then given a list of 12 specific quality leadership characteristics:
   - Persistent: I keep trying even when it is hard
   - Tolerant: I will accept you even though you may be different to me
   - Reliable: I will do as I say I will
   - Courageous: I am brave enough to take safe risks and deal with possible failure
   - Trustworthy: I can keep confidential and important things to myself when necessary
   - Optimistic: I can look on the bright side even when things are hard
   - Self-Disciplined: I do what has to be done even when I don't feel like it
   - Enthusiastic: I inspire others with my keenness
   - Honest: I can tell the truth and own up when needed
   - Assertive: I stand up for what I think is right
   - Independent: I can do things for myself
   - Resilient: I can bounce back when things don't go my way

4. In groups, students recorded student friendly definitions for each quality. They then recorded a different name next to each quality and an example of how a person has showed this.

5. Students independently completed a personal assessment and rated themselves on these leadership characteristics. They tallied their scores and recorded their strengths, areas to work on, and what they would like to improve. Students who wished to, shared some findings with the whole group.

6. Finally, in small groups, students brainstormed ways in which they can be leaders within the school. These were all listed on the whiteboard for future reference.

Simone Badenoch
Student Counsellor
Mount Gambier North Primary School
Moving beyond fundraising
Taking your Student Council to the next level

Earlier this term I had the privilege of skyping in and being part of a Q&A session during a Professional Development session being run for SRC Teacher Advisers. One of the questions focused on the work of Student Councils and how we can take them beyond a group that raises money for charity. This article aims to explore the current work of Student Councils, possible opportunities for Student Councils to do more, and suggestions for taking that next step.

Where Are We At?
To my knowledge, there is no quantitative data about the work of Student Councils in Victoria. Suffice to say, based on our experiences and interactions with teachers working with Student Councils, much of their work currently looks like the graph below.

Many Student Councils are just surviving. They’re not really sure what they are supposed to be doing, or how they should be doing it. Most of the other students and teachers don’t know about it and when they do finally come up with an idea they want to take action on, it’s dismissed by those in power or turned down with no response as to why.

Moving on from this are Student Councils that exist simply to take care of raising money for organisations. Again, without research it’s difficult to confirm this, but it’s estimated that Student Councils in schools raise millions of dollars for charities each year.

At this point, I’d like to make it clear that while I think there is merit in Student Councils raising money for charities and causes, if this were their sole purpose I would be asking some questions about what other opportunities or tasks the SRC could get involved with within the school.

The next step up from this are Student Councils that run events to raise money for projects within the school, such as building upgrades, updating or purchasing sports and other equipment. Again, I have no problem with students doing this; the problem lies when students are not involved in the decision-making behind the scenes for the project. It’s great to be fundraising for new furniture and resources for your classrooms, but have you involved students in the design of the building? Have you involved students in selecting what is purchased?

Beyond this point is where things start to get interesting. Involving students in shared decision making focusing on real school matters such as school facilities, the creation and review of school policies and even involving them in the structure and makeup of teaching and learning. This is where the action is, but so few are focusing on this.

How Do We Take That Next Step?
Set some guidelines:
We have mentioned frequently the advantages of having a constitution or policy for your Student Council.

When discussing the idea of which organisations, events and charities the SRC would support, it was decided that the SRC would only support organisations that focused on children or had a direct link to supporting members of our school community. Beyond that, the SRC were keen to support organisations that cared for animals and the environment. Implementing this structure streamlined the decision-making process when selecting which organisations to support.

Taking this a step further, I have heard of a secondary SRC that has an application process where organisations and charities are required to submit a written application addressing certain criteria in order to receiving funding from the SRC.

VISTA has developed a Fundraising and Events Calendar to assist SRCs with planning their year. Copies of the calendar can be accessed for free from the RESOURCES tab of the VISTA website: http://srcteachers.ning.com

Incorporate it into your action planning:
Initially, it might take some direction from you, as the SRC Teacher Adviser, to shift students thinking away from “Let’s raise money for [insert organisation here]” or “Let’s have a [insert theme here] day”.

VISTA currently receives no additional funding to operate its programs and relies heavily on memberships to support its programs. Visit us at http://srcteachers.ning.com or e-mail us at vista@srcteachers.org.au for details on how to join.
The SRC could start by brainstorming ideas, events, activities and actions you would like to implement throughout the school year. Have each idea recorded on a separate piece of paper.

As the SRC teacher adviser, generate some categories (eg fundraising, events, learning, policy, wider community etc...) Group the ideas into these categories and position them around the room. Issue all SRC members with a number of sticky dots and have them place sticky dots on the proposals that they like best. People have the option of placing all their stickers on one proposal or dividing them up between two or more proposals. Repeat this process until the initiatives receiving the most support become clear. To begin with, students could vote on all the ideas presented, but once a clear winner is determined, students could then only vote for proposals in a particular category.

**Use Survey Data:**

The Student Attitudes to School Survey is perfect opportunity for the SRC to become involved in school-wide decision-making processes. This survey, run annually in Victoria by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), is used by schools to drive improvement and forms a component of a school's Annual Report to the school community. Where possible, the school administration, Student Council and student body as a whole should work together to review the data from this survey and develop actions plans for school improvement.

Alternatively, the SRC may choose to conduct its own survey to gauge the current opinions of the student body. Using online tools or polls through Ultranet Collaborative Spaces can assist with the task of data collection and analysis.

**Promotion:**

If the SRC itself is all about fun and fundraising does the rest of the student body know what other work or activities the Student Council is undertaking? Consider running an advertising campaign that informs the student body of the other work that the SRC undertakes. Open your SRC meetings up to the student body and have them attend and share their idea with the SRC.

**Resources:**

The Magic Bag of Unlimited Ideas Resource Kit developed by Second Strike has a range of ideas and strategies for implementation. The Audit Your SRC kit also contains several surveys and tools that will help you determine if your SRC is working effectively.

The VicSRC resource Represent has sections on planning your year, details on how you can run a consultative forum with the student body and details about how you can promote your Student Council. It is freely available on-line at: www.vicsrc.org.au

The VISTA website also features a range of templates and resources developed by SRC Teacher Advisers to support others working in similar roles. To access these resources or to become a VISTA member, visit us at http://srcteachers.ning.com

Scott Duncan, President, VISTA

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**Episode #3 of THE VISTA PODCAST is now online!**

In this episode of the VISTA PODCAST, Scott and Joel discuss the question of setting up a Student Council: Selection versus Election. Is it better to have a selection panel interviewing candidates or have a popular election decided wholly by the students? There are pros and cons for both sides, and various models you could look at depending on your school culture and size.

Download now from iTunes
or listen online at

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**Ultranet Space for Primary School SRC/JSC Students**

In response to some feedback from SRC Teachers, VISTA has created an Ultranet Collaborative Learning Space for primary school SRC/JSC students. It is still very much ‘Under Construction’, but we would love to have some SRC Teachers join and visit the space and provide feedback as to how you could see the space being further developed and used.

www.ultranet.vic.edu.au

Victorian Junior School Council
Collaborative Learning Space ID Number: 1274573
Giving students ‘a voice’ is increasingly acknowledged to lead to significant benefits for the wellbeing, maturation and learning of young people in schools. The concept of ‘student voice’ itself is overwhelming in its breadth of definitions and applications, and includes areas of student leadership, student representative councils, student-led community initiatives, and student feedback and opinion on school matters (Fielding, 2004). However, activities promoting student voice need not be solely extracurricular.

In exploring the idea of ‘student voice’, I have become increasingly fascinated and enthusiastic about incorporating student voice in serious decision making about the content, delivery and assessment of curriculum. There are many benefits of this, but most importantly, the inclusion of students’ ideas and opinions in determining what and how they will learn is known to make students more motivated and productive in the classroom and develop positive attitudes towards themselves and towards school (Boomer et al, 1992; Farris-Berg, 2005; Murdoch & Le Mescam, 1996).

Traditionally students get very little say in what they will learn at school, when they will learn it and how they will be taught. It seems normal that students go to school to acquire knowledge that has been predetermined by others as valuable and is doled out in the way the teacher sees as best. As a society we are very accustomed to this design but it is, in fact, quite bizarre. Consider the number one key stakeholder of a school: schools exist because children and young people (known in this context as students) exist. Schools don’t exist because teachers exist. As an industry, schools are usually doing very little to incorporate the opinions and interests of the student as the consumer into planning their core business: the learning of the student (Farris-Berg, 2005). It doesn’t make sense and it doesn’t have to be this way.

Student participation in school is most often limited to safe and trivial issues such as fundraising and uniform design, whilst the area of curriculum remains off limits (Holdsworth, 1998; Murdoch & Le Mescam, 1996). It would certainly not be appropriate for students to take over completely in dictating the curriculum design. Students rely on the maturity and experience of teachers as leaders and experts and, in reality, each and every secondary school subject will have some non-negotiable objectives. But there remains plenty of room to approach curriculum planning as a collaborative venture involving equal input from students and teachers. By doing so, we acknowledge the unique ideas and experiences that students bring with them and facilitate a change in the role of the student from passive recipient of education to active participant (Holdsworth, 1998). In turn, students feel a greater sense of control and ownership of their learning and a responsibility to meet the targets they have contributed to setting for themselves and their peers (Department of Education, Student Voice paper, 2007).

Australian National and State Government reports and policies repeatedly highlight the need to promote independence and responsibility of young people at school. This includes the Melbourne Declaration (2008), the Victorian Department of Education’s Student Engagement Policy Guidelines (2009) and the Victorian Department of Education’s Student Voice paper (2007). Young people in Australian schools do need more responsibility and any opportunity to voice and justify their ideas and opinions can contribute to their development into valuable citizens and prepare them for adult life. Such opportunities exist in the safe environment of the classroom. As teachers, we can’t to contribute to the maturation of students in their home or social life but we can empower them at school.

I believe most teachers do genuinely listen to their students and respect their points of view. On my teaching placement so far I have seen two examples of teachers asking for student feedback regarding curriculum. One teacher distributed a three question feedback sheet to her Year 9 Maths class after trialling a new activity with them. Perhaps this is not an outstanding example, but it’s a start. The other teacher asked her Year 7 SOSE class to evaluate the Ancient Egypt unit they had just completed under the headings: ‘Positives’, ‘Negatives’ and ‘Improvements’. Unfortunately most of the students misinterpreted the task and evaluated their own performance during the
term and not the content or delivery of the unit itself. The teacher’s explanation of the evaluation task had been explicit, yet the Year 7 boys had not understood it. One cannot help wondering if this was because the concept of their opinions being wanted and valued is so completely foreign to them.

Real student participation can only include activity that is both meaningful and valued by the student (Holdsworth, 1998) – meaningful in the capacity of student input to lead to a real change, and valuable in that the outcome holds some importance to the student. We can now consider the ‘care factor’ of the feedback task to the Year 7s in the previous example. It was indeed admirable practice of the SOSE teacher to invite student feedback at the end of the term. However, given that most of the students didn't understand how their feedback was going to be used, the task was neither meaningful nor valuable. Additionally, many students would place little value on contributing to changes in a unit of study they have already completed that will only serve to benefit future classes and not them personally. The time may have been better spent with a classroom discussion to plan the curriculum for the next term, and incorporating student ideas to meet the learning objectives.

As a teacher, I plan to use a structured method to negotiate unit and lesson planning with the students in the classes I teach. Firstly, an open classroom discussion would introduce the topic and establish the prior knowledge of the group. We would then need to consider timeframes including number of lessons that are available to complete the topic and establish the non-negotiable learning objectives that need to be achieved. Other outcomes, including students’ own areas of interests or skills they would like to develop, can be added to the list of learning objectives. Collaboratively we can then plan the unit around these learning objectives, focussing on how the learning will occur, be monitored and be assessed. This approach is similar to procedures described by Boomer (1992) and Shor (1996) in the literature.

Initially, students may struggle in this task as they develop skills in creating, expressing and evaluating their own ideas and opinions and the process of curriculum planning itself. Additionally, for the teacher, relevant professional development in empowering young people and creating a democratic and collaborative classroom would be valuable. Challenges of this method include avoiding exclusivity amongst the cohort so that all students have the opportunity to contribute and feel safe in doing so (Holdsworth, 1998; Fielding, 2004; Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Student Engagement Policy, 2009). Ways to do this might include a suggestion box in the classroom for students to express ideas they don’t feel comfortable expressing in a public forum, or a rotational system in which the class is divided into smaller groups that alternate during the semester in working with the teacher regarding curriculum planning.

Hopefully, with greater student and teacher experience, curriculum negotiation can lead to the development of interesting, dynamic and successful learning environments that are personally valued by everyone involved.

It’s time for teachers to share the reins of curriculum planning with the students. Who knows what we might learn!

Amy Freeman
a.freeman2@student.unimelb.edu.au

References


Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2009, Effective schools are engaging schools. Student engagement policy guidelines. Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Melbourne


Holdsworth, R 1998. Schools that create real roles of value for young people, paper for the 4th UNESCO-AEICD International Conference Secondary Education and Youth at the Crossroads, Bangkok, 10-13 November


I have a number of concerns about how I am seeing ‘student voice’ and ‘student engagement’ used in K-12 schools, education administration, and other settings that should benefit students to share their voices. One set of concerns I have I’m calling Trojan Horse Strategies. I call them this because in this approach, educators and advocates give students a carrot by listening to their voices, and then these same adults turn around and blatantly use student voice and student engagement to forward their political agendas without concern for what students are genuinely seeking.

The scariest part of the Trojan Horse Strategies is they are being used a lot more in the name of ‘student voice’ and ‘student engagement.’ Too many schools, governments, and organisations are manipulating student voice to fit into their adult-driven, anti-authentic approaches to promoting particular education reform agendas. Here is a low-down of what some Trojan Horse Strategies look like.

Trojan Horse Strategy #1: Adults as Parasites

By using the phrases ‘student voice’ and ‘student engagement,’ educators, leaders, and advocates are implying their interest in listening to the unfettered opinions, ideas, experiences and wisdom of students. However, their approach is similar to that of many companies that market to young people: Listing for profit. That’s what many educators, leaders, and advocates hope to receive from student voice and student engagement programs: Profit.

By continually uplifting the education reform agendas of adults and coining them in ‘student voice’ and ‘student engagement,’ many people literally maintain or develop funding for their schools, or their versions of school reform. They continue to maintain or develop funding opportunities for their schools by using ‘student voice’ and ‘student engagement.’ If that sounds greedy and parasitic, that’s because it is.

Trojan Horse Strategy #2: Adults Maintaining Authority

Most ‘student voice’ and ‘student engagement’ programs use anti-transparent responses to young people. This merely perpetuates the modus operandi of schools, which is to do to and for students, rather than to work with students. I conceptualised Meaningful Student Involvement precisely for the purpose of distinguishing this difference. Meaningful Student Involvement is contingent on student-adult partnerships throughout the education system. The approach advocated for by the vast majority of ‘student voice’ and ‘student engagement’ programs is adult-dictated, adult-agenda oriented, and ultimately will only benefit adults. These ‘student voice’ and ‘student engagement’ programs actually reinforce adult authority, which is antithetical to Meaningful Student Involvement.

Trojan Horse Strategy #3: The Student Voice Vacuum

Ultimately, the approach of using ‘student voice’ and ‘student engagement’ to reinforce adults’ preconceptions is the same for students as yelling into an empty well. Students speak into a vacuum where they don’t know the outcomes of their contributions to educators, leaders, and advocates, and there is little or no accountability. Adults listen only when ‘student voice’ and ‘student engagement’ are needed, and engage students only when adults see it as necessary. Otherwise, there is little or no substantive student presence.

The goal of all student engagement activities anywhere in schools should be to build the capacity of students to cause change within the education systems and communities to which they belong. Many ‘student voice’ and ‘student engagement’ programs actually negate students’ abilities to cause that change by capturing ‘student voice’ and ‘student engagement’ and putting it into the hands of adults. This disengages, taking away the little authority that authentic ‘student voice’ and ‘student engagement’ should have. It alienates students from the process of whole school reform, and ultimately serves to extinguish any level of interest students may have in the first place.

Outcomes

The point of Meaningful Student Involvement is to re-engage students in their health of their schools and the education system. As they stand today, the vast majority of ‘student voice’ and ‘student engagement’ programs only serve to help students learn about their lack of power, and reinforce the belief that the roles of young people throughout society are determined for them, and they simply need to accept what is coming down the line.

These three approaches to ‘student voice’ and ‘student engagement’ have brought our schools to where they are now. By manipulating, tokenising, and exploiting individual students’ perspectives on any given topic in education, entire generations of young people have been disengaged from school reform. This is not what I am about, and that is what is wrong with many ‘student voice’ and ‘student engagement’ programs today.

Adam Fletcher

When my teacher drew me aside, I feared the worst. “I found that Professional Development to be a very important and intriguing exercise,” he said. These words allowed my heart to start to beat again. I wasn’t in trouble. In fact I was a long way from it!

The Professional Development that he was referring to was an initiative that the students in my SRC and I ran. You must be thinking: a Professional Development event run by an SRC: how is this possible? It’s quite simple really. Through our work on the VicSRC Executive, we have written up a template of the process to show the way that students can run Professional Development at their own schools.

In fact, we don’t refer to this as ‘professional development’ but as ‘teach the teachers’. The aim of this approach is to allow students and teachers to work together to achieve a positive change in or solution to problems and issues that face both students and teachers in the classroom environment. So basically ‘teach the teachers’ is not students teaching teachers but us working together. There have been two of these courses run – one at Melbourne Girls College and the other at my school, Bundoora Secondary College – and both were a huge success. Both had a very positive vibe and atmosphere.

The most recent one at Bundoora Secondary College was fantastic. The teachers were asked questions based around such topics as distractions in class and student and teacher relationships. The teachers worked with each other and with the students to find solutions to these problems or issues.

I welcomed the teachers to the session in this way:

“Welcome to the first ever ‘teach the teachers’ course at Bundoora Secondary College. The student leadership team appreciate and thank you for your time and for allowing us to run this workshop. You will divide up into groups and two leadership students will lead you to a different room. Each group has been given a different topic to discuss amongst themselves. There are five topics and each topic is the views of the Bundoora Secondary College students on what they believe are problems or issues in their classroom.

“The aim of this course is for you, the teachers, to discuss amongst yourselves and with two leadership students, ways in which you can find a solution to these problems or a way to lessen their impact in the students’ classroom. In your groups, the leadership students will ask questions and seek answers and solutions.

“The leadership team will then table and report these solutions back to the teachers. We would like you to implement them in your classes to aim for positive change. All of the questions asked today are the views of the students and these were taken during a mentor session a couple of weeks ago.”

The teacher groups then looked at topics such as:

Distractions in class:

• “Why do students get distracted?”
• “Why do you think students use phones in class?”
• “Why do think students talk in class?”
• “Whose responsibility is it to maintain focus or avoid distraction?”

What is the ideal teacher?

• “What qualities does your Ideal Teacher have?”
• “What tone do you use to speak to your students?”
• “How do you show that you value your students?”
• “How do you make your students enjoy learning?”

Learning: How and Why:

• “What learning styles do you find most useful?”
• “How can we work together to decide what we learn, why we learn it and how we learn it?”
• “What is a good amount of homework to be given?”

Attitudes:

• “Do you put effort into making class fun?”
• “Do you think that the attitude teachers present in class can be a factor in the performance of your students?”
• “If you feel frustrated with your class, how do you address the issue and is it effective?”
• “How can we reach an agreement within all our classes about the standards of behavior and respect that we expect of each other?”

Teacher and student relationships:

• “Why is the relationship between students and teachers important?”
• “How do you think teachers and students should behave towards each other?”
• “Sometimes relationships between students and teachers can be strained. How can we deal with these situations and are the solutions effective?”

The VicSRC is now in the final stages of completing a template for all schools to follow and develop around its own school needs on how to run a ‘teach the teachers’ course.

Edison Ponari
Bundoora Secondary College
VicSRC Executive
Connect 194-195:

Victorian Regional Student Conferences 2012

Each year the VicSRC organises sub-regional SRC conferences across Victoria. These enable students to meet together across schools, learn from each other and work together on common interests. Just creating these spaces for students to meet, express themselves and realise how much they have in common can be a very empowering opportunity for the young people and SRCs involved.

Conferences are one-day events, within school hours: 9.30 am to 2.30 pm. They are hosted by local schools and invitations to attend are sent out to other schools in the local area.

The conference programs are mainly interactive and are designed with student participation as well as active learning outcomes in mind.

Conferences are designed for SRC members and will enable students to:

• Share information about what their SRC is doing and learn about other SRCs and their work;
• Be challenged about making their SRC more effective;
• Identify issues of concern that they share – and develop plans around them;
• Learn how to effectively plan responses to important issues;
• Link their interests to on-going action through the VicSRC – through local clusters and the Statewide SRC Congress later in the year.

Conferences cost $20 per head for VicSRC member schools and $25 per head for non member schools.

Please note our policy on cancellations: full refunds will be made if cancellations are made more than two weeks before the conference is held; less than two weeks’ notice will receive a 50% reimbursement; if cancellations are made with less than one week’s notice, no refunds can be made.

Dates for 2012 confirmed so far:

Thursday April 26th
Frankston High School
Foot Street, Frankston

Friday May 4th
Mortlake P-12 College
10 Hood Avenue, Mortlake

Friday May 11th
Balwyn High School
Buchanan Avenue, North Balwyn

Friday May 18th
Yarram Secondary College
86 James Street, Yarram

Friday May 25th
Thomas Carr College
35 Thomas Carr Drive, Tarneit

Wednesday May 30th
Newcomb Secondary College
81-85 Bellarine Highway, Newcomb

Friday June 1st
Bendigo Senior Secondary College
Rosalind Park, Bendigo

Friday June 8th
Bendigo Senior Secondary College
21 Dickson Street, Echuca

Tuesday June 5th
St Joseph’s College - Echuca
21 Dickson Street, Echuca

Registration forms – to sign up for a Conference near you – are available at:
www.vicsrc.org.au/events/conference

A big shout out to the best SRCs in Victoria!

Do you think your SRC deserves recognition?

Schools often spend time, effort and money on producing sportsmen and women, academics and musicians, but very little on student representatives.

Why? Maybe because these other activities can earn the school plaques, trophies and flags – and SRCs cannot.

To combat this problem (and in response to a resolution at the 2009 VicSRC Congress), we introduced the SRC Recognition Awards to celebrate the success of SRCs, inspire bigger and better projects and give student representatives the credit they deserve.

This means we want to hear from YOU – the students – about the great things your SRC is doing.

Awards are being offered in the following categories:

• The Connect Award for Integration, recognising SRCs that are strongly connected to the school’s decision-making processes, that are strongly responsive to student needs and voices, and that are linked strongly with the School Council/Board and its committees.

• The Second Strike Award for Enterprise, recognising SRCs that, through use of strategic planning and strong leadership structure, have completed a highly successful school or community project.

• The VASSP Award for Informed Representation, recognising SRCs that are truly democratic and fully representative of students.

• The VISTA Award for Outstanding Teacher Adviser, that seeks to recognise and highlight the support that teachers provide to SRCs.

More information, including deadlines and application forms will be available from the VicSRC website from May 1st 2012.

www.vicsrc.org.au
The VicSRC receives funding support from the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and is auspiced by and based at the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic). It can be reached there on 03 9267 3744 or, for the cost of a local call from outside Melbourne on 1300 727 176; or by email: vicsrc@yacvic.org.au
Students from up to 12 different secondary schools from across Victoria have come together and formed a group known as ENVY: the Environmental Network of Victorian Youth. This year the ENVY team will be hosting its first conference on Thursday 12th July around the theme of the Year of Renewable Energy.

The conference is hosted by the New Lecture Theatre, RMIT - Bundoora Campus.

The Conference focuses on issues such as the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). This year's theme has a specific focus on renewable energy and the impacts of fossil fuels on our planet. The ENVY group is determined to learn and share knowledge on a wide variety of energy topics. There will be guests and speakers from groups such as the Australian Youth Climate Coalition, CERES, John Seed, Generation Waking Up, University lecturers and many others from the energy field.

The conference is the first conference for students from accelerated Year 9, and Year 10 to 12 classes are invited to attend this conference at the New Lecture Theatre, RMIT - Bundoora Campus. The theme of the conference is the Year of Renewable Energy.

The ‘renewable energy’ conference will hopefully create an educational and inspiring conference for Victorian students to further understand different types of energy and the impacts they each have. Through guests and speakers (including Dr Kate Auty, Environmental Commissioner, John Seed and Trent McCarthy), ENVY plans to educate the community on ways to implement renewable energy in homes, schools and workplaces while inspiring Victorian young people to investigate environmental career prospects for their future.

The conference will be in the school holidays and will run from 9 am to 4 pm. With a maximum of 15 students per school, ENVY expects attendance to be between 250 and 300 students. Costs: students and teachers will pay $10 each for attending and meals can be purchased at RMIT or participants may bring their own nude food lunch and snacks. Morning tea may be included: this will be later confirmed.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact Darcie Jordan or Melissa Arsov, or check the ENVY website: www.vicenvy.squarespace.com

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Who We Are
We’re young. Passionate. Pragmatic. Dedicated to achieving incredible change for the world’s environment and the species found within it.

We’re 30+ strong Victorian young people under the age of 26, from across 12 different schools. We’re a movement of young Victorians. We’re Victoria’s own environmental network. We’re young people working together to end environmental problems.

Vision
A collective youth voice in Victoria on environmental issues.
Youth leadership opportunities around environmental issues.
Opportunities to network and work with other Youth Environment Councils around Australia and New Zealand.

Principles
• Student run and organised  
• Reflecting diversity and inclusion  
• A-political  
• Representing young people (15-26) from all across Victoria

Goals
• To raise awareness of sustainable issues throughout schools in Victoria  
• To share ideas, collaborate on projects and work together  
• To promote youth networks on environmental issues  
• To represent and be a voice for young people in Victoria on environmental issues  
• To support statewide environmental projects and initiatives
August 2012 marks the 25th NSW State SRC Conference. It will be a time for students to reflect on journeys past, current challenges and future possibilities.

Students in the Conference organising group (the 2012 State SRC Conference Action Team [SCAT]) met for their first planning meeting recently and discussed ways to help SRCs reflect on their current practices and consider the sorts of actions that SRCs should ideally be doing. Words and concepts such as ‘student wellbeing,’ ‘student voice,’ ‘community action,’ ‘citizenship’ and ‘student participation’ filled the room during the first planning meeting. Students in the organising group said they were interested in an approach that focused on reflection and renewal for SRCs. This will involve participants drawing a line in the sand and saying: ‘this is where we are now … but over there … that’s where we could be and want to be’.

This year’s NSW State SRC Conference theme, once finalised, will encourage SRCs to consider their core business. It will ask participants to consider critical questions for all SRCs, such as those in the box.

For more information, contact Noel Grannall:
noel.grannall@det.nsw.edu.au

1. What do SRCs spend their time doing?
   What do they work on? Why?
   What sort of decisions are SRCs involved in? Why?
   What is ‘in’ and ‘out’ as far as decision-making possibilities? Why?
   What should SRCs be working on?
   What would you like SRCs to be doing?

2. Who do SRCs represent?
   Which students are on the SRC?
   Are any groups consistently missing? Why?
   How does the SRC gain broad input from students?
   Whose voices are heard? Whose voices are missing? Why?
   Who should be involved with the SRC?
   How can we broaden participation?

3. How do SRCs connect to school decision-making?
   To whom do SRCs report?
   How do SRC proposals get translated into action?
   Where are decisions made in a school?
   How does the SRC relate to decision-makers?
   How should SRCs link to school decision-making?

4. How are SRCs recognised within the school?
   How do they connect to learning (and teaching)?
   What time is provided? What credit is provided for learning?
   What other ways is the work of SRC (and representatives) recognised?
   How could it happen?

5. How efficient and effective are SRCs?
   How do SRCs make decisions?
   Who is included or excluded?
   What sort of decisions are SRCs involved in?
   What have been SRC achievements?
   How central or marginal are these achievements?
   How could SRCs improve their practice?
   What are the Enablers and Barriers?

The 2011 NSW SRC annual report is available at:
Student leadership program yields results

A project to develop leadership skills in Year 9 students has led to the creation of an indoor/outdoor classroom.

In 2011, Georges River College, Penshurst Girls Campus was invited to take part in a student leadership program. Penshurst Girls principal Anne Ross said the objective was to equip student leaders with the values and tools to help them implement leadership initiatives throughout their school and community.

“The Year 9 student representative council (SRC) students brainstormed ideas with fellow peers regarding a project for the school that they could lead and manage,” Ms Ross said.

From these sessions the idea of an indoor/outdoor classroom was born.

In a statement of intent the Year 9 SRC wrote: “We have decided to change our boring performance space into an alternative learning area. We plan for this area to come alive with bright and vibrant colours to create a comfortable learning environment for our peers. We would like to re-carpet, paint and refurbish this area with wireless Internet provided for the students’ laptops. It includes school community involvement and it caters for the whole school.”

The challenge of making this a reality was overcome when Creating Brighter Career Connections (CBCC) came on board. Its role was to identify and build relationships with businesses, parents and community groups.

Students, parents, teachers, Pole Depot Community Centre and St George TAFE helped fully re-design and refurbish a run-down and virtually unused space on the school grounds.

“The CBCC partnership broker, Sarah Royall, was instrumental in keeping all the agencies communicating with each other,” Ms Ross said.

She said the community support had completely astounded her.

“Certainly witnessing the snowball effect of this project has been a wonderful educational journey for all of us within the school community, especially the students,” Ms Ross said.

“The students have really participated in action learning from leadership training to leading and managing a project.”

Hayden Zammit (17) was humbled and proud to receive a Medal of the Order of Australia in the 2012 Australia Day Honours List. His citation read: “For service to the community of Broken Hill through a range of fundraising and volunteering programs, and to youth leadership”.

A Year 12 student at Willyama High School in Broken Hill, Hayden has a long history of volunteering and raising money for charity, as well as being a school leader. Willyama High principal Tony Hicks said Hayden had been and continued to be a wonderful ambassador for Willyama High School. “As a student here Hayden has shown himself to be both empathetic and passionate about his fellow students, especially those who have on occasion required assistance,” he said. “Hayden has shown leadership qualities both at school as president of our SRC and within the wider Broken Hill community.”

Hayden began fundraising and volunteering after a close relative was diagnosed with cancer. His first event was to host an Australia’s Biggest Morning Tea in his front yard to raise funds for the NSW Cancer Council. He also raised funds for Camp Quality and has since been involved in fundraising through programs such as Pink Ribbon Day, Daffodil Day and McHappy Day.

“I’m overwhelmed by the support I’ve received and grateful for others’ commitment,” Hayden said. To date, Hayden and his family have raised more than $30,000.

Hayden believed it was important people did not take what they had for granted. “Set a goal, a vision, and work towards what you may think is a dream,” he said. “What you put in, you’ll get back plus so much more.”

Hayden’s award also acknowledged his youth leadership activities. He had been involved in programs including Rising Generation National Leadership Camp, NSW Youth Parliament, Global Young Leaders Conference in Washington DC and New York, as well as the 2010 NSW State SRC Conference. “These programs have encouraged me to achieve goals, work to plans and to aim high,” Hayden said.

Coordinator of student participation, Student Welfare Directorate, Noel Grannall said Hayden was a very enthusiastic member of the 2010 SRC Action Team, representing Western NSW Region and helping organise and run the conference. “Hayden is a keen advocate for student voice,” Mr Grannall said. “As a motivated and key member for the team, he ensured the conference was a great success. Hayden’s outgoing, fun style and passion for helping others ensured the students had a great time, discussed student issues and developed their personal leadership skills.”

Hayden Zammit, OAM. It has a nice ring to it.

Wendy Robinson

Proud to be Australian...
Willyama High School student Hayden Zammit is rewarded for his community work.

Photo by GAVIN SCHMIDT from the BARRIER DAILY TRUTH
Laverton Youth Foundations (YF) is a not-for-profit organisation that helps to empower young people to create positive change in the Hobson’s Bay community. We do this through funding, developing and implementing youth-led programs and initiatives.

One such program is the leadership program that Laverton YF runs with young people who attend the VISY Cares Link Centre in Laverton. These young people are aged between 15 and 18 years and attend the Centre because they have disengaged from mainstream schooling. VISY works towards successfully and sustainably re-engaging them through teaching life skills, academic subjects, and counseling – via a small, yet supportive team.

Laverton YF runs the leadership program with VISY once a week. Young people participate in leadership and team-building activities that build resilience and confidence through encouraging and empowering the students to make choices and decisions on what programs and projects to run during the year.

In 2011, Erin Young, who was then the YF Facilitator, developed a challenge with the VISY young people to create their own magazine. They decided that this would accurately reflect life as a young person in the area and the issues they faced, while encouraging and supporting independence and embracing individuality. The result of that challenge was the magazine that was aptly titled Be Yourself.

With Erin’s guidance, the group created a brightly coloured, engaging and informative 20-page magazine. They did this from concept to publication, including researching, writing and editing articles, and designing the look and feel of the magazine.

The magazine contains tips on how to be happy, stories from people who have experienced challenging times at school and through adolescence and, most of all, the very strong message to “follow your heart and be yourself.”

This message, which came from both the young people from VISY and various contributors throughout the magazine, was that an important key to remaining engaged in school, and even in life, was to study subjects and participate in activities that you enjoy doing; in essence, being true to yourself.

“We tried to encourage the young people who read the magazine to walk away with the understanding that, in order to really be engaged at school, they need to follow their heart and trust themselves and the decisions they make,” says Erin.

Be Yourself connected the young people from VISY and readers with organisations and services that can provide support and information: Project Rockit, Hello Sunday Morning, Bite Back, Twenty 10, Heywire, 10ThousandGirl, Pixel8, Airtame, Reachout, Eating Disorders Victoria, Headspace, Oxfam and Tune In Not Out.

The creation of Be Yourself also enabled the young people to build and strengthen verbal and written communication skills, creativity, organisation and time management, and allowed them to contribute to their community and to the lives of young people in an engaging and meaningful way.

Eden and Shantelle, the Editors of Be Yourself both commented on how proud of themselves they were for achieving this mammoth task. “It feels like we’ve really achieved something,” Shantelle said, while Eden added: “I thought that we would do half of it, but that we wouldn’t finish it in time.”

The key to their enthusiasm and excitement about this essentially educational piece of work was that it was delivered in a way that was interesting, exciting and new: all key aspects of encouraging youth participation and engagement.

If you are interested in a copy, or copies, of the magazine, please contact Melissa Wallace, Laverton Youth Foundations Facilitator.

Melissa Wallace
Laverton Youth Foundations Facilitator
melissa@lavertoncommunitycentre.com
School Councils:
Shut up, we’re listening

There was an interesting article (and subsequent discussion) in The Guardian (UK) on Monday 12 March this year (the article was by Tom Bennett). This took an informed and critical look at the operation of Student Councils (in England, they are referred to as School Councils).

The article can be accessed at: www.guardian.co.uk/education/2012/mar/12/school-councils-number-lip-service?newsfeed=true

Enviro Inspiro!

Enviro Inspiro! 2012 is open. The NSW SRC invites students in NSW public schools to create a five minute media presentation and a two page written report to showcase their successful student-led environmental projects. Schools and student teams can win one of three major prizes valued up to $3,000.

More information, including the competition poster, guidelines and entry forms at: www.schools.nsw.edu.au/events/statecompetitions/enviro_inspiro/index.php

Congratulations to the winners of Enviro Inspiro! 2011:

• 1st prize ($3,000): Menai High School: Re-educate the Cockies
• 2nd prize ($2,000): Chatswood High School: Red and Yellow
• 3rd prize ($1,000): St George Girls High School: Beyond the Gates

Second Strike
Events Calendar 2012

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Details from Second Strike 115a High Street, Kew 3101 www.second-strike.com T: 03 9853 0600; F: 03 9853 0661; E: info@second-strike.com

Switched On To Learning Reprinted!

The Connect publication Switched On To Learning: Student Initiatives in School Engagement has been reprinted and copies are available again from us. The 52 page cartoon-style book for teachers and others, was 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.

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.
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<td>copies</td>
<td>Student Councils &amp; Beyond §</td>
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<td>... copies</td>
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<td>Reaching High (with DVD)</td>
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<td>Democracy Starts Here</td>
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<td>A Foxfire Christmas (1 available) §</td>
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<td>Foxfire 9 (1 available) §</td>
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<td>... copies</td>
<td>Students and Work (maximum of 10 copies per order)</td>
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<td>... copies</td>
<td>SRC Pamphlets Set (1988) (2 sets available) §</td>
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($) check availability before ordering; * discounted rate for current and new subscribers to Connect

B: Total for publications: $...........

NOTE: all amounts include 10% GST and postage/packaging within Australia

(Postage: Outside Australia add $10 pa to subscriptions and $5 per copy of publications $...........)

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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.

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.

Connect: From Print to Digital

Having boldly announced in the last issue that Connect will cease publication of print copies in 2013 after issue 200, and only be available electronically (and for free) from that point, we have been thinking about how this will happen. There will be more information about this in the next issue (#196 - August 2012) and all current subscribers will be contacted directly later in the year. But one immediate implication is that Connect will now only accept new subscriptions for one year - and we have therefore removed the 2-year option in the subscription form (see opposite). More on this later!

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:

The Experience of Education: The impacts of high stakes testing on school students and their families (Polesel, Dulfer and Turnbull: Whitlam Institute, University of Western Sydney, NSW) Literature Review; January 2012

Inspire (DEECD, Melbourne, Vic) Issue 2: March 2012

Research eLert (DEECD; Vic) March 2012

Student Advocate (VicSRC, Melbourne, Vic) Vol 6 No 2; April 2012

YAPRap (YAPA, Surry Hills, NSW) April-May 2012

Yikes (YACVic, Melbourne, Vic) Vol 10 Edition 1; February 2012

Youth Studies Australia (Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies, Hobart, Tas) Vol 31 No 1; March 2012

International:

Rethinking Schools (Milwaukee, WI, USA) Vol 26 No 3; Spring 2012

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:

Dr Sally Varnham Broadway (NSW)

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!

April 2012
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.**

Back copies of Connect are available on-line for free!

research.acer.edu.au/connect/