STUDENT VOICE:
Hip Hop for Social Justice

- Teach the Teacher: at Middle Years + Secondary College
- Cascading Student Leadership
- Primary School SRC Network: SLUG
- VicSRC: Teach the Teacher; Regional Conferences; Congress
- VISTA: Connect to Tech
- Student Voice Initiative in Canada
- Print to Digital: Your feedback

Resources:
- A Hand-y Evaluation Tool
- A Guide to Student Voice
- Civics & Citizenship Draft Curriculum
- PENA: ReThinking Schools
- Stepping Out; Breaking Through
- Research Developments on-line
- NAB Schools First Student Awards
- VicSRC Congress; SRC Awards
- Connect on Facebook
Well, it has arrived: the second age ... the second life of Connect. As I said last issue: from now on, it’s all electrons!

Production of this first on-line issue of Connect has also been a great learning experience for me. I’ll take it slowly, not making massive changes ... yet. So this electronic Connect looks very much like a print Connect from the past few years, with some exceptions and additions. In the future ... maybe we’ll change to a blog, or produce more frequent smaller issues, or larger issues more seldom, or ... And Scott Duncan from VISTA is already talking about a Connect app. What do you think?

Changes: Most obviously, Connect is now published in full colour. The restrictions on printing close to the edges of pages have been eased, so I’ve felt a new freedom in the layout of this issue. Both of these design elements have previously been restricted by printing costs, as have limits on the number of pages in an issue. I’ll keep total pages in multiples of 2 (rather than the multiples of 4 involved with print), but have been able to include extra pages in the issue. (I must keep in mind that you might want to print out the issue yourself, so: no essential information at the edges of pages ... and not too many pages for you to print out!)

The freedom to add pages has also meant the ability to include fuller information about relevant conferences and seminars. So there’s information here about interesting events in Sydney (page 8), Geelong (page 28) and Footscray (page 30).

Electronic publishing also potentially speeds up production turn-around times, so Connect can be more up-to-date with events and reports. That also depends on contributions coming in by the set deadlines. My resolution (to myself and to you) is to keep tightly to deadlines: the end of every second month (so for issue 202, the deadline is the end of July) – and then e-mail the issue to you early in the scheduled month.

Your stories are vital to continued publication of Connect. An electronic format should also permit more interaction between contributors, including comments on articles. How will that happen? We’ll see as we explore it.

Finally, electronic publishing enables Connect to add links within articles. If you hover your cursor over some of the web and e-mail addresses you will see that they are ‘live’; clicking on them will take you to the appropriate web page or e-mail address. (I’m teaching myself how to do this with this issue; some may not yet work perfectly - let me know if you can see any improvements.)

So it’s a new journey for me - and perhaps for us all. While publication in this way removes printing and postage costs, it doesn’t leave Connect cost-free. Many thanks to everyone who has donated recently to keep us alive (see page 35). Your continued support would be most appreciated (e-mail me and ask about EFT methods of payment).

I’ve included some initial feedback (page 32) and would love to hear from you. What suggestions do you have? What can you contribute? And please let others know about Connect (pass it on) - and invite them to contact me to be added to the e-mail list.

Roger Holdsworth

Next Issue: #202: August 2013
Deadline for material: end of July, 2013

Why does Connect exist?
Connect has been published bi-monthly since 1979.

It aims to:
• document student participation approaches and initiatives;
• support reflective practices;
• develop and share resources.

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Finding their voice: hip hop in schools

Music has had a long and complicated relationship with social movements. Activists have used it as a tool to educate, to inspire and even to anger, all in the hopes of influencing public opinion or government policy. Whether the music might have been written solely for a particular cause, or been co-opted to represent a cause regardless of the writer’s original intention, music has been a useful tool for galvanising public support and educating citizens about issues as diverse as the environment, land rights, indigenous affairs, fiscal policy and historical events. One need only look at examples like La Marseillaise from France, linked to the French revolution, or Beds are Burning by Midnight Oil, with its close association with the green movement in Australia, to realise the power of the music and the lyrics.

However music has not penetrated all sections of society equally. One area where music as a tool for social change has not entered is that of the school. In an era, at least in Australia, where there is a growing emphasis on a rigid Australian curriculum with only very limited opportunities to contextualise the syllabus, music – and especially the music that young people listen to – seems to have a limited domain. As an example, in NSW the only mention of hip hop is in the dance syllabus, and this reference makes no mention of the efforts of education and social change linked to the music and culture, instead classifying it solely as a style of dance. This separation of the art from its social context strips from it its value and authenticity. Hip hop grew out of the poor social conditions in New York in the 1970s and 1980s, and developed into a worldwide social movement through organisations like Zulu Nation. In that time, the music itself, and the artists that make it, have become synonymous with social justice and empowerment of marginalised groups – regardless of the countries from which it originates. To not address the way that the music in hip hop is an expression of this culture, is limited in the extreme.

This failure is a missed opportunity by educators, and music can and should be used in a variety of different ways, and in numerous curriculum areas, to deliver concrete and powerful curriculum objectives, as well as other important life skills for students. In particular, the creation and consumption of music by students can aid the development of student voice by providing students with an artistic way to present their ideas and
feelings, and so engage with the schools and the broader community.

An example of this approach is McCarthy Catholic College’s Hip Hop for Social Justice program. In this program, implemented over a couple of years, a selection of students who had been identified as being disengaged or marginalised were, each year, invited to participate in a 12 hour-long course, run over the space of three weeks. During this time, students engaged with the work of hip hop musicians from around the world, were mentored by a current artist, and then wrote and recorded their own song about an issue that they felt was important. The purpose of the program was to develop the skills of the students in using the IT resources, to encourage re-engagement with the school’s work, and to provide a platform for students to speak about issues in the local and global community that they felt were important. This speaking was then intended to act as a mechanism for social change; that is the music and songs would provide access for the young people to debate and discuss, and inspire them and others to take action to address the issues that they spoke about.

**Hip Hop in Education**

In a twist that may be surprising, hip hop has always had connections with concepts of education and school. It’s not a coincidence that older hip hop artists are referred to as ‘old school’ and new artists as ‘new school’. In fact, the earliest generations were conscious of the pedagogical content of their work: Chuck D from Public Enemy explained that his songs were like a ‘seminar.’ And let’s not forget Dr Dre: why would an artist self-consciously give himself a title from academia, if not to emphasis the didactic elements of hip hop? (Mitchell, 1998).

At the heart of the Hip Hop for Social Justice program was the desire to engage young people in a process of what Freire (1970) described as conscientisation or consciousness-raising. In other words, we, as teachers and facilitators, were seeking to provide the participants with experiences and skills that would allow them to take more ownership over their lives – to become subjects, rather than objects in the educational system. Crucial to this process was young people learning that they already have knowledges that are of value, and are capable of sophisticated linguistic and communicative skills. Many of the young people involved in this program had already written, or tried to write, songs and lyrics. These lyrics demonstrated a complex understanding of language, its use, and the way that language and society interact. For example, in the song *Six Hours of Pain* (an excerpt of which is presented in this article), students create a dense lyrical tapestry referring to religion (‘like Jesus carrying His cross’) and popular music and culture (‘everyday I’m shuffling’) in a way that shows an understanding of the way that meaning is constructed, as well as a humorous and critical view of society. This shows the level of understanding and skill students already possess; a question an educator must ask is why these skills and understandings are often absent in a child’s ‘normal’ school work.

Hip hop songs are a good match for this kind of educative. According to Morrell and Duncan Andrade, they are rich in literary qualities like imagery, metaphor, tone and structure. In addition, they can, ‘be used as a bridge linking the seemingly vast span between the streets and the world of academics’ (2002, p89).

Hip hop songs were used in Hip Hop for Social Justice to meet a number of crucial goals. Firstly, students were encouraged to explore both hip hop songs that they knew well, and also songs that they didn’t – those from different countries and cultures. The aim of this activity was to encourage the students to develop the skills necessary for critical analysis. This skill is vital for students’ future lives, as well as their academic success.
In addition, students were encouraged to write their own songs about specific issues in their local community. This was important because students were now able to use their own skills and knowledges – thus positioning themselves as teachers and subjects – to contribute to their local community, rather than as the passive recipients of knowledge deemed important by teachers. For once in their educational lives, they were in a position of determining what was important, and how they were going to speak about it, rather than being told what to do and how to do it. This kind of activity would necessarily be empowering for students.

**Hip Hop for Social Justice**

*Hip Hop for Social Justice* was an idea developed by Fulbright scholar, Akesha Horton, and myself as a teacher at McCarthy Catholic College. Akesha was working in Australia with hip hop artists, and was invited to McCarthy to run a program for students based on the principles of global citizenship and critical thinking. Over the course of two rotations, between 2011 and 2013, a total of 20 students undertook the program. The program changed from year to year as the students involved refined the process, but it was generally based on the same structure, which shall be discussed later.

The first step was the selection of participants. This fell to myself, as I was a teacher at McCarthy, and knew the student body well. It was important to garner the support of the principal, teachers (who would have to agree to students missing class in order to participate in the program), parents, and students. I consulted with staff at McCarthy to identify any students who either had a specific interest in hip hop, or who staff were conscious of as being marginalised. This approach identified six possible students. Using this as a starting point, I approached these students and asked if they would be interested in attending some hip hop workshops. Most students were in favour of this, and were also able to recommend other students who would be able to benefit from the workshops. This ‘snowballing’ method of gaining participants was quite effective and soon led to a suitable number of participants.

Recent research undertaken by staff at McCarthy has identified that students feel that their lessons lack relevance to their lives. The lessons were described as ‘boring’ and ‘uninteresting’ and students had commented that teachers make little effort to link what they are learning to the lives of the students. Another commonly cited concern was that the students felt that the teachers did not understand what the students were talking about, or what their lived experiences were and, perhaps more concerning, they were making no effort to do so (from McCarthy’s Learning Evaluation Survey, 2011).

This kind of complaint from students is hardly new; Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2008) have previously identified the lack of achievement amongst urban youth (especially urban youth of colour) as well as their concerns with the lack of relevance of traditional curricula, and have advocated the use of popular culture, in a critical fashion, to remedy this lack of achievement. In particular, Morrell and Duncan-Andrade recommend the use of critical analysis of hip hop in order to develop academic literacies. Although Morrell and Duncan-Andrade’s work is located in the United States, it was the belief of Akesha and myself that there were important lessons that could be adapted to an Australian context. With this in mind, the *Hip Hop for Social Justice* project was developed. Akesha Horton and I developed a series of workshops to run for approximately 12 hours. These workshops were meant to serve these main purposes:

- to engage in a dialogue with students about the critical issues that are present in their community;
- to identify the ways in which these critical issues, and other similar issues on a global scale, have been explored by hip hop artists and other musicians;
- to encourage creative, critical responses to community issues in the form of hip hop music; and finally
- by engaging in the project, students would become more capable and confident in their own academic ability, leading to improved results.

These workshops would be launched by an outside expert (in this case, *L-Fresh*, a local Sydney hip hop artist was invited to launch the program). The sessions then did a number of different things. Firstly, students had the opportunity to reflect upon their own hip hop listening habits: what musicians did they like? Who were they currently listening to? This was a novel experience in and of itself for most of the students, who had never had this kind of conversation with an adult. It became even more novel – and more challenging – when students were asked to explain what it was about those particular songs or artists that they found so appealing. This sharing took the form of students playing songs for other students – and the teachers – through the classroom speaker system. Lyrics, and where available,
video clips, were analysed to determine what was 'good'.

The next section was a brief introduction to the history of hip hop – and how hip hop has had a profound impact on the world. This took the form of a number of films, including How Hip Hop Changed the World. Again, students were invited to share films they had watched as well. This section segued into a discussion about global hip hop, and students were introduced to some other hip hop artists from different backgrounds of whom they might not have heard.

The final section was based on the students writing their own hip hop songs. This took the form of brainstorming around a particular issue of importance to the students – either a school or community issue – and then the participants crafted their own songs based on their feelings about this issue. These songs were then recorded at the Learning Exchange in Mt Druitt, where the Catholic Education Office of Parramatta has a small recording studio. This was a crucial part of the program: it was a final performance of the work of the students, and brought authenticity to their work. Students were now being treated as artists – given time in a recording studio, working with a music technician to prepare their song. This ‘real-world’ experience lent weight to the whole program.

The songs were then mastered, and students were presented with a CD with their song, and a number of copies that they could distribute as they wished. Most students decided to give these to family and friends, although a number of students watching excerpts from a number of films, including How Hip Hop Changed the World, again, students were invited to share films they had watched as well. This section segued into a discussion about global hip hop, and students were introduced to some other hip hop artists from different backgrounds of whom they might not have heard.

Findings from the Project

The Hip Hop for Social Justice project was successful in a number of different ways. Firstly, and most obviously, the students who took part in the project enjoyed the process. A number of them commented that it was a novel experience to be learning something in which they were interested. They also commented on the way that they enjoyed the process - that is, being asked to share their own knowledge, rather than being treated as passive recipients of other people’s knowledges. It is my belief that this approach led to the higher levels of engagement in this program than in other courses. The students who were involved enthusiastically attended all sessions of the project, and even completed blog posts for reflection in their own time, which is more than they had previously been doing in other subjects at school.

Another point that should be mentioned is the importance of the authenticity of the project (as seen by the students). The fact that L-Fresh started off the project, rather than a teacher, meant that students felt that the project itself was more real and authentic than other work that they had undertaken at school. They respected L-Fresh because he was in the field; I am unsure that the project itself was more real and authentic than other work that they had undertaken at school. The most important finding from the Hip Hop for Social Justice project was in relation to the developing global sensibilities of the students who were involved. Students were asked to catalogue their listening habits at the start of Hip Hop for Social Justice. Most of the students involved listened to mostly American hip hop, with perhaps a very limited addition of Australian hip hop. Part of the project was aimed at introducing students to a broader understanding of hip hop. To this end, students watch hip hop from France, Japan and the Congo. What was pleasing, from a teacher’s perspective, was how quickly students became interested in these other nationalities. Even when the artists were not singing in English, students made good use of Google Translate to try to understand the themes of their songs, and these different styles of hip hop influenced their final products.

The most important finding from the program is that it was a vehicle for students to express their own thoughts about matters that they felt were important. Students were encouraged to write songs about any social justice issue that they wanted; originally, a number of students tried to take on a different persona, and to write about drug abuse and violence, but their efforts failed, as these themes were probably outside their own lived experiences.

On the other hand, once students had identified a theme that they did know something about, they were able to write a much more complete song. This is best evidenced in the song Six Hours of Pain. The students who wrote this song felt that it was unfair of the school to mandate kind of school bag that they had to bring to school, and wrote this song about this issue. In the lyrics of the song, they liken themselves to Christ carrying His cross, and use densely packed allusions and even humour to get their message across.

Another interesting point was when asked whether they wanted to play the song for the principal, the two boys (in this example) chose not to do so. For them, it was enough to have
expressed their opinion and shared the song amongst their friends. Other students did request that their song be played to the principal, and then engaged with her in a discussion about the meaning of their lyrics. I think that this was a novel – and powerful learning experience – for both the students involved and the principal, who had not listened to much hip hop music before!

It is my hope, as the Hip Hop for Social Justice program extends into its third iteration, that students will continue to grow in confidence and will start to feel able to share their work beyond their friendship networks, and into the wider community. This is a crucial part of the work; although Hip Hop for Social Justice might be considered successful simply by virtue of the fact that the students have had a chance to speak about something that they think is important, this is only a limited success to my mind. As a teacher, I believe that such a critique is only half the job; the next step is to take action to address particular issues within the community in order to make society more just for everyone.

When asked about this, students did talk about what that kind of action might look like; I was surprised to hear them discuss ideas like a civil disobedience campaign in the school, with everyone bringing in brightly coloured bags, for example, or the importance of building partnerships and alliances between the student body and the teachers in order to bring about lasting change. Of course, developing the attitudes and skills necessary for such action is not done quickly or easily; schools themselves need to consider how they can change in order to make such action possible, and, although students might have felt more empowered through Hip Hop for Social Justice they were still relatively inexperienced in the next steps. Perhaps this is an area in which the program can grow in the coming years.

In conclusion, then, hip hop certainly has a place in the development of student voice in schools. The main attraction of this method of developing student voice is that it allows students to use an art form that they are familiar with to communicate issues about which they are passionate. In this way, it is good combination. Of course, there are important factors that will limit or enhance the effectiveness of projects similar to Hip Hop for Social Justice. Firstly, it is important to recognise that Hip Hop for Social Justice was based on the students’ own interests – that is, hip hop culture and music. Should these not be present, it would be unlikely that the program would succeed. Furthermore, it is important that the program contains elements of choice – students needed space to demonstrate their own knowledge about these matters. Finally, the project should be as authentic as possible – and authentic in students’ eyes; in the case of Hip Hop for Social Justice, this authenticity was demonstrated in two ways: through the involvement of L-Fresh to start the project, and through the trip to the recording studio to conclude the project.

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Works Cited
The Justice Citizens Project is a youth participatory action research project that took place in 2012 at McCarthy Catholic College. Facilitated by Keith Heggart FRSA, a teacher at the school, the project invited Year 9 students to take charge of their own learning by creating films about a wide range of local issues. Inspired by Paulo Freire and other critical pedagogues, Keith encouraged the students to investigate topics of interest to them, such as environmental degradation of the Nepean River, domestic violence and teenage pregnancy. He then challenged them to both document their findings and attempt to enact positive social change in their local communities.

In his talk, Keith will present the findings of the project along with examples of the students’ filmwork. This project has been supported through the RSA A+NZ’s 3P’s initiative.

RSA A+NZ AGM 2013

Paul Vittles, Chairman of RSA A+NZ, will provide a short annual report and a financial statement at 2.00pm.

Canapés will be served from 1.30pm. Free entry. Open to Fellows & guests.

RSVP

Please RSVP if you are intend joining us, at: http://rsaanz15062013.eventbrite.com.au/
For more details on RSA A+NZ, see:
www.rsaanz.org.au
Follow us on twitter: www.twitter.com/thersa_anz
Also see: www.theRSA.org
Student Leaders United Group Meets Again

A student forum was held early in March, 2013, bringing together over 50 student representatives (and their support teachers) from five primary schools in Mount Gambier. At the previous forum in March 2012 (see Connect 194-195, April 2012: page 15), the students decided to term their group SLUG: the Student Leaders United Group.

The purpose of the forum was to share ideas between SRCs in these schools, and to build the skills of the students involved. Because this forum was held early in 2013, there was a need also to introduce new students to the idea of an SRC and what it could do.

Hence, following some introductory games that mixed students and had them find out about the experience of other students, the first session asked each school to give a report about the structure of their SRC, and what had already happened this year. Each school prepared and gave a two minute report.

Building on this, we asked: “Why do we have SRCs?” “What’s in it for those involved?” “What’s in it for schools?” The students brainstormed around these question in mixed groups, drawing on their different experiences. Students were then asked to think about what they wanted to learn or gain from their involvement – and hence students started to consider how they could support all students to be leaders, not just those selected for the SRC.

After morning tea, there were further activities about being a representative. In the same mixed groups, students sorted various descriptors of student behaviour into ‘good’ and ‘bad’ piles, giving reasons for their choices. Some of the descriptors puzzled them: “This might look bad ... but then it might have good aspects”, so they started to form a third pile of descriptors that were neither ‘good’ nor ‘bad’, but more subtle. They shared some examples between groups.

This activity then was formalised into writing role statements for representatives. Because structures differed between schools, the students re-grouped into school groups and started to draw up ‘wanted’ posters for various representatives. As this progressed, students realised they needed to be clear about the difference between statements of what a particular representative would do, and what qualities that representative should have. Some of the posters are re-constructed here.

Working effectively in a group was tackled through some cooperative team games (‘knots’ and ‘turning over the boat’), followed by reflection on what was learnt about teamwork. The students made points about the impact of the size of the group, the forms of communication (in some of the games, the students were asked not to talk) and the particular roles and styles of individual leadership.

In the afternoon, the students were introduced to the POOCH method of problem-solving: Problem / Outcome / Options / Choose / How did it go? After some discussion of this, they were asked to apply this to some scenarios. These provided a dilemma and each small group of students was asked to discuss a problem, use POOCH to come up with some options to achieve the desired outcome, and then choose one to show by way of a brief role play.

The day wrapped up with a quick discussion of future directions: did the group find the day useful, did they want to continue meeting ... and where to now? Students then completed an evaluation sheet.
Evaluation

Students were strongly positive about the day, with the great majority saying it was ‘pretty good’ or ‘brilliant’. Similarly, almost all students said they learnt ‘some’ or ‘lots’. No students indicated that it was ‘boring’ overall, though some found aspects (usually associated with writing) boring; overwhelmingly they enjoyed the day, with a small majority going further to say it was ‘great fun’. In particular, students valued ‘meeting new people’, learning new, useful or cool things and being involved in activities that were ‘hands on’ and ‘fun’.

When asked to say what they had learnt, the overwhelming idea mentioned was the POOCH problem-solving approach. But students mentioned a total of 80 examples of learning. Commonly identified learning areas were: what makes good leaders and representatives, ideas from other schools, and what an SRC means and why we have it. There were also several mentions of personal skill development in the areas of confidence, communication, organisation and teamwork and group cooperation. Some students identified more abstract messages as things they had learnt: “That it is not all about you/no student is more important than another student”; “be the best you can be”; and “student voice is important.”

In looking at improvements in the day, there were about 25 varied ideas; less talking, shorter lunch, more games/more fun, stay for longer, make it shorter, more people from your own school in the groups, more schools, fewer writing activities, less time sitting down, better processes for forming groups, and more communication skills. Others reflected more on their own improvement: “being more involved and speaking up”; “increase my listening and confidence”; “join in”; and “don’t embarrass myself”. Finally, a couple of students specifically suggested inviting Principals of all the schools to attend next time.

Teachers also enjoyed the day, commenting on the ways in which students worked together and the positive process of challenging the thoughts and ideas of the students. They saw themselves as learners alongside students and enjoyed working with the students. Finally, both students and teachers suggested that these schools should find ways in which they could work together more frequently.

WANTED
SRC Representative

To:
- Listen
- Attend meetings
- Take minutes
- Report
- Share

Are you:
- Team worker
- Sensible
- Responsible
- Confident
- A good listener
- Persistent
- Organised

How:
Get you speech ready! MacPark wants you!

WANTED
Waste Watch Warriors

Required to:
- Host assemblies
- Act on behalf of the school
- Tour guests around the school
- Show and explain sustainability programs

You should be:
- Confident
- Able to attend meetings
- Able to use initiative
- Work as a team
- Not be scared to share your ideas
- Organised
- Respectful
- Persistent
- Inclusive of others
- Helpful

If so, you need to:
Apply with an application stating why you think you should have this role. Then you may be short-listed for an interview. You will be chosen from there.

Student Leaders:
• run assemblies      • run acquaintance

You are required to:
- Attend all meetings
- Help the school
- Encourage others
- Promote ideas
- Work as a team
- Speak confidently
- Attend all specialised events
- Share ideas

You should be:
- Helpful
- Persistent
- Inclusive
- Respectful
- Committed
- Confident
- Organised
- Resilient

For further information, contact
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A Middle Years Student Voice Team Leads Teach the Teacher

If you, as students, could make changes to your school, what would you want to work on? The curriculum? Student-teacher relationships? School structures? And how could you, as students, start to build partnerships with teachers, to work on these changes together?

Middle Years students (Years 5-8) at Malvern Central School in Melbourne’s southern suburbs are currently involved in leading discussions with their teachers about the issues of concern to them. They recognise that they are aware, every day, of many areas that need addressing, and that they hear student responses to and ideas about their education. So they are using a ‘Teach the Teacher’ approach to enable them to lead discussions within the school, and to support students and teachers to work together around common issues.

The school includes students from Prep to Year 8, so the Middle Years students are the senior students within the school; they are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and for supporting that of others. There are already existing ‘buddy’ programs in the school, in which older students work with juniors, and a long-standing Student Representative Council that is now looking to become more involved with significant representation and change within the school.

The students at the centre of this initiative – a group called Student Voice – identify their purpose as “building student voice in their school”. They aim for teachers and students to work together to improve relationships and learning and teaching; they say: “we are trying to change things so that learning is better for everyone”.

Teach the Teacher

The Teach the Teacher approach was developed by secondary school students through the VicSRC, the umbrella body in Victoria of Student Councils. It is a program in which students lead professional development sessions for teachers within their school around issues identified by students (and later, by teachers). It was initially trialled in two secondary schools in Melbourne, and the processes used there have been documented in a resource – a manual – that is available on the VicSRC website: www.vicsrc.org.au/resources/representplus

Support is now for being provided by the VicSRC (with funding from the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development) for the extension of this approach to a further 10 schools across the state in 2013.

However, Malvern Central School began its own journey to build student participation in student-teacher discussions of learning and relationships in the school in 2012. It is part of a small group of Victorian schools exploring ‘Student Voice’ within a National Partnerships-funded program on teacher development. The school decided to utilise the Teach the Teacher initiative as a focus for their work, after hearing from one of the VicSRC students involved in the initial program development.

The Student Voice Team

Ten students from Years 5 and 7 were invited to be members of the Student Voice team late in 2012. The focus was on the school’s middle years, with students chosen who would be in Years 6 and 8 in 2013, and who were enthusiastic to take a lead in discussions with teachers. Some of these students were members of the school’s SRC and provided a link between these groups.

The Student Voice group was introduced to the ‘Teach the Teacher’ idea at an inter-school student workshop late in 2012, and began to discuss possibilities for their own directions. In Term 1, 2013, the team revisited the overall purposes and ideas, and then brainstormed possible categories for their investigations. This also included considering possible questions that students could ask teachers, and statements that students would like to make to teachers. In doing so, they talked with fellow students in order to get a broader understanding of issues for all students.
Possible categories of concern to students emerged as: **School Programs and Curriculum, Student-Teacher Relationships, Homework, School Organisation, and Equipment and Resources.** The Student Voice team decided that it would like to build on the discussions by formally surveying middle years (Year 5-8) students (using Survey Monkey).

The team met several times early in the year (during class time) to discuss what made ‘good questions’, and decided to focus further on three areas: ‘Student Curriculum Choice’, ‘Use of Facilities’, and ‘Homework’. They presented at a student assembly, letting their peers know what they had been doing and how they were now to be involved. This also further informed the teachers at the assembly about the project. Parents of the Student Voice students were also formally invited to the assembly with a written invitation co-constructed by the students.

Soon after the assembly, in the last week of Term 1, all Year 5 to 8 students were given time to complete the on-line survey. Student Voice members facilitated the students’ completion of the survey, answering queries and giving clarification where needed.

With 146 responses in from students, the Student Voice group met early in Term 2 meeting to discuss and analyse the survey results. They drew up powerpoint slides presenting the main outcomes on each of the three categories.

**Staff Information**

Parallel with the students’ initiatives, the Principal presented to all teaching staff about the context of this initiative. This included background material on the intentions and benefits of enhanced student voice, and the connection of this to the students’ initiatives. The staff was strongly engaged, asking questions and responding thoughtfully to the six areas of possible ‘partnerships’ drawn from Michael Fullan’s work (see **Connect** 197).

This provided the school’s leadership team with lots of comments to discuss with the students, to add to the data they would draw from the students through the survey.

**Student Voice**

The survey was conducted in three phases. The second phase involved staff completing a questionnaire provided by the students. The Principal presented to all teaching staff the main outcomes on each of the three categories.

**First Professional Learning Session**

In mid-May, the first staff Professional Learning session, led by students, was held at Malvern Central School. The Student Voice team set up a space in a large classroom area, gathered all staff together and provided them with name-tags. They introduced the intentions of the session and explained what would be happening. First, they organised two groups of the teachers to take part in an ‘ice-breaker’ game – the ‘helium stick’ – that had everyone laughing and relaxed.

The student team had prepared and showed powerpoint slides that explained their survey and its results.

From this session, the teachers also became fully aware that the students would be facilitating a Professional Learning session in mid-May, based on the analysed survey results and teacher responses to the staff discussion.

The Principal also outlined the Student Voice project in the school’s newsletter, as well as keeping School Council up to date, so that the whole school community had an understanding of what was evolving through the project and what this meant for the students. It was fitting and timely to place it in the newsletter given the official launch at assembly.

**Outcomes So Far**

The Student Voice team met a couple of days later to review what had happened and to start to plan the next steps. They brainstormed within a PMI structure.

The things that they saw working well included: “We were well prepared ... The ice-breaker went well ... The slide show was great.” “There were good discussions ... The teachers were cooperative ... Teachers were interested in what the students said ... There was great interaction between teachers and students ... Every teacher was involved.” “It was exciting and different ... and fun!!!”

The things that could have been improved included: “Just reading off the powerpoint ... The seating patterns in the groups.” “The reporting back, that meant that some teachers were tuning out at the end.”

And it was interesting to note: “Our worries didn’t happen ... Everyone had lots to say ... We heard teacher perspectives.” “Next time: include all groups in the game ... And maybe a wrap-up game.”

Kerry Clayton, the Principal of the school, commented later: “I am really proud of the way the project is going at the moment. The students in the Student Voice group have certainly come a long...”

**David Hargreaves, puts ‘student voice’ as one of the gateways to personalising learning and suggests:**

*The idea of community most neatly captures what student voice is about. It is not simply about introducing new structures such as school councils, or about providing other occasional opportunities for students to speak their mind or have their say. It is about forming more open and trustful relationships between staff and students ...*


**Connect 201:**
way in their growth. They have begun to internalise what it is they are involved in. Some unexpected outcomes happened as well: with mentoring and support, one student has overcome his fear of public speaking.”

What now?
This is a ‘work in progress’. The next steps involve the Student Voice team reporting back to a student assembly about the survey results and inviting students to provide further reflections on these. They will also tell students about what happened at the teacher Professional Learning session and where this is heading.

At the same time, the group will begin to plan a further Professional Learning session with staff. They will look at the first session’s information in more detail, analyse it and feed this back to staff with a focus on the questions: “Is there an issue that came out strongly? Are there ideas that can be worked through with students? What action could students and teachers take together to improve this area?”

Already, some possible foci for action are starting to emerge. Under the Facilities heading, students are suggesting they could work with teachers to organise and monitor the borrowing of equipment. Under the Homework heading, students are looking at the purpose and nature of homework across the school and what changes might be possible. Under the Choice heading, the topic of electives has been raised, with possibilities of students defining areas of learning in which they are interested.

Stay tuned – Malvern Central School is on a fascinating journey!

Contact:
For more information, contact: Kerry Clayton, Principal clayton.kerry.l@edumail.vic.gov.au or Saraid Doherty, Assistant Principal doherty.saraid.d@edumail.vic.gov.au Phone: 03 8823 9500
Teach the Teacher Continues

A further round of student-led Professional Learning sessions – Teach the Teacher – have begun at Melbourne Girls’ College in Richmond, Victoria. We were one of the schools that initiated and trialled this approach (see Connect 192 – December 2011: pages 9-10) and it has continued to be well regarded and valued by the school’s leadership and teaching staff.

So we held our first Teach the Teacher session for 2013 recently after school on a Tuesday. There may have been fewer students involved finally than we’d hoped, but it went well.

I spent about six 70-minute sessions with the students during the week before the staff PL, developing ideas and supporting them in speaking with a teacher. The students were a mixed group, some who had been involved previously with Teach the Teacher and some brand new ones. This time spent developing the ideas formed the training for the occasion. Here’s how I approached it.

The first few sessions were spent discussing students’ concerns and some data from surveys of students that we delivered in-house on teaching (eg “The class environment lets me get on with my work”; “Work that is handed in for feedback or assessment is returned in a reasonable turn-around time for assessment, what makes classes ‘interesting’, and what builds confidence. The last two sessions were about rewording questions and deciding on their priority order.

On the day of the Teach the Teacher Professional Learning session, we divided the staff up into their subject areas (English, Science, Maths etc) and had two students per group. Students worked from the question lists they had developed (see the list in the box). There were numbered questions that were included as a reminder of what had been discussed. Basing the groups on subject areas worked well, as the responses to the questions had a context on which the group could agree – eg mobile phone use in Maths compared to PE.

Students took notes from the discussions, and these will be written up for a report to the SRC and to staff.

The staff at the school are getting more used to the idea of Teach the Teacher and are feeling more comfortable with the process – some even look forward to it. The next challenge is to be able to show that the process can produce beneficial and measurable outcomes.

Zack Pretlove
SRC Support Teacher
08835084@mgc.vic.edu.au
Teach the Teacher: Possible Topics and Questions

**Topic: Student Teacher and Substitutes**
- If a class feels like they are not learning anything from a student teacher, what should the mentor teacher do to intervene?
- When deciding which class a student teacher gets, what is taken into consideration?
- What are the teacher’s responsibilities when they take an extra?

**Topic: Classroom Teaching**
- When would a teacher stop explaining a concept/idea to a class when some know, 50/50, or only when a few are left confused?
- How far ahead do you plan for a lesson? Is it acceptable for teachers to leave things to the last minute?
- Is it acceptable for instructions to be vague? How much of an assignment should be explained?
- Do you realise how frustrating it is for students when the assignment sheet and rubric don’t match?
- Do you think teachers purposefully mark students down to avoid giving out too many 100%?
- Have you ever left the classroom – for instance to talk to a teacher, to get printing/photocopying or even for a cup of tea?

**Topic: Behaviour and Rules**
- Do you know the three principles that underpin the student code of conduct at MGC?
- Why don’t some teachers yell when the class gets out of hand?
- What strategies do you use to deal with problem students? (students who are disruptive, abusive etc)
- Are detentions the most effective form of discipline, especially for repeat offenders?
- Do teachers always uphold the policies of the school fairly and evenly?
- Are you as strict with rules depending on the year level of the student?
- Do you think teachers take mobile phones off every student when they see them out in class?
- How long should these phones be confiscated for?

**Topic: Favourites**
- Do you think it’s OK to have favourites, but not show it?
- Do you realise that a teacher’s actions can give the impression that you have favourites?
- Does favouritism affect classroom control eg students who don’t do work, are on phones, or always hog the teacher’s time?
- Do teachers prefer students who don’t ask questions and get work done or students who ask lots of questions?
- We think that a positive student-teacher relationship has a positive effect on learning. Would you agree?

**Topic: Curriculum**
- Who decides on what novels we read or the materials we use? What is the process? Is student feedback taken on board?
- Why do you teach what you teach?

**Topic: The Ideal Classroom**
- What are your expectations from students? Does it change from student to student? Do you think students know what these expectations are?
- What is one thing that students can do to make your job easier?
- Describe your ideal classroom.

**Teacher Questions to Students**
- Why do you need to bring mobile phones to class? Is it really imperative that you know of your friends’ movements from one class to the next? Can’t it wait until recess or lunch?
- Do you get distracted in class when text messages/phonecalls are received? Isn’t it best to wait until the end of the day?
- Do you get distracted in class when text messages/phonecalls are received? Isn’t it best to wait until the end of the day?
- What should we do about students who don’t want to learn?
- Would the students find it beneficial to work in table groups in class in higher years, as is currently done in Year 7?
- How do students find the transition from double classes in Year 7 to single in higher years?

A resource kit for students and teachers interested to implement a Teach the Teacher program at your school has been developed by the VicSRC. It is part of the Represent! Plus resources on the VicSRC website: www.vicsrc.org.au/resources/representplus
Teach the Teacher
Professional Development for teachers with a twist

The story so far...

Teach the Teacher is a school-based professional development program for teachers, led by students. It brings students and teachers together to explore ways to enhance student wellbeing and engagement with the curriculum through improvements to the classroom environment. It provides another perspective on what occurs in the classroom, and enables students, through their Student Representative Council, to be involved in important discussions about learning and teaching.

The Teach the Teacher professional development program began with a resolution agreed to by students attending the 2011 VicSRC Congress. Students recognised the importance of the relationships built between students and teachers and were keen to become more involved with discussions around enhancing student wellbeing and engagement with the curriculum, through making improvements to the classroom environment. The result was an idea that students could run professional development for teachers in ways that would provide other perspectives on what was occurring in the classroom.

Since the 2011 Congress, VicSRC Student Executive members have developed this initial concept. Based on their experience in implementing such an approach in two schools, they created a step-by-step resource for students and teachers to use in implementing a professional development program. The Executive decide to extend the scope of Teach the Teacher to cover both the different learning styles and needs of students as well as ways to improve the learning environments in which students work. The aim of this student-led professional development is to allow students and teachers to work together to achieve positive change in their classroom environment, open up dialogue and develop stronger relationships. It provides a focus for students, through their representative organisation, to become actively involved in issues that are central to the school's objectives.

Following its initial trials, the Teach the Teacher program is currently being extended to a further ten schools in 2013, with support from the VicSRC and funding from the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

The Teach the Teacher approach is tailored to the needs of each school and can be adapted to the school's needs and circumstances. In response to student and teacher identification of issues, the approach can either target areas with a specific focus or take a more general approach. By working in this way, the professional development remains relevant, defined and directed so that schools can use the information gleaned from discussions between students and teachers to make positive changes or to reinforce current practice.

Similarly, the support that the VicSRC will deliver to SRCs and schools is adaptable to students' needs. The program is student-based and student-led. Students, through their SRC or equivalent organisation, are provided training and guidance on how they would like to offer and organise the professional development. They then work alongside teachers to prepare a unique professional development session for the school, based on the needs of the student population, their teachers and the wider school community, and in order to improve learning environments and strengthen relationships. The key element of this project is that students are leading the way and are actively engaged and supported in the process through the training program that the VicSRC has developed.

Teach the Teacher is being piloted in 10 schools across Victoria in the next six months. To support the Teach the Teacher project, the VicSRC has employed a Project Officer, Krista Seddon - who introduces herself here:

My name is Krista Seddon and I am thrilled to be part of this innovative project working with the VicSRC and its Executive. I am passionate about increasing opportunities to increase student voice and I think Teach the Teacher creates a space where students and teachers can openly discuss ideas about improving students' learning and their learning environment.

Ever since I was a student I have been actively involved with the SRC. I was on the SRC throughout my high school years and subsequently as a teacher at Alkira Secondary College. At Alkira I was lucky enough to coordinate the student SRC team.

My role as Teach the Teacher Project Officer involves liaising with schools, supporting teachers and students who sign up to the program and organising and delivering training for student teams to prepare them for running Teach the Teacher sessions. So far I have meet with three schools and I’m looking forward to delivering the first training session soon at Bayside P-12 in Williamstown. We are very excited to have six schools on board so far, but we are still looking for four more schools to sign up.

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If you think it’s something your school would be interested in, please contact Kate Walsh at the VicSRC: coordinator@vicsrc.org.au
VicSRC Regional Conferences 2013

VicSRC Regional Student Conferences enable students to meet together across schools, learn from each other and discuss common interests and issues.

One-day conferences are hosted by local schools and presented by the VicSRC, with interactive programs that enhance student participation and promote active learning. SRC members can share the ideas about the work their SRC has been doing, get ideas from other SRCs in the local area, be challenged to make their SRC more effective, learn how to effectively plan responses to important issues, link their interests to the ongoing work of the VicSRC, and gain new skills and new friends!

Here are accounts of some recent VicSRC Regional Conferences:

Southern Metropolitan Region

We came together in Term 2 to share our experiences and to discuss common ideas. Many enthusiastic students gathered recently at Padua College to discuss issues experienced within schools around the Mornington Peninsula area.

Each participating school reported back on the activities that their SRC had been involved in. This was invaluable: it was great to share ideas across schools about programs we could or have run. From there discussion got flowing between delegates about how schools could adapt existing ideas to their own needs and a lot of friendly feedback occurred about new ideas and about how to improve.

Western Metropolitan Region

As students filed into the activity centre at Braybrook College for the Western Metropolitan SRC Conference, the students kept to their schools. All huddled in small groups (apart from Copperfield College, a mass of 16 passionate students!) discussing what they were expecting for the rest of the day. Some were rehearsing what they would be saying during the showcase of SRCs, while others faced up to the daunting task of talking with strangers.

We began the day with the usual introduction, then straight into the program. We got to hear the amazing work of SRCs from Caroline Chisholm Catholic College, Bayside College, Thomas Carr College, Copperfield College, MacKillop College and the host school, Braybrook College. Everyone was impressed by what other SRCs in the local area were doing and took notes of how they could improve their own SRC.

After lunch, everyone was feeling a tad restless, so we woke them up with a few energisers and created clusters for the local schools. This allowed for a great networking session, with schools teaming together in group projects for their community. A great initiative from the Caroline Chisholm, Bayside and Braybrook College cluster was a student school exchange project. They plan to allow students from younger year levels to experience a new school setting, new people, a new diverse range of teachers and gain new knowledge.

By the end of the event, schools had created vast networks, produced new projects for their own SRCs and added Facebook friends. All day the students opened up their minds and made some new contacts. We finished the day with a group photo to capture the amazing day we all had.

Rachel Cerar, Braybrook College

More reports ... page 20
The 8th Annual VicSRC Congress 2013

Connect 201: 18

Congress brings Secondary School students together from across Victoria to voice their opinions and ideas around education and set the VicSRC’s agenda for the next 12 months.

A Voice for Students

A Vote for Action

When
Friday 2nd - Saturday 3rd August 2013

Where
Oasis Camp, Mt. Evelyn
Melway reference: 120 D3

Who
Year 7 - 12 students

Cost
$90 p/student VicSRC members
$115 p/student non-members
Price includes accommodation, all meals, registration, materials & GST.

Full supervision provided
Further information about Congress and registration forms

For more information contact:
Kate Walsh
VicSRC Coordinator
(03) 9267 3744 or 0411679050
coordinator@vicsrc.org.au
Michael Swift
Congress Coordinator
congress@vicsrc.org.au

REGISTER BY FRIDAY JULY 19, 2013

The VicSRC is funded by the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and auspiced by the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria
Coming to the VicSRC Congress?
Make sure your school is represented!

The VicSRC Congress is running again for its 8th year! This annual gathering of students from SRCs across the state sets the agenda for the VicSRC’s work for the coming year. This year, Congress will be held on Friday August 2nd and Saturday August 3rd at Camp Oasis in Mount Evelyn. Students from Years 7 to 12 are all welcome!

The VicSRC has booked the same great venue as last year, and this year the program – over two days and one night – is even sharper and better.

During this time you’ll get the chance to:
- meet students from surrounding schools and form educational and social connections;
- swap ideas with other delegates about how you can improve your own school!
- participate in workshop groups to develop challenging ideas;
- form and debate resolutions, which, if passed, the newly elected Executive of students will work on for the next year!
- run for election for your own position on the VicSRC Student Executive for 2013-14!

Many people have been involved in the planning this year, and we’ve organised a jam-packed schedule for the 2013 Congress!

Not to give too much away but ... we can expect a visit from Victorian Minister for Education, Hon Martin Dixon, who will be involved in a discussion panel where you get to pitch the ideas and ask the questions!

So make sure you book to attend Congress, as places are limited – and the deadline for registrations is July 19th!

Michael Swift
VicSRC Student Executive Congress Co-ordinator 2013
How do we recognise the great things that Student Councils, student representatives and their support teachers do?

Again this year, the VicSRC invites students to apply for its annual Victorian SRC Recognition Awards. These reward and celebrate outstanding Student Councils throughout the state. We have been amazed by the work of some of the SRCs attending the VicSRC Regional Conferences. So if you think your SRC deserves recognition, hurry and apply - applications close soon!

**Award Categories**

There are four award categories each year - one of these could be your Student Council:

- **The Connect Award for Integration**, recognising SRCs that are strongly connected to the school’s decision making processes (the School Council/Board and its committees), and that are strongly responsive to students’ needs and voices.
- **The Second Strike Award for Enterprise**, recognising SRCs that, through the 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 recognises and highlights the support that teachers provide to SRCs.

**Apply by June 28th**

*We want to encourage all SRCs to apply!*

For further information and application forms please visit the VicSRC Website. Applications close on June 28th.

The awards will be presented at the 2013 VicSRC Congress by the Victorian Minister for Education, Hon Martin Dixon, on the 2nd of August.

Lachlan Hugo  
Recognition Awards Coordinator

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**Inner Metropolitan and North-Eastern**

What do students want? Why do they want this? How can we make it happen? These are some of the many questions raised by the students at the Inner Metropolitan SRC conference at The Mac.Robertson Girls’ High School and the North-Eastern Metropolitan SRC conference at Bundooora Secondary College.

The atmospheres at both conferences were awesome. This gave the students attending an opportunity to tackle issues that arise at their school and at others’ schools. It really allowed for open discussion amongst schools to see what other SRCs do, how they implement their ideas and overcome problems, and how the schools can work together to help each other.

How hygienic are your school’s toilets? This was one idea that branched off from the topic of schools’ facilities and how to improve them. Another big issue coming from these two conferences was about improving student teacher relationships. Schools talked about how they can improve the communication between students and teachers and really open those links. The main idea of how to tackle this was by running a *Teach the Teacher* program at their schools (see the VicSRC website: www.vicsrc.org.au). These conferences allowed for the schools to work together and set up action plans on how they will implement these ideas. This worked well because it made the SRC students feel that they weren’t alone and that they can ask for help and guidance from other schools they were working with.

Students were raving about the conferences: “A great opportunity to learn from other SRCs and a chance to improve your own”; “there needs to be more of them”. Both conferences were a huge success both in helping out schools’ SRCs by giving them support and assistance to run initiatives in their school and to also change their mind-frame - to take this away from just fundraising to actually improving the school environment and student lifestyle at schools.

Edison Ponari, Bundooora Secondary College
Cascading Leadership Among Students

Cascading leadership is the experience of having students facilitate students in a sequence according to their skills, knowledge, and experience. It is different from traditional leadership, which is generally having students command other students according to their interest and ability.

In my experience working with student leadership programs in hundreds of K-12 schools over the last decade, I have discovered that students can be the best purveyors of student leadership skills and knowledge. This is especially true among nontraditional student leaders — the ones who lead their peers in negative ways throughout your school. I have actually found cascading leadership to be a norm among these students, as they rely on self-guidance and peer relationships to meet their needs, as opposed to traditional student leaders who rely on adults.

Cascading leadership offers students the chance they need to mentor, support, and sustain each other as they engage in decision-making activities throughout school. Acknowledging the variety of experiences, knowledge, reflections, and applications of student decision-making can leverage student ability, engagement, and outcomes, in the more effective ways than traditional student leadership. It does this by activating greater effectiveness, ownership, and belonging among students.

In this model:
- Student 1 gives direct instruction, mentoring, and critique to Student 2;
- Student 2 provides instruction to Student 3;
- And so forth.

At the end of the waterfall, Student 5 is acknowledged as the foundation for successful leadership, and as their knowledge, experience, and reflection expands, they will in turn ‘swim upstream’ to new positions of authority. This way even more students can become engaged in leadership by expanding student engagement activities beyond the immediate leaders at the top of the waterfall and increasing the capacity of the school to engage student leaders.

This model offers a new way to visualise how students can support students becoming more engaged in leading themselves, their peers, and their entire school. Cascading leadership among students is best supported by student/adult partnerships, and is one of the very best ways to support Meaningful Student Involvement.

For more information and resources, visit the SoundOut website www.soundout.org or email info@soundout.org

Adam Fletcher

Here are some school-centred articles I’ve been working on recently:

Issues Addressed by Student Voice:
The SoundOut Resource: http://commonaction.blogspot.com/2013/05/issues-addressed-by-student-voice.html

Critical Questions for Meaningful Student Involvement:
The SoundOut Resource: http://commonaction.blogspot.com/2013/05/critical-questions-for-meaningful.html

Finally, you might want to let people know about the Meaningful Student Involvement Deep Assessment. It can be downloaded at: http://commonaction.blogspot.com/2013/05/new-student-voice-evaluation.html

I’m about to complete a new edition of The SoundOut Student Voice Class Curriculum: Teaching students to change schools. It is also going to be posted on Amazon.com when I’m done.

In case you’re feeling adventurous, I have a body of writing that’s community focused through my Freechild Project. In case you want to see, I posted a summary at: http://commonaction.blogspot.com/2013/05/the-freechild-project-publication-guide.html
In order to assist in the transition to the new digital Connect, we now have a presence on Facebook. Find us at:

www.facebook.com/pages/Connect/360372760717566

We’re already posting some news, links and stories there to complement what you see in the print version of Connect. It would be great if you could go there and ‘like’ us, and watch there for news of Connect’s availability on-line - for FREE - in mid 2013!

This idea emerged in the evaluation session of a recent VicHealth workshop. We’ve tried unsuccessfully to find a source to see if it has been published elsewhere. The five areas have been passed on colloquially ... thanks to Jessie Mitchell from YACVic – and wording may vary. Does anyone have any more detail on this, or a source for it? Do you know who invented this?

Roger Holdsworth

Resources: A possible evaluation tool

I give a thumbs up to ...

Key pointers were ...

I’d give the finger to ...

I will make a commitment to ...

I will make links with ...

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

www.asprinworld.com/student_action_teams

Student Councils and Beyond' On-Line!

We’ve almost run out of print copies of the first Connect publication: Student Councils and Beyond (from 2005). And many of the ideas have subsequently been reflected in the Represent! kit from the VicSRC (www.vicsrc.org.au/resources/represent).

So we have made all of Student Councils and Beyond (a compilation of articles and resources from many earlier issues of Connect) available on-line for FREE. It can be downloaded (as one document or in sections) as PDFs from the Connect website. Find it at:

www.asprinworld.com/connect
As ICT becomes more prevalent in our modern society and our students become more confident at using these tools to communicate, why not harness the power of these tools and services to improve the operation, communication and marketing power of your Student Council? In just a few clicks, your SRC members can be alerted to changes in meeting dates, or students across your school can be informed about the latest upcoming event. The introduction of just some of these practices could also help your SRC reduce its printing costs and promote sustainable practices. Let's take a look at some tools and sites that could help out your Student Council.

**E-MAIL:**

Whilst it’s been around for some time now, email is an easy way of keeping in touch with others. You might like to create e-mail lists for SRC members or have students sign up to receive newsletters or updates from the SRC. For students in Victorian Government schools, your school can set you up with an e-mail account on your school's domain name (eg: mymail@myschool.vic.edu.au). Speak to your school’s ICT Co-ordinator or technician about this. Alternatively, there are several free online e-mail accounts you can sign up for.

Distribution lists help make sending bulk e-mail messages easier also by creating a single address that then forwards the same e-mail out to all who subscribe to that list. Check out Google Groups (https://groups.google.com) for more about creating e-mail accounts.

**WIKIs and NINGS:**

A wiki is a website that allows all members to edit and make changes to it. A wiki might be just what your SRC is looking for to share minutes, agendas, action plans or have online discussions between SRC Meetings. Check out www.wikispaces.org for more about creating wikis through Wikispace have no charge and are advertisement free.

**BLOGGING:**

A blog is an easy way of posting information online. All content generated is written as a post that appears on the page with the newest content usually appearing at the top. DEECD has its own blogging platform through Global2 (http://global2.vic.edu.au) for both teachers and students to use.

**SMS SERVICES:**

SMS messages are a great way of getting ‘last-minute’ reminders and changes to plans out to people. Your school may already be using an SMS service to communicate with parents about absences; why not see if the SRC can tap into this to share details of upcoming events?

**WEB CONFERENCING:**

Tools like Skype (www.skype.com) are a great way of bringing people together for a meeting who might not otherwise be able to attend due to timing or location issues. Check out the DEECD Web Conferencing Website (www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/support/Pages/vcc.aspx) for more information about tools you can use to connect with others.

**SOCIAL NETWORKING:**

For secondary students, Facebook and Twitter are other ways of communicating via the tools that students are already using. Set up a page to collect student feedback and discussion around topics or ...

**VIDEOS:**

For those of you struggling to recruit budding actors, you might like to use online animation sites like Xtranormal (www.xtranormal.com) to create your own animated vi.

**MOBILE DEVICES:**

With so many people now carrying smart phones in their pocket, it makes sense to tap into this tool as a way of keeping in touch with others. Sites like The App Builder (www.theappbuilder.com) allow you to easily create a simple web app that others can add to their iPhone, iPad or Android device. You could also add QR Codes (www.qrstuff.com) to posters for people to scan and go to view other online content.

With any technology, it’s important to ensure it meets your school’s privacy policy and ICT Acceptable Use Agreement and that you review the Terms of Service before using a particular tool or website. For more information about using technology to help your Student Council, you can visit the DEECD Learning On Line (www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/Pages/lol.aspx) site. Teachers can also visit Using Social Media: A guide for DEECD Employees (www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/Pages/lolsocialmedia.aspx). The VicSRC Represent! Resource Kit also has a section on using technology effectively. You can download a copy from the VicSRC Website at: www.vicsrc.org.au

**SAVE THE DATE!!!**

VISTA MEET UP - THURSDAY 22nd AUGUST
Details at http://srcteachers.ning.com

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.
Several months ago, while perusing the *Globe and Mail*’s education section, I came across a wonderfully-written piece by a student named Jaxson Khan. The article, entitled “Who’s missing from the education equation,” argues that high school students should be empowered to advocate for their educational interests, thus reflecting the values of cooperation and collaboration within the Canadian education system. Khan, the Executive Director of the Student Voice Initiative (SVI) and a former recipient of Canada’s Top 20 Under 20 prize, seemed to have something special going: an innovative and timely project that I needed to explore in more depth. I consulted the SVI website, sent an email, and waited for a response.

Within hours, Khan sent his response. And as I read through the email, I was stunned. The SVI launched in April 2012, and over the period of thirteen months has made a significant dent on the Canadian education landscape. The movement has gained significant traction in Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta. It has assembled a network of provincial organisations and a roster chock full of impressive young leaders, with Khan leading the coordination effort at the Canadian level. Under the website’s “What do we know” section, Khan and company write that “Celebrating the successes of youth who make an impact on their communities will encourage more young people to do the same,” a statement that certainly manifests itself in reality.

The idea behind the SVI is as follows: each province should legally mandate an education framework that sees a student trustee on all school boards, like the Edmonton Public School Board that is soon up for re-election in October. The student trustees serve as bridges between high school students and policy makers, and are supported by a student senate, school-specific school councils and a network of conferences and professional development events geared toward student advocacy skills. In an email interview, Khan writes “it is incredibly tough starting a national policy change movement. Nonetheless, I think one of our main successes has been making this a national – and even international – conversation. We have talked to students and policy makers from nearly every province. One could say that dialogue is fruitless without action, but where else do we start? We need to begin by getting everyone – students, academics, and policy-makers – on board.”

Over the weeks to follow, Khan and I maintained an email chain that provided additional insight into the organisation’s successes and challenges. I was soon introduced to Claire Edwards, a University of Alberta student entering her second year of Political Science, and current Student Voice Alberta Director. Though geographical limitations prevented Khan and me from meeting in person, Edwards and I agreed to meet at Remedy Cafe on a weekend afternoon.

Though summer was in its early stages, Saturday May 11 was a scorcher. One of the longest days of the year. I had scheduled meetings starting at 8 am in the morning, spending a good four hours traversing the city on foot. Following coffee with a friend at 6 pm, I made my way down to Remedy Cafe for a 7 pm coffee with Claire Edwards, a second-year student whose CV is much the same as Khan’s: remarkable, something that one would expect out of a thirty-year-old looking to consult for McKinsey. Edwards, a TD Canada Scholarship winner, was recently appointed Student Voice Alberta’s Director, and in a short time achieved important gains in her advocacy efforts.

Our discussion opened with an overview of the trials and tribulations of advocacy in British Columbia. When one consults the SVI website, it is clear that Vancouver has been the scene of an interesting education campaign, with the *Vancouver Sun* covering much of the progress. While the BC Liberals and NDPs geared up for a wild provincial elections campaign, Khan and several Canadian student leaders were conducting their own strategic planning. Backed by trustee Mike Lombardi, the SVI has lobbied
current school board trustees to consider a pilot project for 2013-2014. Though the motion narrowly failed, Khan understands that the project is gaining momentum.

Through email, he writes: “The motion unfortunately failed in a close vote, but that meant something – students from across a province and across Canada successfully lobbied hundreds of trustees from 60+ school boards (representing millions of taxpayers and students) to nearly support student voice across the province. We have more than a hundred adult champions in the form of policy-makers, educational administrators, and more, and their support, just as much as the countless students behind this cause in Canada, and around the world, is only the beginning of our success.”

As Claire and I talked, it became clear that despite its initial successes, the SVI is making considerable climbs in its advocacy efforts. Their achievements are covered by national newspapers like the Globe and Mail to local papers in Medicine Hat. They’ve authored mental health policies, promoted awareness for cyber-bullying issues, shaped nutritional standards in a variety of schools and fundraised for several organisations. This centralised effort is strengthening, and with individuals like Edwards and Khan at the helm, there is every reason to expect more of the same.

§§§§

So as Claire and I parted ways, I felt more energised than exhausted. The day was a lengthy one, with little room for repose, but learning about SVI created a spark that kept me smiling as I walked home. Some readers may know of Sir Ken Robinson’s famous TED Talk and RSA Animate video on creativity, where he argues that our educational institutions hinder students, discouraging them from asking questions, moving around, demonstrating entrepreneurial spirit and so on. In other words, our society’s young students are passive learners, ingesting material rather than working with it. The Student Voice Initiative seems a counterforce to this, a movement rapidly bringing a voice to students aged 18 and under across Canada.

And really, there is little reason to resist the policies proposed by the SVI. On May 26, I was fortunate to present at the Alberta Student Leadership Conference (ALSC), an event that brings together over 500 outstanding high school students from Calgary and Edmonton to small towns like Stony Plain, Olds and Drumheller. The students in attendance were imaginative, knowledgeable, curious, enthusiastic and engaged. They are talented leaders, and the 16, 17 or 18 next to their ‘age’ category is little reason to distance them from education policy affecting high school administration.

Up until this point, the Canadian education debate has been open to students of ages 18 and up. Khan, Edwards and the SV team are changing this. And our education system will benefit. If the ASLC is any indication, thousands of students across Canada will put high school trusteeship on the map, not only in Ontario and New Brunswick – which is already the case – but in Alberta, B.C., Manitoba, Quebec and the rest of the country.

Emerson Csorba
www.thewandereronline.com

www.studentvoiceinitiative.org
While some educators see students as recipients of teaching or problems to be solved, more and more recognise students as valuable partners to improve schools.

Students are learning in new ways through activities that used to be just for adults. And they’re learning powerful lessons about schools, communities, and life that they need to. In turn, schools are reaping the benefits that come from working with rather than for students. These benefits include new ideas and energy, and decisions that reflect the world outside of schools where students live every single day.

In much of the education system, however, the idea of engaging Student Voice is still very new, and there may be some apprehension on all sides.

The Guide to Student Voice is a clear, conversational guide on how adults can partner with students to improve schools, and do it successfully. This is an introductory guide for students, teachers, administrators, advocates, and others. It explores Student Voice in the widest possible terms, including learning, teaching, and leadership throughout the education system. It features practical tools, theory, and implementation activities, as well as resources and more. Along with important issues like defining Student Voice, locations and positions throughout schools that can engage students as partners, evaluation, and how to plan for action, the guide explores the important relationship issues that arise when students and adults becomes allies in education.

This, along with practical tips and information, will be a great benefit to school improvement efforts around the world.

About the Author
Adam Fletcher is an internationally-known, award-winning expert in engaging people. Adam has worked with more than 300 K-12 schools in communities of all sizes across the United States and Canada, and has been published internationally. With more than a decade helping schools become more effective places for learning, teaching, and leadership, he contracts with organisations around the world as a public speaker, facilitator, trainer, writer, and consultant, and as a professional coach for educators. Learn more about him at http://adamfletcher.net

The Guide to Student Voice is available at:
www.amazon.com/Guide-Student-Voice-Adam-Fletcher/dp/148499504X

Student Voice Research and Practice Facebook Group

www.facebook.com/groups/studentvoicepage/

This open Facebook group was initially established by Dana Mitra, and is now supported by the work of academics, practitioners and students throughout the world. It provides a valuable community of people working and interested in the area of ‘Student Voice’ - in Australia, USA, UK, Italy and elsewhere – as well as access to useful resources and examples, and up-to-date information about initiatives. You can easily log on and join the group at the above address.
Bright Ideas = Big Wins for Students

NAB Schools First Student Awards Open

A utralian primary and secondary school students with the best ideas for school-community partnerships will be given assistance to bring their vision to life, as part of the NAB Schools First Student Awards. Applications are open online NOW!

All ten winners of the NAB Schools First Student Award will each receive:

• $5,000 in funding for their proposed school-community partnership;
• Mentoring and workshopping support the NAB Schools First network;
• An Apple iPad.

Rebecca Kotow, Head of Education NAB, says students and their schools stand to benefit enormously.

“The NAB Schools First Student Award creates opportunities for students to be incredibly creative and innovative. It is a chance for them to think outside the square about a school-community partnership that will benefit themselves and their peers. Past applicants have been nothing short of inspirational and we cannot wait to see what ideas come in from 2013 students around the country,” she said.

Past NAB Schools First Student Award winners have included a ‘bike bus,’ a soccer match between students and the local police force and a before school breakfast service.

“The beauty of NAB Schools First means any idea could be a winner – as long as it involves a school partnering with the community in a way that benefits students,” said Rebecca.

Now in its fifth consecutive year, NAB Schools First is a partnership between NAB, the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) and the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

Visit www.5000reasons.com.au for further information and to apply for a NAB Schools First Student Award. Applications close 5 pm Friday 28 June 2013.

Australian Curriculum: Draft Civics and Citizenship Curriculum Available for Public Consultation

T he Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) has released the draft Years 3 – 10 Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship for public consultation. Feedback can be provided until 19 July 2013.

The draft curriculum is available on ACARA’s consultation website: www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/consultation. You will need to register on this website to read, review, download or print the draft curriculum and to complete an online consultation survey.

Following consultation, all feedback will be analysed and used to revise the draft curriculum before it is published as the Years 3 – 10 Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship.

ACARA encourages and welcomes the involvement of all educators and the wider community during the consultation process. Please take the opportunity to review the draft curriculum and provide feedback on the Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship.

Robert Randall
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority

Australian Council for Educational Research
ACER’s Research Developments
Now Available On-Line

C ontinuing a ‘trend,’ the Australian Council for Educational Research published the final print edition of its magazine Research Developments in November 2012, after 14 years.

The magazine is now available for free on-line from May 2013. Subscribe at www.acer.edu.au/rd
STEPPING OUT, BREAKING THROUGH: CHOICES AND CHALLENGES IN EDUCATION

27–28 August 2013
Geelong, Victoria
deakin.edu.au/equity/conference
DeakinWorldly.com
STEPPING OUT, BREAKING THROUGH: CHOICES AND CHALLENGES IN EDUCATION

Exploring the issues that impact on the educational achievement of students from diverse backgrounds

Join the conversation:
- learn with and from young people
- hear from inspirational speakers
- investigate issues, generate solutions and break down barriers through interactive workshops
- develop an action plan, make a difference and help improve educational outcomes
- network with others with the same goals:
  - secondary school students
  - current university students including pre-service teachers and health students
  - educators - teachers and school staff
  - university and TAFE staff
  - community services organisations, youth and casework staff, training organisations
  - Commonwealth and Victorian Government staff.

Presentation proposals welcome by 28 June.

27–28 August 2013
Simonds Stadium, Geelong, Victoria
with thanks to the Geelong Cats for the venue

Only $150 for the two-day conference. Register by 28 June.
deakin.edu.au/equity/conference
Inviting all teachers, parents, students, activists & academics interested in rethinking our schools! Registration is free.

Sick of neoliberal stunts? Giving you standardised testing not educational standards, taking from universities to pay for schools, attacking TAFE whilst spending billions on NAPLAN and non-government schools? Do you want to criticise (the response to) Gonski because you want to address low SES children’s needs?

Working harder doesn’t alleviate the pain of working in an adversarial education system? Where is the vision of common and empowering schooling? Yes, admit it, you are ‘old-fashioned’, defending knowledge and access in curriculum, and you are ‘young-fashioned’, seeking educational innovation through collaboration, critical and transformative pedagogy. We have the place for you to have these conversations and more! Feel supported by meeting like-minded people who still have questions and who know communities can and do find their own solutions.

We have invited Rethinking Schools from the US to tell us about how they developed a big curriculum and activist website with a small budget to support teachers on a day to day basis, building communities that nurture, aspire, and give hope. We are united by Paulo Freire’s work towards the ideal of education as the source of individual and societal liberation, transcending ‘interest’-based divisions. We do not divorce you from your students, your class, your co-workers, your passions, your language and your country - we celebrate and thrive on it. We seek the knowledge and skills and distribute them because we love to share (and that is still a legal drug)! Let’s come together to create the change we need for our children & for our sake!
June 2013
Your feedback

As Connect moved from 33+ years of print issues to the new era of on-line publication, I received lots of feedback from you about the value of the magazine. Many thanks for all the comments and also for the financial support (see page 29). I thought you might be interested to read what others had to say (and forgive my indulgence):

Thanks and in appreciation of the wonderful work you do advocating for student participation in schools. It does make a difference! Best wishes as the magazine goes digital. It’s a great resource!

Dr Alison Sewell
Institute of Education, Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand

Thank you for sending out this email and for putting our article in Connect! My classmates and I are honoured to be a part of this issue. It looks fantastic!

Rayven Wray
Eugene, Oregon, USA

What a wonderful privilege to share my vision for 2030 with you and the readers of Connect - much thanks Roger for the opportunity. Having been with Canada’s longest running youth written magazine (Tiny Giant, aka Teen Generation, aka TG Magazine) when we decided to stop print publications (outside of ‘special’ project based editions), there was some sadness along with the reflection of what had been achieved. For more than 50 years we continued a tradition started by high school students in the 1940s - and though difficult, looking back it was the right decision at the right time. That all said - sending you lots of good energy as I have an idea of the feeling when a publication goes from print to digital ...

Roger, although I’ve only been reading you for just over a half decade, I’ve always appreciated every issue I’ve received in the mail. I’ve devoured each one, oftentimes more than once, gleaning inspiration, smelling perspiration, and seeing dedication in this labour of yours that’s beyond all expectations. Thank you for everything you’ve done to build this field, and for the Oz postmark every quarter. I know the future will only build your readership, and I look forward to the first e-copy! Here’s to many happy 1s and 0s in the future...

Adam Fletcher
SoundOut, Washington, USA

Good luck with the movement to on-line publishing. I must admit that I will miss the beautifully presented hard copies. Best wishes for your fantastic interaction with youth and teachers – it is inspirational.

Thérèse West
Watsonia, Vic

Congratulations on such an outstanding achievement!

Stephanie Neumann, Vic

Good luck with the e-copy!

Professor Marie Brennan
School of Education, Victoria University, Footscray, Vic

Many thanks and good luck with the email version!

Peter Mildenhall
Kangaroo Ground, Vic

Thanks for all your great and continuing work for students worldwide.

Victoria Triggs
Alphington, Vic

Going electronic is a great idea. Well done!

Jackie Ohlin
Redfern, NSW

Well done on Connect and looking forward to a ‘hip hop student voice edition’!

Meg Steele
Broadmeadows SDS, Vic

Roger - really interesting articles - nearly read through them all. Really appreciated the space for my voice - just what a 70 year old needed.

Lyn Loger
Nathalia, Vic
As we previously advised, the last issue of Connect was our final print publication. Connect is now, with this issue, only produced electronically (on-line). If you are a subscriber, you will now receive copies by e-mail every two months, or you can download your own (colour) copy of Connect from the Connect/ACER website (where back copies are also archived):

research.acer.edu.au/connect/

Access to Connect is now FREE: no more paid subscriptions. We will continue to provide information, stories, case studies and resources to the widest audience at no cost.

Donate to Support
However this does not mean that publication of Connect occurs at no cost to us - there are still internet and associated costs ... not to mention time (for which we've almost never been paid anyway). So we will now be totally reliant on any donations that you are able to provide to assist our work. These will be acknowledged in each on-line issue.

Back Issues
All issues prior to the last six have always been freely available on the Connect/ACER website (above). We have now added all the remaining issues to this website.

New Subscriptions
If you are finding Connect for the first time, or have not been a subscriber for some time, you are also welcome to join the new e-mail subscription list. Simply e-mail us: r.holdsworth@unimelb.edu.au

The final print issue of Connect heads off to the Post Office (April 2013). After 33 years of trolleys, it’s all on-line from here ...
Connect Publications: Order Form

Tax Invoice:  ABN: 98 174 663 341

To:  Connect, 12 Brooke Street, Northcote VIC 3070 Australia  
e-mail:  r.holdsworth@unimelb.edu.au

Connect On-Line Subscription (6 issues annually e-mailed to you FREE):

Simply supply your e-mail address (below or by e-mail) and name and phone number (in case of bounces). There is no cost; however donations to support Connect's work are appreciated and acknowledged.

☐ I enclose a donation to support the work of Connect.

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ASPRINworld: the Connect website!

www.asprinworld.com/connect

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

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

Connect is now also archived and available electronically:

research.acer.edu.au/connect

All issues of Connect are being archived through the ACER Research Repository: ACEReSearch. Connect issues from #1 to #194 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.

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.

Friends of Connect

By supporting Connect with donations, the following have helped keep us going. This is particularly important as we shift away from paid subscriptions. Even though costs will also drop, there are still costs associated with ongoing publication. To make a donation to the work of Connect, use the form in the Catalogue in this issue. We gratefully acknowledge receipt of the following contributions since the last issue of Connect:

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Local and Overseas Publications Received

Connect receives many publications directly or indirectly relevant to youth and student participation. We can't lend or sell these, but if you want to look at or use them, contact us on:

(03) 9489 9052 or (03) 8344 9637

Australian:

Student Advocate (VicSRC, Melbourne, Vic) Vol 7 No 3; June 2013
TLN Journal (Teacher Learning Network, Abbotsford, Vic) ‘Catering for Difference’: Vol 20, No 1; Autumn 2013
Vocational Education and Training (VET) and young Victorians: a way forward (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic) February 2013
YapRap (Youth Action/YAPA, Surry Hills, NSW) April-May 2013

International:

UP for Learning (Youth and Adults Transforming Schools Together, Vermont, USA) Spring 2013
All back issues of Connect from 1979 to the present (that’s over 33 years!) are now freely available on-line! Thanks to the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), back issues of Connect have been scanned or uploaded 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.

Connect has a commitment to the sharing of ideas, stories, approaches and resources about active student participation. We are totally supported by donations!

Let us know

There may be some gaps or improvements necessary. As you use this resource, let us know what you find. (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!

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