Can students see a future for schools?

- In the Future: Student Visions for Schools and Education
- A Student Voice Journey at a Special Developmental School
- Linking Across the Lines: Student Voice in Cambridge, UK
- VicSRC: Discussing, Debating, Deciding
- VISTA: MeetUp: 22 August
- Student Councils in five schools: What do they do?
- International Student Voice: UK, Europe, Canada, USA

Resources:
- Student Views on why and how ...
  - Why have a Student Council?
  - Why have a statewide student group?
  - What’s the secret of being effective?
- Connect archived and available on-line
- Student Voice Videos
- Scoop.It
- Connect on Facebook
For me, it’s all recently been about conferences: the Student Voice Conference in Cambridge (UK), and then back to Melbourne for the VicSRC Congress. Not surprisingly, this issue of Connect is dominated by reports of and stories from these events.

And not surprisingly, this issue also reflects the focus on the work of Student Councils that was evident through student discussions at the VicSRC Congress. I’ve noted in the past how students arrive at this event constrained by their own perceptions of what it is that SRCs do. So many talk initially just about fundraising, socials or representing the school at public events. But for the last few years, the VicSRC has started its conference by asking these students to imagine what schools could be like. And the ideas pour out. There are visions, dreams and hopes, but also frustrations - at the limitations that students see in schools, at the restricted roles that students play. And at the constrained perceptions of what students and their organisations can do. However, once convinced that they will be seriously listened to, students talk about curriculum and pedagogy, about self-managed learning, about assessment and reporting, about ways to overcome stereotypes - and ways to deal with the rules and attitudes that govern their lives. These issues are reflected in the decisions they then make about the work program for the VicSRC for the year ahead (see page 17).

Several schools have also written about their Student Councils in their applications for the VicSRC’s annual SRC Awards. Some of these stories are in this issue, and others will hopefully appear in Connect 203 in October.

The Cambridge Student Voice Conference was an important international gathering of people whose practices, research, writing and thinking are in this area. But where do such discussions go – beyond being a nice time to talk with people who understand the language and concepts? I was privileged to be part of planning around integrating our work - and we’ll see where the set of ‘working groups’ takes us over the next year (see pages 14-16 for Dana Mitra’s notes of the discussion). The fourth such Conference – and the last one planned in this series – will be held in June 2014, and will seriously reassess this way forward. Might you be there?

This issue of Connect also starts with another ‘work in progress’ about student voice – from Mornington Special Developmental School. Working in a setting whose students have not traditionally been recognised as ‘capable’ of having any voice, this important initiative is exploring practices that have implications for all of us. Read on and enjoy ... and tell us what you’re doing too.

Roger Holdsworth
Here it is – the end of July 2013 – and we are re-reading an article from the August 2012 edition of Connect (#196): “What it means to have a voice”, from Meg Steele of Broadmeadows Special Developmental School (SDS). We’re rethinking what ‘student voice’ really means at our school.

The School Review: Unpacking Communication at Mornington SDS

You could say we started our ‘student voice’ project back in 2011 after a school review identified ‘improving student communication’ as a whole school improvement strategy. Back in 2011, we were already using interactive whiteboards and ICT to enhance multimodal learning, and teachers were using picture symbols to assist with ‘key word’ communication. We were also using Abilities Based Learning and Education Support (ABLES) assessment tools to help identify student learning needs and to track student progress. The ABLES data helped us to identify and target ‘student communication’ as an improvement focus.

At the end of 2011, we re-wrote our purpose and values statements, developed our new strategic plan and, in March 2012, we ran a whole school PD day to review the new Strategic Plan and to identify teaching practices that could improve student communication across the school.

Mornington Special Developmental School is a Victorian Government school that provides individualised education programs for students with moderate to severe intellectual disability who reside on the Mornington Peninsula. Some students also have autism, sensory and physical disabilities.

The school is a small school with approximately 55 students aged between 3 and 18 years. Learning programs follow the AusVels Curriculum but are tailored and modified to meet the individual needs of each student. The school provides a safe and structured learning environment within which students are encouraged to explore the world around them and to experience success in their learning. There is a strong emphasis on maximising student communication and the development of sound personal and interpersonal skills. The school also has strong links with neighbouring primary and secondary schools that provide opportunities for integration activities.
These included:

- Providing more visual supports across the school for communicating daily timetables, class schedules and playground options;
- Embedding the use of PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) across the whole school;
- Conducting PECS training workshops for all staff and parents;
- Expanding ICT resources to include iPad technology and the use of the communication program Proloquo2Go;
- Providing professional development training for all staff in the use of Proloquo2Go;
- Engaging our Professional Learning Teams in Action Research Projects around student communication.

Refining the Improvement Strategy: The Student Voice Initiative

Although teachers were beginning to implement these strategies, teaching and learning across the school was still very much teacher centred:

- Teachers retained ownership of the classroom and the learning activity;
- Teachers decided what was to be taught and how it was to be delivered;
- Teachers thought it important to give students 'choice' within an activity but there was no real focus on engaging students in the decision-making processes around what the teaching and learning activity should be and how it might be learned;
- Students were not routinely involved in Student Support Group (SSG) meetings and Individual Learning Plan (ILP) Goal setting;
- Students were encouraged to make choices but the choices were limited by the teacher making available the choice options and the communication tools;
- Teachers felt they were confined in the choices they offered students by DEECD Policies, curriculum requirements and legal obligations.

As you can appreciate, the 'duty of care' in a special school is very high and teachers must weigh up the risk associated with enabling student choice and each student's capacity to fully understand the implications of the choice they are making.

However, we saw a real need to improve teacher practice by:

- Strengthening the collaboration between teachers and students in the classroom and across the school;
- Involving students in the organisation and ownership of the teaching and learning in the classroom and across the school;
- Developing a learning culture where teachers routinely enable students to take more responsibility for and ownership of their own learning.

We had the opportunity, starting in 2012 and continuing in 2013, to be part of a large Supporting Professional Practice initiative of the Department. Workshops involved with this initiative helped the leadership team (of Principal, Assistant Principal and classroom teacher) to identify the focus for our ‘teacher practice improvement strategy’; we were initially presented with three ‘Peer Learning Group’ options, each aimed at improving teacher practice through:

- Classroom Observation;
- Learning Teams; or
- Student Voice.

What We’ve Done

Having decided that our improvement strategy would be around student voice, the Peer Learning Group organised an introduction to the Teach the Teacher program one morning in late 2012 at Mornington Secondary College. This was led by students from Mornington Secondary College and student representatives from the VicSRC. Students from Malvern Central School and Mornington SDS also joined us at this workshop.

We must admit that we were fairly nervous about how our students from Mornington SDS would react to the workshop and were concerned that they may not have the capacity to understand what was required of them and to communicate their ideas. It was also a new experience for us to hand over the
leadership of the workshop to students. However, we were blown away by the way all students contributed to the success of this workshop.

Our leadership group and our students returned to Mornington SDS committed to the idea of having a Student Representative Council (SRC) group at our school. The students decided to call the group **Student Voice**; they decided that the membership should be representative of all classes across the school – this included the senior and more able students as well as junior and less able students.

The **Student Voice** group met once a fortnight in the office. Karen, who teaches in our Early Education Program, and who is a part of our Student Voice leadership team, also joined us at these meetings. With the help of pictures to facilitate our discussions, we began the meetings. It was not very long before the students were ‘finding their voice’ and requesting all sorts of changes that they would like to see happen in the school.

We then set about ‘formalising’ our meetings and teaching the student voice members how to research and prepare a ‘Request Proposal’ to submit to the Principal so that changes could be approved and implemented.

So far the students from the ‘Student Voice Group’ have submitted two well-prepared proposals and successfully introduced two significant changes in the school organisation. These included:

- Implementing a system where students could use their ‘responsible student green card’ to redeem their personal ICT device (iPad, DS etc) from safe storage in the office, during lunch play time;
- Changing the pre-bell music to a piece of music voted for by the majority of students across the school.

The students have also conducted a survey across the school to determine the popularity of a whole school excursion to ‘The Enchanted Maze’ during Term 4, 2013.

### Measuring Progress

We have already been able to see some major developments in the school around student voice and partnerships. We hope that the culture of collaboration and student ownership of their learning continues to develop at our school and will be evident in:

**Individual Learning Plans:** Students as active participants in choosing their Individual Learning Goals

**MIPS Plans:** Students as active participants in preparing their individual transition plans for transition from school to future options

**Positive Behaviour Management Plans** actively utilise individual student interests and detail alternative learning activities

**Unit Plans and Work Programs** include student choice options and incorporate Principles of Learning and Teaching (POLT)

In addition, we will see positive developments in the following areas:

- **The Abilities Based Learning and Education Support (ABLES) data** will show improvements in student communication skills;
- **The Student Opinion Survey** will show improved satisfaction in the Teaching and Learning at MSDS;
- **Student Classroom Feedback** will be embedded in classroom practice and form the foundation of curriculum planning;
- **The Teacher Survey** using the POLT assessment tool will show improvement in teacher/student collaboration and student ownership of their own learning;
- Mapping practices against Michael Fielding’s **Six Partnerships Assessment Tool** will demonstrate improvements in all areas;
- In **PLT Communication Research Projects**, students will have access to and show significant improvement in their communication skills.

We are on an important journey at Mornington SDS, are excited about the changes, and very positive about the results to date. We look forward to continued work and growth in collaboration with our students.

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Fielding, Michael (2013) *Student Voice: patterns of partnership and the demands of deep democracy*, *Connect* 197 (October), Melbourne

**Principles of Learning and Teaching**, State of Victoria, 2004

Steele, Meg (2012) *What it means to have a voice: SRC in the SDS*, *Connect* 196 (August), Melbourne
Connect 202:

**Student Voice Tip Sheet**

DEFINITION:
Student Voice is any expression of any student about learning and education.

This includes, but isn't limited to, active or passive participation, knowledge, actions, wisdom, activism, beliefs, service, opinions, and ideas.

Who Does Student Voice Come From?
- Pre-kindergarten students
- Elementary students
- Junior high/Middle school students
- High school students
- Students of color
- Low-income students
- Low-achieving students
- High-performing students
- ESL/ELL students
- Special needs students
- Gifted students
- Dropout/Pushed out students
- Graduates

Where Does Student Voice Happen?
- Classrooms, Class evaluations, School boardrooms, School planning, Hallways,
- School research, School protests, Policy-making, School reform, Afterschool, Clubs,
- Teaching, School year Planning, Sports, Educator hiring, Political rallies,
- Discipline, Curriculum planning, District offices, Technology,
- Teacher training, Principal's office, Grant evaluations, School budgeting,
- Playgrounds, School culture, Cafeteria, Building design...

Who Is Student Voice For?
Every K-12 Student & Out of School Learner; Parents; Classroom teachers, School support staff, & Building leaders; School board members; Local, state, & national leaders; Education researchers; Curriculum makers & others...

What Do Students Need To Know To Change Schools???

**The Guide to Student Voice**
For Students, Teachers, Parents, & Others

Find it all at http://amzn.to/lItHe54

Convenient Student Voice

- Saying or doing things adults are comfortable with.

Inconvenient Student Voice

- Saying or doing things adults are NOT comfortable with.
In the future ...

What will education be like in 2030? Will there still be schools? What will we learn? And how will we learn? Will school structures and facilities stay the same? How will relationships and decision-making in schools have changed? These are some of the questions considered by student delegates at the 2013 VicSRC Congress.

The results of students’ discussions aren’t perhaps that surprising. They reflected on what was important to them but also on what they were anxious or angry about now. Their responses were often based in their current experiences; while some went boldly where others had not gone before (robotic kangaroos as transport to school) most saw schools continuing in similar patterns to those they currently observed and experienced.

However, they were most insistent that, by 2030, students would have a much greater say in what shaped their learning - from classroom to education systems.

Here are some of their ideas.

Facilities

... buildings and grounds, environment, lockers, canteen, heating and cooling, technology etc

In the future ...

Technology: There was general consensus that there would be a better balance between technology and non-technology: “not too much technology but good productive uses of it”. Schools would be more energy efficient (solar panels etc).

Students said: “more technology used in classrooms”; “more computer testing”; “technology-smart schools”; “robotic kangaroos as transport”; “laptops in schools” - but “iPads and laptops are distracting”; “bring your own laptops”; “more technologically advanced facilities”; “there will be no power points”; “solar-powered schools that are environmentally friendly”.

Classrooms: There will be themed classrooms in all sorts of areas. These will be beautiful learning environments with big, open spaces.

Students said: “big oval and open spaces”; “Science room with themes”; “English themed rooms eg Tolkien”; “Maths themed rooms”; “floating school (like Sky High)”; “beautiful facilities – you can’t learn in an ugly atmosphere”.

Other facilities: There will be bigger lockers in more open areas (“bigger lockers”; “more open locker areas”; “get rid of overcrowded lockers”). Toilets will be more hygienic and up-to-date (“replace outdated facilities - toilets etc”); “soap in toilets”; “toilet locks”; “non-gendered bathrooms”; “talking toilets with poetry”). Other facilities were imagined: “no excursion fees”; “no asbestos in all the walls”; “more comfy uniforms”; “better food in school canteens – food that isn’t restricted by the health food criteria”; “sports equipment”; “better musical facilities”; “facilities that accommodate all cultures – food, prayers, beliefs etc”; “students decorate the school in a positive way – paintings and murals”.

The Process:

The VicSRC Congress opened with a session about visioning what education could or should be like in the future. This was put in context of the rest of the program: it would lead to each student picking an issue of particular concern and joining with others with similar interests to create a workshop group. These workshops would then form and test proposals for action, culminating in the formal decision-making session.

To start the visioning, students were invited to imagine what schools would be like in the year 2030. Would there even be schools? Eight broad areas were defined (with more time, we could have all decided what these might be) and large sheets of paper with these as titles were posted around the room. Working in their original colour groups, students started by writing post-it notes for action, culminating in the formal decision-making session. These post-it notes were then put on the appropriate sheets of paper.

After some time, the sheets with their notes were allocated to the colour groups (there were eight of these) and groups challenged to make sense of the ideas by grouping and summarising. These summaries were reported to the whole conference to conclude this session, and time provided for students to look at all the sheets before writing their individual issue of interest on an A4 sheet.
What we learn

... subjects, content ...

In the future ...

Compulsory subjects: There were strong disagreements about whether subjects should or would be compulsory ... and, if so, what should/would be compulsory and at what age level. In particular, future options for learning more second languages were suggested.

   Students said: “no compulsory subjects”; “students get to suggest the subjects they want for the next year”; “greater choice of subjects earlier on”; “English in VCE – compulsory or non-compulsory?”; “Year 9s should have advanced science”; “politics should be compulsory up to year 10”; “compulsory languages to year 10”; “more language options for schools - diverse programs”; “non-compulsory languages earlier on”; “more variety of subjects from a young age”.

Humanities and current affairs: Students continued the above debate and suggested they should learn more about current issues in their world in the future.

   Students said: “Learn more about present day and less ancient history”; “more lessons in current issues eg poverty”; “Study History and Geography”; “History and Geography should be continued as a core subject in year 9 and 10”; “civics and learning life”; “life-skills lessons: money in the future, leaving school, stress, culture, travelling”; “more beneficial subjects that apply to ‘real life’ and not ‘work life’”.

Creative and artistic subjects: In the future, students said there should be more room for creativity.

   Students said: “More creative/artistic subjects in schools”; “creative subjects like arts, drama and music should be equally important in schools”; “have music and dance classes”.

More practical and hands-on subjects: Echoing results from the ‘How we learn’ group, students here said that future learning should include more subjects that had practical outcomes, life-related learning and work experience.

   Students said: “Teach what needs to be taught, not because it’s on the exam”; “Sex Ed – that teaches you about relationships rather than mechanics”; “balance of practical and theoretical work”; “work experience and interest groups”; “do more prac instead of theory”; “separate subjects into ‘tech’ and ‘non-tech’”; “relaxation strategies, meditation and exam and stress management”.

Extended class time for VCE: In the future there would be less homework and more choice – and less stress – at senior levels.

   Students said: “No homework for VCE students”; “make extended classes – it’s too stressful”; “in VCE, students pick one subject they want and one they need to do, so they don’t end up stressed”; “making school less stressful, so students don’t end up depressed or hurt”; “making schools’ strong subjects more spread, so they don’t have to go to particular schools”; “we should have more VCE subjects at schools”.

How we learn

... teaching and learning methods ...

In the future ...

Technology: Students will use technology appropriately to assist learning, both in class and at home.

   Students said: “take home classes to review in own time eg download the lectures on school subjects”; “the option of on-line classes”; “technology – learn from home”; “more balance between technology and handwriting etc”; “more laptop programs”; “learning on-line”; “blended learning with technology on-line”; “have a website for lessons that you have missed”.

Student-directed learning: Students will and should take more responsibility for their own learning and have more control over it.

   Students said: “letting students pick how they want to learn”; “ability to choose own learning styles and teachers?”; “more choice interests made more direct to students’ needs”; “multiple teachers teaching each subject – student choice”; “have a tutor for people who have trouble with subjects at lunchtime”; “two days of writing work, one day of prac, one day of revision”.

Class sizes: Students agreed that classes should be smaller to allow more individual attention.

   Students said: “we should have classes with less than 10 people in them”; “smaller classes”; “there should be fewer students in classrooms so teachers can focus more on individuals”; “smaller class sizes to under 20 students”; “more teachers to focus on separate students”; “in many primary schools they have more than one teacher in a class; I think we should do something similar”; “don’t have a whole class taking notes”.

Practical Learning: Students suggested ways of learning that were more practical.

   Students said: “hands-on learning”; “more field work, more field trips etc”.

Teachers: In the future, teachers would continue to be vital.

   Students said: “specialised teachers with passion”; “better teachers”; “choosing teachers for subjects”; “good education from better teachers”, “teachers provide end-of-year lectures on their subjects”; “transition periods”; “teachers should have a degree in what they want to teach”; “broad range of teachers with expert skills”; “make sure that teachers remain focused in class”; “teachers should all have Masters degrees”.

Homework: should be coordinated and negotiated.

   Students said: “teachers all discuss what assignments/homework tasks are set at each time so we aren’t flooded and overwhelmed”.

Other suggestions were also made here that might bear upon processes of learning: “we should be allowed to eat snacks in class”; “academic inter-school competitions”; “girls should be allowed to wear nail polish, make-up and have their hair down”.  

Connect 202:
Assessment and reporting

... exams, tests, assignments, NAPLAN, MySchool, marks, ATAR

**In the future ...**

**NAPLAN:** Students expressed strong dissatisfaction with NAPLAN: it’s stressful, teachers push too hard, but if it will continue then there could be more preparation. They said they understood why it was needed but that the system should be revised.

**Students said:** “no more NAPLAN testing”; “NAPLAN bad”; “get rid of NAPLAN”; “taking the stress out of NAPLAN”.

**ATAR and the VCE Marking System:** Similar concerns were expressed about the impact of senior assessment and scores.

**Students said:** “try and redirect the focus from purely ATAR”; “slowly get rid of ATAR and implement an international system for final exams so that Australian students can more easily go overseas for University”; “get rid of scaling – creative subjects get scaled down more, even though they can be just as hard as science subjects”; “radicate ATARS; students should be judged on their real ability, not a test score”; “alter ATAR”; “change the ATAR system”; “Year 12 exams to be tested on less content, perhaps like the NSW exam system where they have a smaller exam after each term”; “bring mid-year exams back”.

**Tests, exams, grading and reports generally:** In the future there would be different approaches to testing and reporting.

**Students said:** “no more tests”; “no student ranking in testing”; “don’t do tests/exams – choose what you want to learn”; “keep testing but make it more discreet and less stressful”; “flexible exams: elect a certain amount of exams to suit future profession”; “do all tests hand-written”; “more exams prep and exam familiarisation”; “more feedback from teachers on tests etc, especially English because students don’t always get the feedback they need”; “fairer reports – scrap the Cs if you are getting 100% and the person next to you is 78%”; “crediting for different activities”; “teachers not getting lazy writing reports”; “don’t base all results just on Year 12”.

School groupings and structures

... student groupings by age etc, forms, sub-schools, year levels, houses, vertical groups, pastoral groups etc

**In the future ...**

**Flexible hours:** School will start and finish at different times.

**Students said:** “we could let students choose when they go to school like 2 pm to 8 pm, depending on what their daily life would suit best”; “school should not start at 8.30 in the morning”; “flexible school hours – not having to attend classes 9 am to 3 pm but instead, attend school specific number of hours a week”; “school should finish at 2.30 pm at the latest”; “push school times back – reasons: biologically, more attentive, early mornings contribute to less interest in school”.

**Student groupings:** In the future, different groupings of students will be used - both ability-based, but also cross-age and interest-based.

**Students said:** “structure learning at levels”; “have class determined by ability not age”; “classes based on academic level, not age”; “classes based on ability instead of age”; “grades by ability – streaming”; “have relationships with other year levels – peer to peer tutoring”; “sub-schooling instead of year levels – to a degree eg year 9 and 10”; “each new year, have a completely different class – with no-one from your previous class”; “all group work members should be chosen by the students, not set by teachers (when working in groups)”; “houses not just for sport”; “house groups mandatory”; “one-on-one education – get rid of classes”; “tuition on-line”.

**Relationships**

... rules, how we work together, student-student, student-teacher, teacher-parent, teacher-teacher, student-parent etc; wellbeing, stress, bullying etc

**In the future ...**

**Students and teacher:** In the future there will be more equality between students and teachers, with mutual respect.

**Students said:** “teachers and students should be considered equal and call each other by their first names”; “first-name basis with teachers”; “fairness/equality”; “respect both ways between teachers and students”; “respect for students”; “equal representation”; “teacher uniforms”; “more activities with teachers”.

**School systems and policies:** School policies and practices will overcome discrimination.

**Students said:** “homophobe-free zone – no discrimination”; “effective anti-bullying policies”; “get rid of the male dominance”.

**School-community relationships:** Schools will actively involve parents, teachers and students, and link strongly with their community.

**Students said:** “equal participation – three point triangle theory”; “parents, teachers and students to all be in on the education and schooling system”; “overcome the lack of communication between parents, students and teachers”; “more interaction of schools with community”; “more incorporation of community-based learning but with content”; “more information for parents on pathways post Year 10”.

August 2013
Decision-making

... School Council/Board, Student Council/SRC, committees, who decides what?

In the future...

Student participation in school decision-making: There was broad agreement that more power will and should be held by students in schools, with SRCs having a bigger role and teachers checking decisions with students. There will be a balance of power between teachers and students, with consultation and representation in all the big decisions.

Students said: “all students should be involved in decision-making”, “more student involvement in decision-making”, “students will run the class/school”, “students as Principals”, “teachers have less power over school decisions – delegate to student leaders”, “the SRC should have a big impact on the decisions in the school”.

Specific areas addressed included:

- School Councils/Boards:

  Students said: “should get rid of School Boards and replace them by SRCs”; “students on School Boards”; “councillors”;

- selection of teachers:

  Students said: “students on teacher selection panels”; “students involved in selecting teachers”;

- use of consultation and surveys:

  Students said: “use consultations and surveys to find students’ opinions on issues and where money is spent”; “consultation with students and listening/action”; “someone from each year level gets to voice the opinion for big school decisions”; “hold teacher and student meetings to help make decisions throughout the school based on students’ opinions”.

Links and support

... with/from Government/Department, parents, community, funding

In the future...

Community: In the future, students will and should feel more involved in their community, and communities will value the role of schools.

Students said: “having strong ties with local communities”; “local governments should work closely with their schools in their boundaries to cater for their needs”; “have companies outside of the school to relate to the subjects inside the schools”; “teachers valued more in society as with lawyers, doctors etc”; “able to have transparency between major stakeholders”.

Support for students: Specialist programs and funding will and should be provided according to need.

Students said: “student support programs for students living independently”; “more support for special needs students”; “financial support for disadvantaged students.”

Funding: The role of school funding by Government was hotly debated - but it was important that funding was fair.

Students said: “school funding based on student numbers”; “funding should be made directly available to the schools”; “abolish private school systems”; “we shouldn’t have private schools”; “lower school fees”.

Support for schools: from the Department and other schools.

Students said: “smaller regions – Principals report more, accountability increases”; “building relationships between schools to offer different opportunities”; “more interschool competitions”.

Future
Over the last several years, there has been a proliferation of terms to describe efforts to ensure that students have more active roles in conversations about and approaches to education: student voice, student-teacher partnership, youth empowerment, and the list goes on. All of these terms describe work focused on students as active participants and partners in educational practice, research, and reform.

For the last three northern summers, the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge, England, has hosted gatherings to bring together variously positioned participants in education from across continents around the topic of Student Voice.

The first student voice seminar, called Student Voice: Past Efforts, Current Trends, Future Possibilities, held on July 1, 2011, focused on exploring the similarities and differences across these efforts and what theorists, practitioners, policy makers, and students themselves might have to learn from one another. That 2011 event was the first cross-level, cross-context gathering of its kind, bringing into dialogue differently positioned participants in education (teachers, students, policy makers, researchers) from across levels (primary, secondary, tertiary) and contexts (Australia, Brazil, Canada, England, Italy, The Netherlands, Scotland, Spain, the United States, and Wales).

The 2012 gathering supported the development or extension of cross-context or cross-level projects. During the two days of Strengthening Links Across the Lines, participants were invited to consider overlapping realms of theory and practice — student voice in assessment and research in primary and secondary educational contexts; students as change agents at the tertiary level; and teacher research and students as researchers at the primary and secondary levels, and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning at the tertiary level. They clarified their own commitments in one or more of these realms and sought to connect up with others in different contexts to pursue programmatic, research, and/or writing projects.

The 2013 conference, Linking across the Lines: Works-in-Progress, opened with an informal sharing of resources. The main day of the conference included the following sessions, each with two or three 15-minute presentations, responses from student discussants, and 20 minutes of discussion:

**How to Listen to Students**

- Listening to Girls’ Voices on Bullying through Working with Teenage Co-researchers and Teenage Focus Groups. (Helen Hearn, University of Nottingham, UK)
- What Can Participatory Methods Derived from Inclusive Research in the Field of Learning Disabilities Offer to Student Voice Research in Higher Education? (Professor Jane Seale, University of Plymouth, UK)
- Negotiating the Curriculum as a Way of Developing Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights in Schools. (Jeroen Bron, Senior Curriculum Developer, Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development, SLO)

 Called Linking across the Lines: Works-in-Progress, this three-day event brought together scholars, teachers, policy makers, and students from Australia, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, England, Ireland, Italy, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Scotland, The Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and various states in the United States (Arizona, New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont).

On the main conference day, many of these participants presented works-in-progress that integrate student perspectives and participation into the development of educational practices and reform.

This year’s activities built on the foundation of the last two years’ seminars, conceptualised to honour and extend the student voice work pioneered by the late Professor Jean Rudduck of the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge.
• How Our Definitions of Curriculum in Higher Education Impact on the Nature of Student Participation in Curriculum Design. (Catherine Bovill, University of Glasgow, Scotland, UK.)

Assessment and Self-Assessment
• Towards a Model of Principles of Fair and Valid Student Assessment: Student Voice in Assessment Policy Development. (Jannette Elwood and Laura Lundy, Queen's University, Belfast, Northern Ireland, UK.)
• Self-assessment: A Process to Liberate and Sustain Learners and their Learning. (Dr. Roseanna Bourke, Senior Lecturer, Academic Group Director, Educational Psychology, School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy, Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand.)
• Student-Led Professional Development for Teachers. (Roger Holdsworth, Editor/Publisher, Connect; Senior Research Associate, Youth Research Centre, Univ of Melbourne, Australia.)

Ethics and Expansions of Student Voice
• Voice and the Ethics of Children's Participation in Research. (Prof. John O'Neill, Professor of Teacher Education and Director of Research Ethics, Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand.)
• Mind the Gap: Creating a Family Learning Environment that Facilitates Learner Voice. (Kate Wall, Senior Lecturer, Durham University, Helen Burns, Research Associate, Durham University, Anna Llewellyn, Teaching Fellow, Durham University, UK.)

The Schools Students Want: Cross-Context Analyses
• Unleashing the Power of Partnership for Learning: A State-wide Model. (Helen Beattie Ed.D., Founder and Director of "Unleashing the Power of Partnership for Learning", Vermont, USA, and Dana Mitra, Penn State University, Pennsylvania, USA)
• Participation, connection and rupture: Cross-school links in an Australian Students as Co-Researchers initiative. (Eve Mayes, Kadek Arya-Pitanyh and Susan Groundwater-Smith, Australia)

Informal Presentations
There were also less formal presentations, including:
• Ari Sussman, New York City Department of Education Administrator and Founder of the Student Voice Collaborative (SVC) Program, USA, walked through the process by which SVC students explored the meaning of Student Voice from multiple perspectives – ultimately using the findings to create a Student Voice Rubric as a tool for assessing and improving their schools. He also discussed the promising role that SVC students are currently playing in the NYC accountability system as “Student Shadows” on Quality Reviews (QR). This past school year, as a product of their observations and work, SVC students developed a Guide to Student Voice for QR Reviewers. More information and related resources are available on the SVC web site: www.studentvoicecollaborative.com/
• Jean Courtney of the Ontario Student Voice Initiative, initiated by the Ministry of Education in Ontario, Canada, spoke about the impact on policy and practice of the Students as Researchers (StAR) program, inspired by the TLRP/ESRC Project, Consulting Pupils about Teaching and Learning (2000-2003) resources.

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funded schools, they wanted to find out: “What are the experiences that Aboriginal students go through while transitioning to the publicly funded high school?” The StAR team identified three key challenges for Aboriginal students: Family and Culture; Schooling; and Adapting to new contexts. Together with their peers, school, school board and First Nation communities, an action plan has been created and now underway.

- **Catrine Kostenius** and **Ulrika Bergmark** from Luleå University of Technology in Sweden, shared images from a study concerning students’ positive experiences of their learning through the use of visual narratives, observation, and field notes in two secondary school classes in Sweden. Four themes were found: knowing the needs of mind and body, embracing each other in mutual support, learning in a facilitating environment, and using a variety of learning modalities. Students wished to have a voice in setting the curriculum, favoured a variety of assignments, and sought to expand their learning environment beyond the classroom. The full paper can be downloaded at: [contentcat.fhsu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/p15732coll4/id/798](contentcat.fhsu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/p15732coll4/id/798)


**Sustainability Workshop**

The conference concluded with a workshop on sustaining student voice work facilitated by **Roger Holdsworth**, publisher of *Connect*. (See Associate Professor Dana Mitra’s notes in a separate article in this issue.)

**Links and Connections**

A number of links or connections have emerged from these annual events. Among them are:

- A collaboration between **Helen Beattie**, Director of YATST (Youth and Adults Transforming Schools Together) in Vermont and **Dana Mitra**, Associate Professor of Education, and **Cat Biddle**, doctoral student at The Pennsylvania State University. One outcome of this connection was that Mitra conducted an evaluation of YATST, helping to further establish the program and leading to several presentations and publications.

- A research project focused on students’ perspectives on fair assessment on which **Alison Cook-Sather** (Mary Katharine Woodworth Professor of Education and Coordinator of The Andrew W. Mellon Teaching and Learning Institute at Bryn Mawr College, USA), **Jannette Elwood**, (Professor of Education and Director of the Doctoral Research Centre) and **Laura Lundy**, (Professor of Education and Director of the Centre for Children’s Rights at Queen’s University, Belfast, Northern Ireland) will collaborate.

- Creation by **Dana Mitra** (Associate Professor of Education at Penn State University) of the *Student Voice Research and Practice* Facebook page, which currently has 270+ members and is steadily growing.

Next June will be the fourth of the student voice seminars. Participants are looking toward continuing to share their works in progress, connecting with scholars, practitioners, and students from around the world, and mapping new ways forward.

For further information about the seminar and its outputs, or to register interest for attending the Student Voice seminar 2014, please contact **Julia Flutter**: jaed100@cam.ac.uk

**Alison Cook-Sather**
Sustaining Student Voice Work

As noted in the previous article, the Student Voice Conference at Cambridge, UK, concluded with a half-day workshop about sustaining our work. The following notes attempt to capture something of the rich conversation that took place.

The session started with a challenge. Participants were asked to re-introduce themselves and to talk about the pressing questions and issues they had in their work. And why are we working in this way? What are our beliefs or hopes about the ways in which changes might occur?

It was important to hear these opening comments, as they form the basis for understanding the assumptions we are making and how the various aspects of Student Voice work fit together.

In these introductions, we heard of both the successes and the difficulties. Ari started by sharing frustrations with the pace of change.

Fiona, a year 8 student, talked of her school’s student governing body, that comes together to talk about student concerns. They are also involved in StudentVoice sessions with Rachel.

Rachel added that, in Fiona’s school, she saw really good practice because it has become institutionalised. “Of course we have students involved in recruitment - that’s just our practice.” Where that becomes common practice, it carries on, even with student turnover. That’s the challenge: how do you go from starting with a school and make the shift to student voice becoming a part of the intrinsic culture of the school. Rachel added that she saw teacher disempowerment as a big barrier to student voice practice sustainability.

David was a high school Mathematics teacher in New Zealand and now a student at Cambridge; he talked of students’ disengagement in Maths.

Rebecca is similarly a student at Cambridge undertaking a Masters in arts, culture and creativity. Her concerns were with labelling, and breaking down the barriers in education - what she termed ‘slow education’.

Eve’s work is concerned with the impact on the students who are involved; the hope is that the students will be transformed and have a great experience. Whereas we used to think students were immature, we now recognise their maturity - in a different context, they do fantastic stuff. We are all shifting and changing every day. Eve’s concern is with shifting that ‘logic’ about student immaturity. Her hope is about challenging assumptions, particularly in the face of challenges that assert “we don’t see reduction in suspensions”.

We need to develop a view of schools that allows people to make mistakes.

All of Bethan’s research has been involved in helping pupils and about reforming pedagogy. Her background is as a classroom English teacher, now working with 11 schools in the Cambridge area.

Jen, as a teacher, recognises that Student Voice needs to be grounded in practice: it should be a routine that goes on in practice. She sees really good practice going on currently and says that, if she hadn’t consulted with students, there would never have been an impact on her practice. That can grow from classroom to schools.

John asked us: What are the big questions? If Jean Rudduck were around, what would be the questions she would be asking?

Rosanna from New Zealand has an interest in self assessment, and in how students conceptualise learning away from their position as ‘student’. There is a big push around evidence-based practice. Initially student and practitioner voices were not legitimised. However there is greater freedom within a model that they are developing for evidence-based practice: three circles of research, practitioner voice, and the children and families’ voice. We need all three. We are looking at culturally responsive pedagogies and practices and we rely on student voice for validity.

Alison was formerly a secondary teacher, now in teacher education at Bryn Mawr at college level; she is interested in moving to an integrated culture of partnership work.

Rebecca from Uganda is a Cambridge PhD student. Most of her work is at primary level in Uganda; secondary students there have a very teacher centred experience. So she is interested in adapting these ideas in different contexts, particularly to very large classes - with 100 students in a class.

Cathy’s role is an academic curriculum developer. This provides a great opportunity to get student voice in there, but she recognises that we’re not doing as much as we should. Her particular research area is about student participation in curriculum design, sitting between academic staff and senior management. She expressed two major concerns: the first is about mainstreaming good pockets of practice without depoliticising the issues. We are okay talking about student centred learning, but power issues then make people feel uncomfortable. How do we take pockets of good practice and mainstream them without losing the essence of what makes them really good. The second concern is with the huge issue of deficit views of students. We talk about staff that way as well. We need to shift the tone and have higher expectations.

Jean advises the Minister of Education, participates in forums and creates her own research projects. Politically it is well supported and Speak Up projects are happening in 800 schools. Much great work is being done. The goal of this student voice work is that students feel a belonging to and participate in schools. Students reflect an improvement in this over time – their sense of civic engagement and community involvement contributes to the holistic experience in a school. Jean’s big concern is with maintaining the use of the term and concept of student voice. “I have seen it become student input or student engagement; I have seen it diminished.” What is behind such changes in terms? Jean is also involved with ‘theory of change logic’ models. However there are worries with adulthood viewpoints.

Jane has been involved with Networked Learning Communities and the Forum for Participation in Cambridge. “Linking across the lines is not just a seminar title: it has manifested itself in our work. Her concern, not a worry, is with moving forward and actually making sure that what we do is greater than the sum of the parts. These concerns are around sustainability and, in particular, embedding student voice work in policy.

Dana suggested that our shared concerns were with sustainability and the scale of change. We need to be better at showing outcomes with research methodologies that we can live with but that are also legitimate to the big funders. So that means looking for synergy, for collaboration to do bigger and combined work, and looking across contexts.

Karen is from the Netherlands. Her concern is with theory building and the overarching structures of our work. We need to do studies in a more structured way. Where there is still resistance in schools, we can convince them with evidence. It is challenging work: making the effects of student voice clearer, so we can make it easier to convince.
Jeroen is also from the Netherlands. He is concerned that Europe has forgotten that this movement exists. There must be examples and initiatives. Theory building is lacking and has stopped at student participation. So we need to raise awareness of what is worthwhile. "Our students are not seen as people who are growing into adults; there is a separation between teachers and students." While there are positive moves in primary education, secondary students are given less power. Johnny is a teacher in Essex who has worked with students around student voice. He is interested in what facilitates student voice and facilitates learning, as well as identifying the barriers and also the practices valued by students. There is fragmented practice in the UK. What is informing a school’s practice in student voice? Is it driven by citizenship? Or is there a link between practice and research? What needs to be done to reduce the level of fragmentation and develop a more coherent approach?

Luke is a Year 11 student, involved with StudentVoice in the UK. In addition, he works with school student unions in Europe. He identified a need to make research available to student unionists and activists to use as constructive evidence to build student participation in policy making. He is working towards more direct self-representation of students in the educational community.

Helen is working in and with schools in Vermont, USA. Her concern is with how we can promote a shift in individuals and institutions towards the rightness of student voice? How do we message it in a way that gets to people’s hearts – with issues about equity and the rights of individuals to be heard? So we see, for example, a Student Voice Committee in a school with no students on the committee - but they didn’t see the irony. We need to work towards noticing and valuing young people in an ongoing and systemic way. The big issues are about being intentional in our messaging, and promoting our work as a cultural shift.

Julia has been grappling with a definition of student voice, but also wondering whether we want to define it “Each of you has your own view and vision.” We are all saying that students matter – that is the distillation, not a definition. It’s a commonality.

Emily from New Zealand is concerned with moving students into governance and legal partnership, not just good pedagogical strategies. Students then are respected for their contributions to the broader debates about how education should be. "But my concern is that, with the increased acceptance of student voice, this area is a diminishing." Emily has been involved with research around the Students Matter idea. Teachers moved outside their comfort zone on the issue, but found it hard to sustain this in the face of competing issues. So teacher voice and student voice are intertwined. "I have concerns about the diminishing understanding of student voice: ‘yes, we have student voice because we did a survey’, and the intertwining teacher and student voice."

Donnan is a graduate student and school principal. "I see my role as somebody who is trying to protect my school from reforms. Change must happen from within." Renewal also involves bringing out the teacher voice, where ‘voice’ and ‘choice’ affects what happens in the school. So Donnan is concerned with the combination of student voice and inquiries. Right now, an inquiry in her school is around zero waste, where teachers and students are working together. This means asking kids: “What is your question?”

Derry has many experiences as student, teacher, principal, and inspector of the lack of democracy. “I managed to persuade inspectors to listen to individual kids. I worked as an inspector for Summerhill School to protect the school. We persuaded David Blunkett in 2000 to introduce participation into the citizenship curriculum.” Derry’s research work showed that schools who took participation seriously, had fewer exclusions, better exam results and better attendance, especially for lower ability boys. There are also some large scale studies in England in this area that look at outcomes when students have a say in how the school runs. There are positive international examples, particularly in the Nordic countries: in Norway, students have persuaded the parliament to pass a law to set up an education ombudsmen; if a head teacher, doesn’t listen to the students, the ombudsmen can summons the head teacher; bullying issues are criminal offences if head teachers do not hear students.

Deborah sees students as developing a sense of self but, more importantly, a sense of community.

Ruth is a Professor from New Zealand in Teacher Education. She also works with four urban high schools. ‘Schools are working with teacher education students around student voice as a practice. ’I am trying to get to a stage where, in our teacher preparation programs, we prepare teachers to entertain students in their pedagogy, as part of their school practice.”

Helen is a fifth year PhD student at Nottingham, concerned with researching girls’ use of bullying. Bullying changes and they are the experts in their social worlds.

Stephanie is an Elementary Social Studies Professor and former teacher. She can potentially have an impact on a lot of things that happen with future teachers. There are 60 interns in the professional development school; many at Donnan’s school. There has been a culture shift in this program: they get it about giving students voice and building such an ethos of the classroom and school. “My concern is with my future teachers: do they keep this focus?” How do we sustain these new teacher’s visions.

Jeannette is at Queens University, Belfast, interested in issues of voice, being heard, listening, speaking, thinking with equality. “For me that’s a challenge/concern. How do we deal with equality? Lack of voice as resistance? Maybe they don’t want to talk to us?” In Northern Ireland, there is a discourse of rights and equality because of coming out of a post-conflict society and resolving issues of peace and reconciliation. A rights discourse and framework provides a way of operating. Maybe government is more rights sensitive because of that. In the peace agreement, section 75 is equality legislation and age is one of the categories. Policies that come out of Northern Ireland have to be equality assessed. People of any age have to be consulted. There is an obligation to consult from the UK and anyone from UNCR. But the concern is about how we move voice into meaningful engagement. How do we do it with policy makers? How do we, as practitioners, bridge
that gap? It is those people who are responsible for examinations, test development. Where are their responsibilities?

A Possible Structure

In summing up, Roger noted that there were broad and diverse definitions and understanding of what we were doing in our Student Voice work. However it is useful to see that we are all part of a Student Voice movement. We are all involved in defining that movement, but it might be useful to set up some portfolio areas or subcommittees to take us forward. We would then each strategically locate our roles within these areas. A tentative list was suggested:

1. **Research:** developing quality research to produce evidence
2. **Documenting:** sharing good practice and models
3. **Monitoring:** what we are doing, keeping us on track, asking the difficult questions
4. **Policy:** working with policy makers in defensive and proactive ways
5. **Supporting practice:** through training and funding
6. **Student collective action:** supporting and building students' knowledge, power and voice within the movement
7. **Integrating:** connecting concepts and people
8. **Publicising:** raising general awareness of what we do
9. **Memory, history and blue-sky thinking:** what we should remember and retain; what we could do

**Prioritising**

The workshop then moved on to look at priorities for action. This was done through posing a hypothetical situation in which we had five years to work in the area, before leaving today’s students and young people in a better position to take on this work.

**What can we do in five years?** What are we going to do to build sustainability?

There were many points made in three informal discussion groups. In no particular order, what it would look like in five years was reported as:

- We need to know when we are there; we will be there when students are no longer surprised that we asked for their opinion.
- We shouldn’t underplay the value of documenting the benefits of student voice.
- The resources will be there.
- We will have built on the work that we have already done.
- We are so focused on PISA, etc; we need to legitimise ‘voice’ to show the positive focus on learning and achievement.
- If student voice is within the things that people do on a daily basis, and is documented in policy, this will engage people at all levels.
- We need to translate academic writing and share that all over. Who wants to read it? How can we take it and make it accessible? Working with students, we should have ‘practical translation’ conferences and choose pieces to make meaningful: ‘This is what we mean.’
- We need to get our minds and mouths around the rights discourse.
- Ministers’ Advisory Councils should know about this. Show them the links from classroom to Minister. When they are with the Minister, they can change things and understand the connections.
- Researchers write and talk to teachers, parents and students. If the teachers were also involved in research that would be better. At a certain points, students will listen more to their teachers.
- Introduce this movement in other countries. Truncate articles so that they are more accessible.
- Student Councils change every year. If they can be provided with resources, they can learn how to be more inclusive about who is involved, how to get to the things they want to get to.
- We need to develop our theory of change models. These begin with “we know and believe that” and also specify the assumptions and risks. This is a template that allows you to put in all references, footnotes, and evidence based connections. Then we can have short, medium and long term outcomes that would help to build the first step.
- If we can form interest groups or working groups then such a framework and template can be a starting point for our work.

**Summary**

The importance of a few areas of work recurred in the conversation. When these were mapped onto the working group structure, this suggested a priority for the following areas:

- documenting and sharing practice
- supporting good practice through training and funding
- building student organisations as partners in the work
- integrating our work by connecting ideas and people

In addition, there were specific tasks suggested:

- translating and synthesising research and evidence;
- addressing issues of power;
- involvement with inspection, assessment etc, where important formative decisions are being made:
  - developing strong grounded local action of partnerships with students;
  - examining the language and means we use to communicate ideas.

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Notes by Dana Mitra, edited by Roger Holdsworth; apologies if we have misrepresented or abbreviated any of the participants’ views and comments.
On August 2nd-3rd, over 70 Victorian secondary school students gathered in Mt Evelyn for the 8th Annual VicSRC Congress. Thirty three schools sent representatives to Congress this year, to discuss and debate the state of education in Victorian and to provide direction to the VicSRC for the year ahead.

We kicked off the first day with a session entitled Creating a Vision for Education: What sort of schools do we want? While many students are not used to be asked the ‘big questions’ about their education, once they realise people are genuinely interested in what they have to say, and believe they should be part of such direction-setting, the discussion really gets going - and that’s what happened here. (See pages 7 to 10 of this issue of Connect to see what Congress delegates came up with.)

After the visioning session, delegates formed workshop groups based around key topics of importance to them, and drawn from their initial discussions. Delegates worked in these groups over several hours to develop these ideas into concrete proposals. They tested these proposals with each other, and then with a panel of teachers and parents, before taking them to the formal (parliamentary-style) Congress proceedings on Saturday for decisions.

Overall, we ended up with seven resolutions passed during Congress (see below) for the newly elected VicSRC Executive to work on during their 2013-14 term.

Unfortunately, the Victorian Minister for Education, Hon Martin Dixon, was unable to join us on Friday, due to last minute negotiations with the Federal Government around the ‘Better Schools’ reforms. Representing him, the local Member of Parliament, Hon Christine Fyffe, presented eight awards to SRCs from across the state. (The VicSRC was pleased to hear that the Victorian Government was able to finally secure this important funding deal for Victorian students during these negotiations.)

As the Minister for Education in Victoria states, the VicSRC Congress: “is an important event on the Victorian education calendar, where the most important members of the education system – the students – get to debate the issues that matter to them. ”

We hope that you can join us again in 2014 to have your say, and to debate and decide on the issues that matter to you!

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Congress Resolutions 2013

The formal VicSRC Congress debated a total of 12 resolutions drafted and proposed by students, and agreed to the following seven. Delegates also prioritised them in this order for action by the new Executive:

1. Filming Subjects
   That a pilot program be developed and tested in a range of VCE classes across a variety of subjects, where all lessons, key teachings and discussions are filmed and/or recorded and uploaded for student use on a secure student portal.

2. Reporting Practices
   That the VicSRC engages with the DEECD, VCAA and key stakeholders in reviewing current reporting practices with the aim of providing ongoing feedback.

3. Non-Gendered Bathrooms
   That the VicSRC support the idea of having both single and non-gendered bathrooms, and write a letter to the State Government, bringing this issue to their attention.

4. VCE, VCAL, VET, TAFE
   That the VicSRC eliminate the stereotype that one pathway (VCE) is superior to the alternatives such as VCAL/VET and TAFE, in order to gain equality for all students.

5. Practical and Engaging Learning
   That the VicSRC pursue an increase in practical and engaging learning in the classroom and in excursions.

6. Dress Code for Teachers
   That the VicSRC discusses with the DEECD and other education systems about the processes by which a school would develop a dress code for teachers.

7. Life Skills Program
   That the VicSRC should create a program, in partnership with other organisations, for young adults in high school, to educate them about life after school.
Some glimpses of the 8th VicSRC Congress
New VicSRC Coordinator

The VicSRC has a new coordinator: Krista Seddon has been appointed to this role in August 2013.

Krista was previously employed by the VicSRC as the Teach the Teacher Project Officer and is a qualified teacher with a diverse range of experience in the education and not-for-profit sectors. This experience has included working directly with SRCs in a secondary school setting, working at the Victorian Electoral Commission to facilitate secondary school engagement with the Passport to Democracy program, and international development work with UN Women in Vietnam. Krista is currently completing a Masters of Teaching at the University of Melbourne and her thesis topic is student voice and participation. She is also a board director for YWCA Australia and YWCA Victoria.

Krista attended Congress 2013 and her first official day in the office as the Coordinator was Thursday 8 August.

SRC Recognition Awards 2013

The VicSRC again presented four awards to SRCs at Congress. The following schools were presented with a plaque and certificate by the local Member of Parliament, Hon Christine Fyffe (Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly), representing the Minister for Education:

**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.

*Winner:* Bendigo Senior Secondary College  
*Runner-Up:* Beaufort Secondary College

**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.

*Winner:* Ruyton Girls’ School  
*Runner-Up:* Montmorency Secondary College

**The VASSP Award for Informed Representation:**

... recognising SRCs that are truly democratic and fully representative of students.

*Winner:* Lowther Hall Anglican Grammar School  
*Runner-Up:* Beaufort Secondary College

**The VISTA Award for Outstanding Teacher Adviser:**

... that recognises and highlights the support that teachers provide to SRCs.

*Winner:* Frankston High School  
*Runner-Up:* Lowther Hall Anglican Grammar School
New VicSRC Executive Elected for 2013–2014

A new Student Executive of the VicSRC was elected at the 2013 VicSRC Congress. The following students are charged with managing the organisation and implementing Congress decisions for the next 12 months:

Tevhid Ajkic (Minaret Secondary College, Year 10)
Sarah Bibby (Bendigo Senior Secondary College, Year 11)
Sammy Chapman (Casey Grammar School, Year 10)
Ron Garcia (Lalor Secondary College, Year 9)
Shannen Henrickson (Beaufort Secondary College, Year 11)
Jordyn Kruger (Mooroolbark College, Year 10)
Aristotle Otis (McKinnon Secondary College, Year 9)
Qais Sadat (Minaret Secondary College, Year 10)
Kristen Sellings (Yarram Secondary College, Year 9)
Emily Smith (Frankston High School, Year 8)
Bryan Tapping (Templestowe College, Year 10)
Arushi Tejpal (Melbourne Girls’ College, Year 10)
Margaret Tran (Mac. Robertson Girls’ High School, Year 9)
Bridin Walker (Frankston High School, Year 8)
Sophie Williams (Highview College, Year 10)

The VicSRC receives funding support from the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and is auspiced by and based at the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic). It can be reached there on 03 9267 3744 or, for the cost of a local call from outside Melbourne on 1300 727 176; or by email: coordinator@vicsrc.org.au
It is with an equal mix of sadness and excitement that I bid farewell to my role as VicSRC Coordinator and embark on a new adventure living and working in Timor Leste for 12 months.

Leaving the VicSRC hasn’t been an easy decision for me. I have absolutely loved working as the VicSRC Coordinator and with passionate people across the education sector – and more directly with the VicSRC Executive and our wonderful team of dedicated volunteers. It’s been an extremely rewarding four years and I am proud of how the organisation has grown and the recognition and respect the VicSRC now receives from students, teachers, and schools and within the DEECD and the Victorian Government.

I warmly welcome our new Coordinator, Krista Seddon, and wish her the best during this hectic transition. I know that Krista will be fabulous in her new role and continue to grow the VicSRC and support the Student Executive to ensure that the VicSRC remains student run and organised.

We would like to thank Kate for the marvellous work that she has put in over the four years she has held the Coordinator position at the VicSRC.

Kate’s level of commitment and dedication to the organisation has always remained clear, and her regard for us as the Student Executive, the real decision makers, has gained her an incredible amount of respect.

Kate has demonstrated huge integrity in the position, and has never strayed from the path of representing students, even in situations when there have been none in the room. Her willingness to take on a job with the primary description of representing students is a position not many other adults would accept!

The 2012-13 Student Executive created some strong memories with Kate, and we will all miss having her around. Kate is the reason that the VicSRC will be able to continue on in the future.

We thank her for the work she has done as we look to the future and work to build on the strong foundation Kate has left us.

Lachlan Hugo
(for the VicSRC Executive 2012-13)
Student voices at VicSRC Congress, Vic

• Why are Student Councils and Statewide student groups important?
• What’s the secret of a great Student Council?

I asked some students attending the recent VicSRC Congress these questions. Here are some of their responses - quickly, off the top of their heads, without much discussion. This is where the conversation should start...

Roger Holdsworth

... so that confident students feel like they have a say in what happens within the school. Students are able to build their confidence and leadership skills while also being in a fun and supportive environment.

Bridin Walker, Danai Harawa, Krista Fulton, Emily Smith, Tyler Goodridge; Frankston High School

... because it gives the students a chance to suggest ideas to better improve their school. It is important to have an organised group such as the Council to make students feel comfortable about expressing their ideas. Sometimes it is difficult to give suggestions when they are a bit personal, for example, suggesting different styles of teaching. The Student Council can provide a comfortable environment to raise such ideas.

Olivia Gregson; Melbourne Girls’ College

It is important to have an active Student Council in every school ...

... so that confident students feel like they have a say in what happens within the school. Students are able to build their confidence and leadership skills while also being in a fun and supportive environment.

Rachaol Campbell; Fairhills High School

... so there is a say from the students, not just the teachers. This would improve teachers’ choice – because we know best.

Sarah Miller; Fairhills High School

Without a Student Council, students don’t get a say in what or how their school works. A Student Council helps decide, on behalf of the students, how their school runs. If the students are happy, then so is everybody else!

Siniva Faitotoa; John Fawkner College

... because it keeps the school in place. It can help students learn better.

Nele Leone and Frank Usitai-Cowley; John Fawkner College

... so that everything is kept in order.

Michael Moreno; Narre Warren South P-12 College

It is important that every student in the school has a voice and that their voice is heard. If there is no-one to let students’ voices be heard, there would be no improvement in the environment students learn in. If a student has an idea that may improve their school, an idea that makes it a better environment, an idea that makes them feel better or safer, then they would want to be at school. But if no-one wants to hear those ideas, they will feel under-represented and no improvements can be made.
... so that we can give students more opportunities to meet other people from different schools and give each other ideas to help improve their schools. Some schools may have fewer facilities than other schools, so having a State Student Council will make it fair for every school with the same ideas and opportunities. It is important for every person, no matter what school you go to, to have the same support to improve the school.

*Arushi Tejpal; Melbourne Girls' College*

**It is important to have an active statewide student group ...**

... because it can bring new ideas and skills to schools.

*Nele Leone, Siniva Faitotoa and Frank Usitai-Cowley; John Fawkner College*

All schools are represented equally and each school can contribute to making all schools a better place.

*Michael Moreno; Narre Warren South P-12 College*

... having many different personalities with good understanding of one another. Communication and teamwork are important.

*Michael Moreno; Narre Warren South P-12 College*

... commitment, and creating a bond with your school.

*Nele Leone, Siniva Faitotoa and Frank Usitai-Cowley; John Fawkner College*

The secret to building an active and effective Student Council is ...

... to help smaller SRC organisations in schools around Victoria. The VicSRC organisation helps groups to improve their leadership skills and become better speakers.

*Bridin Walker, Danai Harawa, Krista Fulton, Emily Smith, Tyler Goodridge; Frankston High School*

... otherwise you will get nothing done – and that is not a good thing.

*Rachael Campbell; Fairhills High School*

It helps to decide overall what the Government spends its money on for our schools. Students know exactly what needs to be done with their school so it can achieve more.

*Sarah Miller; Fairhills High School*

You need to say ‘thank you’ to the leaders to show students that it is fun to be in the SRC.

*Rachael Campbell; Fairhills High School*

You need somebody who can cooperate with other people, and talk to regular students and ask what they think needs to be done.

*Sarah Miller; Fairhills High School*
WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS
VISTA would like to welcome the following new or renewing schools as members!
- Abbotsford Primary School
- Frankston High School
- Nossal High School
- St Joseph’s College – Echuca
- Emmanuel College

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.

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CONGRATULATIONS JESS!
VISTA once again has sponsored the VicSRC Recognition award for Outstanding Secondary SRC Teacher Advisers.

We would like to congratulate Jessica Bambridge from Frankston High School who took out this award (carrying it over from 2012!).

You can hear details of Jess’s work in Episode #5 of The VISTA Podcast. We also hope to interview her again and share some of the new work she is doing around student voice and student leadership.

FAREWELL KATE
The team at VISTA would like to acknowledge and recognise the work of Kate Walsh, the co-ordinator of the VicSRC, who has recently decided to move on from this position after four years. Kate has been a great advocate for our organisation and has put us in touch with a number of other groups and organisations doing great work around student voice and student participation. Thanks for all you have done and best wishes for your new endeavours.

Scott Duncan

JOIN OUR PANEL
The team behind the VISTA Podcast is always keen to hear from other teachers who wish to be part of panels for upcoming discussions. If this interests you, send us an e-mail at vista@srcteachers.org.au and we’ll be in touch!

Join us for our next VISTA MeetUp....

THURSDAY 22nd AUGUST at 4:30pm
RSVP on our Events Page or email us at: vista@srcteachers.org.au

To find out about upcoming VISTA events near you....
1. Visit the VISTA website at http://srcteachers.ning.com
2. Click on the EVENTS tab

VISTA hosts a series of ‘MeetUps’ to allow SRC Teacher Advisers to meet and chat with those from other local schools in similar roles. We also arrange for guest speakers and informal professional development at these nights.

Throughout the year, VISTA hosts a series of ‘MeetUps’ to allow SRC Teacher Advisers to meet and chat with those from other local schools in similar roles. We also arrange for guest speakers and informal professional development at these nights.
Bendigo Senior Student Council engages in vital decision-making at our College, utilising a variety of networks to communicate student ideas and visions. Each year, we not only elect members for executive positions within the Council, but we also appoint members for permanent seats on various committees that are used to communicate the student voice. These are:

**College Council:** College Council sets the key directions for the school within centrally provided guidelines. With the guidance of our opinions, School Council is able to directly influence the quality of education that the school provides for its students in a positive manner. It likes to have two representative Student Council members to deliver student opinion and voice on a range of issues.

**Education Committee:** This committee looks to the student voice for feedback on new models of delivering a range of school programs. An example of this is an ‘assembly and advisor group’ model that allows students to stay informed about important College information. The assembly and advisor model also develops ways to keep all individuals connected to a staff member as their point of contact - very important in a College accommodating over 1800 students.

**Old Gold:** Old Gold Bendigo Inc is the Association of former students and staff. Student Council has two representatives who diligently attend meetings each month and provide information on current College directions. These students report back to Student Council with information about events being held to honour the history of our College.

Student Council representatives are called upon to represent the student voice in many other committees and consultations. These include:

- A Student Council representative sat on the College’s *Cyber Safety Committee* to assist in the formulation of a new school policy to manage issues of cyber bullying and sexting.
- The Student Council was consulted by a student manager to provide ideas to reformat our *Student Diary* to better meet student needs.
- The Student Council conducts *College tours* on Open Day twice a year and talks to prospective students and their parents about College life, facilities and subject choices.
- The Student Council is currently researching ways to improve the less than adequate supply of toilet paper and soap in *school bathrooms*. This is in response to disgruntled students in general.
- Each year, the Student Council designs and votes on the *College Hoodie* and this is then produced and sold.
- Once a term, different representative groups of students from the Student Council have *lunch with the Principal* to keep student and management communication lines open.
- The Student Council has an opportunity to address all *pathway assemblies* to invite participation and feedback from all students regarding events and issues at the College.
- We have expanded upon relationships with an annex campus of our school called *NETschool*. NETschool accommodates teen mums and disengaged young people trying to work their way back to mainstream education. We support their activities and invite NETschool students to participate in our events. This provides an important link to the main campus for students wishing to re-enter mainstream classes.

Importantly, everything proposed at our Student Council meetings is voted on democratically.

*Breanna Tivendale*
At Beaufort Secondary College, SRC members are selected by their peers. From the school’s 184 students, interested students complete an application process involving a written application and an interview with the Principal team and the SRC teacher supervisor. The SRC then comprises four students from each of Year 7, 8 and 9, six students from each of Year 10 and 11, and one student from Year 12 - in total, 25 students. The SRC meets regularly, every two weeks. We plan for events coming up and discuss any issues that have arisen. We report back to our peers through the newsletter, student bulletin and form assemblies.

Activities

The SRC surveyed each of the classes early this year to find out what the student body wants in 2013 and to gain feedback on the areas of school improvement (physical and values), fundraising, and community involvement. The SRC met to collate the information and take a priority list to the Principal. The President, Vice President and Secretary organised to meet with the Principal and Vice Principal to discuss the ideas and improvement areas. These ideas included:

- **School Environment**: heating and air conditioning; toilets (locks, doors, soap, upkeep); gardening (seating, shade sails, new plants, improving the garden); more bubble taps; classrooms (more colour, new blinds); uniform review (PE uniform, blazers)

- **Student Values**: lunchtime activities (such as competitions with prizes and/or vouchers); bullying; awareness of values (students to be involved in this)

- **Fundraising Ideas**: Beaufort Hostel/Aged Care; Presentation Ball (decorations, tickets, food); casual days/costume days (to fundraise for local organisations/charities eg jeans for genes, Pink Ribbon); concert; fun run (in costume, walk-a-thon etc); lunch/morning tea; to be involved with the Hostel/Aged Care

Through the information we gathered, the SRC has begun to run lunchtime activities. We have named this ‘Fun, Fantastic, Fabulous Fridays’. Some of the activities have prizes, which are supported through fundraisers and community funding. To promote respectful relationships, one of the school values, SRC members also handed each student and teacher an Easter egg at the end of Term 1.

The survey also indicated that students wanted to be involved more in the community through the local Hostel and Aged Care Facility. The SRC will be fundraising this year to provide residents with a care basket. Hopefully, students will also be able to participate in some activities with the residents through the remainder of the year.

Community Connection

As President of the SRC, I have strong ties with committees in the community. I am the student representative on the School Council and on the local branch of the Bendigo Bank. I have presented information to them about the SRC plans. SRCs members will also attend a Beaufort Youth Community Network meeting to discuss ideas for the Pyrenees Council’s Community Action Plan.

Jake Morcombe
SRC President
At Montmorency Secondary College we run five Primary School Leadership Days for up to 12 local primary schools. This is a program that we, as a group of student leaders, have designed to give the local Grade 5 students a day focusing on *Actions Speak Louder Than Words*. We aim to give these students confidence and motivation to go back to their school and lead by example. Targeting Grade 5 students gives them confidence to apply for leadership positions in Grade 6. We also run a program for the Grade 6 students from the same schools who will be attending Montmorency Secondary College the following year. This gives the Grade 6 students a chance to experience what leadership is like at our school.

Initially the SRC proposed this idea to our Principal team in 2009. The idea was approved and each year we need to seek approval from Forward Planning for the dates we choose. Then the local primary schools are contacted and given the dates to choose from. Prior to the day we need to organise buses, booklets, activity kits, the staff, food for the primary school staff, training for the student leaders and the student roster.

The day is run by our student leaders. Once the primary students arrive, two of our student leaders welcome them to our school and play a leadership game that involves all students, called “no sir, not I”. Then we break the students up into groups of approximately 16 and we move to classrooms. In each classroom the primary school students sit in table groups of four or five students, with a student leader from Montmorency Secondary College. Each classroom has two or three student leaders from MSC as facilitators on the day. They play a similar role to a teacher, working with the primary school students to keep them on track and assist them with the activities.

We have designed a range of activities that give the students experiences focusing on team work, communication and in general being an effective leader – demonstrating that *actions speak louder than words*. At recess and at lunchtime we play games in the yard with the primary school students, as this is an important time for us to role model good behaviour and put our leadership skills into practice.

At the end of the day each primary school student takes home a leadership booklet that they have completed throughout the day and their own *Snakes and Ladders* leadership board game. They are also asked to complete a feedback sheet, which we review and use to further improve and develop our program.

We have approximately 90 Montmorency Secondary College student leaders involved in this program, spread across the five days. There are also teachers who attend on the day for supervision and staff to student ratio.

*Claire Norman and Daniel Hickey*
*Senior Leaders*
Lowther Hall Anglican Grammar aims to ensure that each girl understands her world and her capacity to shape it. It has been my aim also, to demonstrate this quality within the Student Representative Council (SRC). Throughout the year, Lowther Hall’s SRC has been able to grow and develop in a way that sees effective change undertaken at our school. We have been lucky enough to be involved in the process of introducing new initiatives and taking part in contributing ideas to ongoing school projects.

A factor that makes this SRC functional and efficient is the ability to immediately act on girls’ feedback and respond to questions and queries regarding the school.

The Council operates with 30 girls from Years 7 to 11. Each year level is represented by six girls, two of whom are from each homeroom. Successful committee members are sought out after a nomination process, where they pledge their support to the school and communicate with their class the strengths that they will bring to Lowther Hall’s SRC.

The elections purposely take place at the conclusion of the previous year. Factors that contributed to this decision have been the ability to actively set up a new SRC at the beginning of the new year, and for girls to begin building a relationship with their new class. This also sees the elected girls become recognised across the year level.

However our Year 7 representatives are elected at the conclusion of Term one. This gives all girls in the year level time to develop connections with their peers and for girls to gauge an accurate understanding of who would be their best representative.

Meeting Structures
Meetings take place weekly and are run with the intention of collecting feedback from respective homerooms. This time is designated for open discussion and decision making where the committee collates feedback and suggests new ideas and initiatives.

This year we saw meetings divided into two groups. It was noted that it was difficult for girls to communicate all of their feedback in a large group, and that some of their ideas had only relevance to certain year levels within the school. That is why meetings are regularly split into two, with the younger half of the secondary school having one meeting and the Year 10s and 11s holding another. We then hold the larger committee meeting and share the problematic issues that have arisen. This is a great opportunity for the older girls to provide insightful information to the younger girls and vice versa. This has been a helpful experience for all of the girls, as we have seen growth of relationships within SRC.

Feedback to Students
Each homeroom holds fortnightly meetings with their class where they discuss relevant information and inform them of any ongoing SRC projects. At the conclusion of each meeting, an email is sent to all committee members outlining the minutes, and sections of the meeting that they must act upon. Whether this is conducting a discussion with their homeroom, asking them to complete a survey or verbally explaining a new system, each girl actively participates in this process to ensure a wide range of opinions are collected.

The Year 7 girls on the committee operate their discussions with their homerooms during ‘circle time’. It was deemed important that SRC be acknowledged during this time, where girls can freely express their concerns and opinions free of judgment or negative comments. The girls have reflected the efficient functioning of this method, as they come to meetings filled with ideas and improvements. This way all girls are able to share how they feel about the school and know that their SRC member will identify their problems and bring these to the next meeting.

This year I have asked the girls to complete feedback sheets regarding topics that are being discussed within our meetings. Homerooms have also been asked to complete surveys where the SRC can identify the overall areas of concern on particular topics. Surveys have been conducted about issues that the SRC has been working on, such as a way to alter the current House Clean-Up system, the decoration of homerooms, clocks within the school, canteen and the school sports uniform.
A way to share the ideas being discussed in the SRC is through a public noticeboard. The board is located within the school and is a chance for girls to enthusiastically learn what is taking place within the SRC. It is regularly updated with information outlining our progression and allows girls to keep up-to-date with new ideas and initiatives. We have found that, by taking a snapshot of our meetings, the school is able to immediately see the ongoing efforts of the girls in the SRC. It has been said that this has been a simple yet effective way to communicate the SRC to the school.

Another way we have continued to allow communication between the SRC and school community has been through regular publication in our school newspaper. Here I write a short summary of the SRC’s termly update, and inform readers of upcoming projects. This year many girls have taken the opportunity to present a short speech in front of the school at our fortnightly Celebration Assemblies. Two girls are selected from the committee to present this speech, clearly outlining what the SRC has been working on and informing the school that feedback is always accepted.

Feedback to Teachers
Several initiatives undertaken by the SRC have been discussed with relevant teachers. This method is great to identify concerns with teachers who are usually unaware of the situation. Girls meet with teachers and discuss ways to fix the problem and monitor it in the future.

Discussions between Head of Faculties have been successful in helping the SRC make changes within the school. This year the committee invited the Head of Sport at Lowther Hall to our meetings to openly discuss all of the problems associated with the newly introduced sports uniform. After the completion of a survey and two weeks of collecting feedback from the school, we collated the information together ready to present it to the relevant decision makers.

The SRC girls explained the need to improve the pants, bathers, competition singlets and windproof jackets. This teacher mentioned several times during the meeting that she was unaware of these concerns, however was more than happy to work through them now that she knew they were problematic. Since then we have seen the introduction of new bathers and a new competition singlet. The SRC was actively involved in the design process, confirming with the designers that their new ideas would be positively received.

The girls on the SRC have worked extremely hard advocating for an alteration to our school’s canteen. An idea came to us from a student in the school regarding the introduction of ‘Thank-You Water’. This girl was passionate about wanting to make this change and so we invited her to our meeting to express her idea. We find it important to openly invite any girls who are not on the committee to our meetings should they want to share their feedback about a particular issue.

In this case, the SRC worked with the Education Operations Manager to contact the director of the canteen to put forward a proposal regarding the introduction of this proposal. A thorough investigation was completed before the SRC was faced with some areas of concern should the proposal be passed. The committee worked through trying to identify the girl’s reaction to bottled water priced $3.00, the variation in sizes, and the income for the canteen. After a trial process, the SRC are happy to announce that this year we saw the introduction of ‘Thank-You Water’ at Lowther Hall – water that goes towards providing access to safe drinking water for someone in need.

The SRC is open to all ideas and we welcome individuals to our meetings. We feel that, through this acceptance, we can work to benefit the school for years to come.
**Staff Support and Advice**

This year the SRC has been guided by Tracy Healy, the head of Senior School. I meet with her every Thursday morning to discuss our progress and explain up-coming projects. She is able to clarify answers to the many questions I have and acts as a fantastic support base for the committee.

While the SRC works on large scale projects to improve the school, we also felt it was important to respond to a wide range of feedback from our school. With this we receive questions and queries which we find answers to, and attempt to mend small scale problems. Questions include rules regarding school uniform or queries about subjects. We have worked on some small scale problems such as repairing all the broken clocks and placing recycle bins around the school.

Ms Healy has been influential in ensuring feedback is immediately acted upon, prompting us to seek clarification as soon as we require it. Ms Healy has allowed the SRC to have various techniques of communicating with the school body, and these alternatives have been instrumental in ensuring all opinions are heard and recognised.

The SRC has been working on the submission of a proposal regarding the soundproofing of one of our classrooms. Ms Healy has been influential in guiding our research and investigation, directing us down the correct path and putting us into contact with relevant individuals. There have been several setbacks along this journey, but she has been able to steer us in the right direction and ensure that we are equipped with the correct tools to get back on the right path. For this leadership we are very thankful.

We are eternally grateful for her support and continuous belief in our committee. We have been able to positively make change within the school and are viewed as a group within the school that can actively make change and help make the environment a better place for both students and teachers.

I am positive that without the support of Ms Healy, the SRC would not be as successful as it is. While she does not play a role in our meetings, introduction of new initiatives or proposal writing, we are guaranteed to be applauded by her when we have been successful.

The SRC for 2013 would like to pass on their thanks to Ms Healy for her guidance, support and belief. Her belief that we are capable of change has been enough to ensure that we operate as an effective SRC, where we believe change is possible.

**Lucinda Goring**

*Deputy School Captain, Head of SRC*

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**Golden Grove High School, SA**

**Student Voice Executive Council**

All Golden Grove High School (South Australia) students are represented by the **Student Voice Executive Council** on all decision-making committees within the school structure (e.g., Governing Council, Finance Advisory Committee, Grounds, Facilities and Services Committee, ICT Reference Group, School Marketing, Promotions and Communications Committee). Members of the Executive operate a vertical home group and receive formal leadership training. Active Year Level Councils operate at each year level and they support the student executive team.

The Student Voice Executive is made up of six elected representatives from each year level 9 to 12 and are supported by two staff members. Elections for the Years 9 to 12 positions on the Student Executive are held in term 4 each year. The views of Year 8s are represented through the Year Level Council.

Meetings are held informally during Home Group in the mornings (sometimes extended by starting at 8.30am) and, when possible, during Student Voice fortnightly meeting times. To maintain stability and continuity, Student Executive Members will remain for the whole year.

Interested groups and individuals as well as Year Level Councils may raise issues through the Student Executive.

**Environmental Action Team**

Golden Grove High School has formed an **Environmental Action Team (EAT)**. This team includes students, staff and community members to develop strategies to reduce, reuse and recycle.

The goal of EAT is to ensure that, as a school community, we all play an active role in environmental sustainability and look at how best to educate ourselves, our students and our community in terms of conserving resources, reducing our carbon footprint and eliminating pollution so that we create a sustainable future for all.

Over the years, several classes of Land Care students have collectively added to the sustainability and the Land Management of Golden Grove with the removal of Coolatie Grass and a revegetation process.

In revegetating, the plants chosen are native to our area, and particular care is taken to ensure that they are plants that will afford the harvesting of seeds for future plantings and also to enhance the habitat of the local wildlife. The seedlings all have a specific purpose, from providing wide breaks for smaller plants to providing a method of retaining soil substructure and integrity.

The students have also been very active in other areas of the school with planting the Wilga trees (Native Willow) in the staff carpark and also enhancing other selected areas throughout the school.

*From: [www.goldengrovehs.sa.edu.au](http://www.goldengrovehs.sa.edu.au)*
Imagine an education system where students have a say, where they have the potential to make a change, where their opinions and views have a powerful impact. This is the vision of StudentVoice.

Formerly known as ESSA (English Secondary Students’ Association), we are working to become the representative body for secondary school students (11-18) in England and Wales. We work with schools and young people to promote and encourage good Student Voice practice, whilst delivering training to students on how to get their views on issues around education and schools listened to.

We believe that it is vital that we, as young people, take charge of our own learning and so StudentVoice is run by students for students. Our current structure consists of the National Executive, a Steering Group and members who are anyone of secondary school age from across the country.

The National Executive is made up of three young people who take charge of a certain geographical area and different aspects of StudentVoice, which are: Policy and Development, Participation and Engagement and Strategy and Partnerships. We are the young people who drive StudentVoice, and implement ideas given to us by other students.

We also have a Steering Group that we are currently recruiting. The steering group is made up of young people who help make decisions about the way we run and what we focus on. These young people are spread across England and Wales. They also represent StudentVoice and students’ views at education related events.

Currently neither the National Executive nor the Steering Group are democratically elected, however this is something we would like to work on in the future. As a fairly new organisation we believe that it is best to first define who we are, and build up our membership until we are capable of running successful elections.

To allow as many young people as possible to give their views and use their voice, we run training in a variety of skill areas - including confidence, communication, campaigning and consultation. We provide a number of training packages for school students. Where possible we use peer trainers, who are familiar with the issues students face in schools.

We have three different types of training packages that schools can purchase. Firstly we have the tailored training package that we personalise for a school depending on what they would like to achieve. Secondly we have the ‘real talk’ training package that enables young people with learning or behavioural challenges to gain the skills and confidence they need to take part in student voice activities and speak out about issues that affect them. Lastly we have the ‘asking the right questions’ package that helps students to gain the skills and confidence they need to ask questions in an appropriate and carefully considered way.

Contact us
To find out more about who we are and what we do, you can have a look at our website: studentvoice.co.uk, follow us on twitter @StudentVoiceUK and like our Facebook page: /wearestudentvoice .

StudentVoice is currently supported by The Phoenix Education Trust: www.phoenixeducation.co.uk and is always looking for other funders and supporters to help take our work forward.

Yasmin Rufo
yasmin@studentvoice.co.uk
OBESSU General Assembly

On the 27th and 28th July 2013, OBESSU, the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions, held its General Assembly.

OBESSU, founded in 1975 in Dublin by secondary school students, unites the national school student unions of Europe and represents school students on an international platform. This gives secondary students a voice on the European stage.

OBESSU has 20 member and two candidate organisations, from a total of 19 countries who come together to make up OBESSU. All member organisations are independent, national, representative and democratic school student organisations.

At this year’s General Assembly, OBESSU agreed policy papers on:

- democratic participation;
- the dual vocational education and training system;
- the evaluation of educational outcomes;
- the 2014 European Parliament elections; and
- the effects of the economic crisis on education.

Amongst these documents, OBESSU called for the abolition of hidden costs and fees in education, universal student welfare, citizenship education, democratic evaluation of students, teachers, schools and education systems, and the reversal of education cuts in Europe.

OBESSU unanimously agreed to oppose the closure of the National Youth Council of Spain and approved the application of the Consiliul Naţional al Elevilor (Romania) to become a Candidate Organisation.

Its working groups on Vocational Education and Training and the European Parliament Elections and its Social Inclusion Campaign presented their work.

Alongside this, OBESSU officially gave its support to lowering the voting age to sixteen years – as well as giving a vote of trust in its new Secretary General (Rasmus Åberg), electing a new Monitoring Committee (Kristen Aigro and Ville Majamaa) and a new Board member (Luke Shore).

Following the General Assembly, OBESSU held its 4th annual Summer School in Haapsalu, Estonia. Here, school student representatives from 17 countries tackled the issues of democratic participation and citizenship education. They evaluated and discussed the status of citizenship education across Europe and agreed to take action in each of their home countries.

The Summer School follows on from the Study Session: Participation and Democracy: “A legal framework for school student rights”, held in Budapest in April and the Training Course for young vocational education campaigners, held in Brussels in March (part of the Claim Your Voice campaign: see: www.obessu.org/vet).

OBESSU is looking forward to continuing its cooperation with educational stakeholders such as the European Union and the United Nations. OBESSU will hold its next event in the winter, with a Training Course for International Officers in Brussels, Belgium.

Find out more about OBESSU at: www.obessu.org
Find OBESSU on Facebook at: www.facebook.com/obessu
Follow OBESSU on Twitter @OBESSU

Luke Shore
luke.shore@studentvoice.co.uk
We asked students to speak up and here’s what they said:

A school that engages students and ensures all voices are heard would:

1. have activities outside the classroom
   Based on students’ interests, there should be a variety of activities available to include youth leadership, peer support and academic support.

2. help students learn life skills
   There should be strategies in place to help students learn skills such as leadership, teamwork and communication skills.

3. offer a socially inclusive environment
   A learning environment that is socially inclusive would give students opportunities to talk about issues such as bullying, racism, diversity and inclusivity.

4. be an academically inclusive environment
   In a learning environment that is academically inclusive, teachers understand individual student needs and learning styles.

5. empower students to speak their mind
   Build on the Student Voice initiative to ensure that all students feel welcome and empowered in their schools.

6. allow students to give feedback on learning experiences
   For example, gather ideas on the most effective ways to incorporate Smartboards in classrooms.

7. keep students informed
   Consult with students and inform them on decisions that impact their educational experience.

8. give a high-quality education
   Ensure students’ experience of education is equitable wherever they live in Ontario. For example this could mean students have the same curriculum, classroom materials.

9. encourage eco-friendly practices
   Ensure and encourage eco-friendly practices in schools and classrooms. For example, composting, recycling, green roofs and healthier food options.

http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/students/speakup/9IndicatorsEn.pdf
SECONDARY SCHOOLS ON THE NSW CENTRAL COAST HAVE EMBARKED ON A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION PROCESS AROUND STUDENT VOICE.

A recent conference brought school leaders together to explore ideas around Leading School Transformation through Participatory Learning, and to plan ways to enhance various elements of and approaches to student voice.

New Connect on-line ISSN

Serials such as Connect can be published in printed form or in a range of alternative formats, including microfiche, microfilm, CD-ROM and on-line. Serials in all formats are eligible for the allocation of an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN), and where a serial is published in more than one medium, a separate ISSN is required for each format.

As a result of this, Connect has been issued with a new ISSN that will be applicable to its on-line version: ISSN 2202-4980.

More information on the use of ISSNs can be found at: www.nla.gov.au/about-international-standard-serial-numbers

Connect available in EBSCOhost databases

In a new agreement, articles from Connect are now discoverable through EBSCOhost research databases.
**Connect on Facebook**

In order to assist in the transition to the new digital *Connect*, we now have a presence on [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Connect/360372760717566). Find us at:

![Facebook](http://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 each *Connect*'s availability on-line - for FREE - that started in June 2013!

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**Student Voice Research and Practice Facebook Group**

[www.facebook.com/groups/studentvoicepage/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/studentvoicepage/)

This open [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com) 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, Spain, Netherlands 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.

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**Scoop.it**

Bethan Morgan in the UK curates links to anything she can find on Student Voice, using the [Scoop.it](http://www.scoop.it) tool. This is at: [www.scoop.it/t/student-voice](http://www.scoop.it/t/student-voice)

Ian Fraser has a similar page in Australia on Student Voice at: [www.scoop.it/t/student-voice-australia](http://www.scoop.it/t/student-voice-australia)

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

[www.asprinworld.com/student_action_teams](http://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](http://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](http://www.asprinworld.com/connect)
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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).

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Australian:
Parents Voice (Parents Victoria, Wandong, Vic) Vol 40 Issue 2; May 2013
Research Developments (ACER, Camberwell, Vic) August 2013
School Focused Youth Service (DEECD, Melbourne, Vic) Guidelines 2013-2015
Yikes (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic) Vol 12 No 2; August 2013

International:
ReThinking Schools (Milwaukee, WI, USA) Vol 27 No 4; Summer 2013
SoundOut Student Voice News (USA) Vol 1 Edition 2; August 2013

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