The PowerWalk:
Thinking About Empathy, Equity & Representation

Resources:
- Teach the Teacher Website Launched
- ACYS De-funded
- Democracy & Education: John Dewey Centenary
- IDEC2015 in New Zealand: Report
- Connect ... on facebook ... archived ... available on-line ...
  access to other resources on-line ...

- Who are Representatives Really Representing?
- Reconsidering and Restructuring the SRC:
  - Peacock P-8 Campus, Northern Bay P-12 College
  - Mount Waverley Secondary College
- Taskforce on Student Involvement: US, 1988
- Student Research Team: Victoria, 1986
- VicSRC: 2015 Congress Sold Out; Regional Reports
- VISTA: Think Big About Student Leadership!
Where have the stories about classroom- and curriculum-based student participation gone?

In preparing a recent seminar about changing perspectives on ‘student participation, student voice, and student agency’, it was clear that the core of Connect’s articles in its earlier years were practical accounts of classroom practices in areas such as:

- Cross-age/peer tutoring programs: in which students teach/tutor other students;
- Student media productions: in which students publicise issues of importance to them through print, radio, television;
- Oral histories: in which students document and publish local stories and practices: important intergenerational work;
- Research: in which students carry out school- and community-based research, including through Student Action Teams, and so on. They were stories about what Michael Fielding calls ‘intergenerational learning as lived democracy: student commitment to/responsibility for the common good’.

Increasingly, Connect’s stories have been about the formal governance areas of participation: SRCs and JSCs, students on School Councils, students on teacher selection panels, student conferences ... and so on. These are great stories, and it’s been highly important to include and share these - but they’re only part of the overall picture. Let’s make it clear: Connect is not a journal about SRCs; it’s a journal about student participation practices in all sorts of areas, including SRCs.

So, are there no current initiatives in the above areas? Or have such initiatives become so commonplace that they are not seen as worthy of documenting and sharing? Connect would love to carry and share more of these stories!

While I’m raising some difficult questions, I’m also concerned about how we can become more critical about our practices. It’s great to share stories, but how do we also ask difficult questions and challenge practices? I have for some time been concerned that issues of equity are being forgotten or pushed aside. For example, the early examples of cross-age tutoring programs emphasised how such programs deliberately provided roles of value within schools to those students otherwise excluded; but then such programs developed to competitively select tutors as the ‘best’ and ‘most able’ students ... and hence replicated the processes that excluded and marginalised some students.

How do we challenge practices about their values and intentions? How do we raise questions about who gets to participate and who benefits ... within classroom approaches and within SRCs? See page 32 here, then ... over to you.

Next Issue ...

I’m about to head off to the international Student Voice Conference/Seminar in Cambridge UK. So the next issue of Connect will be delayed a little and will be a giant double issue in October. We expect to have stories from that Conference, as well as from the VicSRC Congress. And more! The deadline for your contribution is the end of September.

Roger Holdsworth
Northern Bay P-12 College in the northern suburbs of Geelong was formed in 2011 as a result of a merger of nine schools into one multi-campus College. Our aim is to provide a supportive, co-ordinated and consistent approach to the education and wellbeing of children and young people enrolled in government schools in the Corio/North Shore/Norlane area.

Campus sites are located at the former North Shore Primary School in Tallis Street, Norlane West Primary School in Peacock Avenue, Corio Bay Senior College in Goldsworthy Avenue, Corio West Primary School in Wexford Court and Corio Primary School in Hendy Street. The Northern Bay P-12 College Campuses took the name of the previous school addresses.

College Structure
The College has one Principal and five Campus Principals. Each Campus has an Assistant Principal who also leads a priority area.

Each Campus has elected Student Leaders, and the College as an entity is proud to have the Goldsworthy Campus Leaders as the College student leaders.

Student voice is in our College plans for the next three years; one of the components of this is a more active SRC. We have been using student feedback surveys on classroom teachers for a couple of years now, which staff must incorporate into their performance planning. We will also increase the perception that the students can actively and informally use influence in determining a range of factors involved in their learning.

For more details, see: www.northernbaycollege.vic.edu.au

NBC Peacock Campus Student Report: Our 2014–2015 SRC

Peacock Campus is one of the P-8 campuses of Northern Bay College. It is leading the way on student voice within the College. This is drawn from its 2014 Student Report, and updated information.

A Student Representative Council (SRC) is a student-led initiative that works towards increasing student voice across all areas of a school and its community. These representatives meet on a regular basis to confer about issues impacting on the school community and how they can make school a more enjoyable experience for all students. Our belief is that students know and understand some things that others (teachers, principals and/or parents) may not, and that they can be more reliable decision makers as they experience school first-hand.

An SRC:
• provides an opportunity for students to have input into decisions impacting all areas of teaching and learning within the school environment
• promotes leadership skills and a sense of responsibility
• builds positive relationships and encourages positive behaviour across the school community
• provides younger students something to aspire to, as members act as role models

NBC Peacock Campus  Student Report:
Our 2014–2015 SRC

Peacock Campus is one of the P-8 campuses of Northern Bay College. It is leading the way on student voice within the College. This is drawn from its 2014 Student Report, and updated information.
The 2014 Peacock SRC story...

It all started on the 28th of May 2014. Gypsy and Erick went to the Regional VicSRC Conference; they got a lot of ideas and were inspired to rebuild the SRC, which had not been active at Peacock Campus for the last few years. They learnt how an SRC works and how other schools managed to achieve a lot in just one year. Gypsy and Erick then brought their ideas back to the other two Peacock Campus leaders.

We all agreed on the idea and had a meeting with Mrs. Biggins and Mr. Ezard to get approval. We explained why we thought Peacock Campus should have an SRC and why it’s important to have a student voice on campus. We got their approval and started researching about how we could make an amazing SRC. We were given books to read at home about student leadership and we soon came back with ideas and suggestions on how we could move forward.

We had meetings as campus leaders weekly and soon became known as the SRC Executive. We worked on important jobs including writing the constitution, defining a decision-making model, figuring out who needed to be represented on the SRC model and then created an Expression of Interest form. We worked hard and worked well as a group.

We really then wanted to choose the members. We soon handed out Expression of Interest forms and got a lot back. It was difficult to choose the members because some of the candidates were our friends, so we talked to teachers to get their ideas as well. It was a hard decision but, through this process, we ended up adding both a Koori Leader and an EAL Leader to our SRC model, because we wanted to ensure we had a diverse range of representatives. We also thought about things such as supporting some younger students in the Year 3-5 area who had shown a lot of leadership qualities in the Heads Up Ambassador (HUA) program. We asked the HUA lead teacher to suggest two Heads Up Ambassadors to join the SRC, which provided an even wider representation on the SRC and meant we would be developing younger students for future years.

The launch of our SRC was held at a campus assembly and the guest speaker was Jess Moyle who is the Co-Chair of the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria’s Youth Reference Group. We handed out Expression of Interest forms and talked about what the aims were for the SRC and why it was important.

Even though our SRC was only active in the last two terms of the year, we have still achieved a lot and wanted to put this document together to support next year’s SRC at Peacock and also try to help other NBC Campuses to do the same.
SRC Structure and Process

The Campus Leaders, Ngarrweet Leaders, House Leaders and Blueearth Leaders are chosen through a written application and then a speech that is voted for by teachers and students in the Year 6-8 community. The SRC Executive is formed by the four Campus Leaders at each campus who then lead the process for the remainder of the SRC roles, including choosing the representatives from a number of existing leadership roles and programs, as well as a representative from each Year 6-8 mentor group, who all apply through the nomination process that includes the Expression of Interest form. However, the two Heads Up Ambassadors (an anti-bullying program made up of Year 5s) representatives are chosen by the Heads Up Ambassadors Lead Teacher.

Year 5 Reps:
Heads Up Ambassador Lead Teacher selects two Heads Up Ambassadors to join the SRC

Sports Rep:
SRC Executive selects one House leader to participate in the SRC through the nomination process

Year 6-8 Reps:
SRC Executive selects a representative for each Mentor Group through the nomination process

Blueearth Rep:
SRC Executive selects one Representative from Blueearth (campus wide student health and wellbeing program)

Stand Out Rep:
SRC Executive selects one Representative from Stand Out (student led group focusing on diversity and inclusion) through nomination process

English as an Additional Language (EAL) Representative:
chosen by SRC Executive through the nomination process

Ngarrweet (Koori) Leader Representative:
chosen by SRC Executive through the nomination process after official Ngarrweet Leaders are in place

SRC Executive:
made up of current Campus Captains; chosen through staff and student vote after a written application and speech

Our SRC’s aims:

- To encourage student participation in all areas of their school life
- To facilitate the process of all members of the student body having input into all matters affecting the school community
- To bring Northern Bay College together as a community
- To widen the range of activities (across curriculum, extra-curricular and health and wellbeing) for all students
- To promote responsibility and good behaviour from all students through the TRIBES agreements system
- To strengthen the Northern Bay College values of Collaboration, Opportunities, Respect and Equity
- To represent the students of Northern Bay College by participating in SRC and SRC related events in the wider community

 SRC Meetings

SRC meetings are held every two weeks and are facilitated and minuted by the SRC Executive. These meetings are student-led but attended by our Learning Partner (teacher). We discuss important information such as schoolyard issues or recent events.

Each meeting a member of the SRC Executive takes turns to take minutes, lead the meeting or organise an agenda.

We also discuss the suggestions that have been collected in each learning community’s Suggestion Box. We have one in each community and there is one at the office. We hope for ideas and feedback.
**Constitution of the SRC** *(developed by Peacock but used as a template for other campuses)*

**Name:**
- The name of the body will be the **Student Representative Council of Northern Bay College Peacock Campus**
- The name of the body may be abbreviated to the **SRC Peacock**

**Aims:**
- To encourage students’ participation in all areas of their school life
- To facilitate the process of all members of the student body to have input into all matters affecting the school community
- To bring Northern Bay College together as a community
- To widen the range of activities (across curriculum, extra-curricular and health and wellbeing) for all students
- To promote responsibility and good behaviour from all students through the TRIBES agreements system
- To strengthen the Northern Bay College values of: Collaboration, Opportunities, Respect and Equity
- To represent the NBC students by participating in SRC and SRC related events in the wider community

**Structure:**

- **Year 5 Reps:**
  - Heads Up Ambassador Lead Teacher selects two Heads Up Ambassadors to join the SRC

- **Sports Rep:**
  - SRC Executive selects one house leader to participate in the SRC

- **Year 6-8 Reps:**
  - SRC Executive selects a representative from each Mentor Group

- **Blueearth Rep:**
  - SRC Executive selects one Bluearth Representative

- **Student Representative Council (SRC):**
  - made up of current Campus Captains; chosen through staff and student vote after a written application and speech

- **English as an Additional Language (EAL) Representative:**
  - chosen by SRC Executive via nomination process

- **Ngarrweet (Koori) Leader Representative:**
  - chosen by SRC Executive via nomination process

- **Stand Out Rep:**
  - SRC Executive selects one Stand Out Representative

- **SRC Executive:**
  - SRC Executive: made up of current Campus Captains; chosen through staff and student vote after a written application and speech

**Meeting Procedure for SRCs:**
- The SRCs will meet at the agreed time fortnightly
- ‘Proper’ meeting procedure will be followed
- SRC Executives will be leading the meeting but may have the assistance of the SRC support teacher if needed
- Decisions within the SRC will only be made if more than half of the SRC are participating in the said meeting

**Meeting Procedure for SRC Executives:**
- As well as participating in the regular SRC meetings, the SRC Executives will meet each other fortnight with the SRC support teacher
- ‘Proper’ meeting procedure will be followed
- Reports and proposals from the regular SRC meeting will be heard at this meeting
- Decisions that haven’t reached an agreement will be discussed at this meeting

**The Role of SRC members:**
- Taking ideas and suggestions from mentor groups to the SRC meetings for discussion
- Attending SRC meetings with other members and reporting back to the class on matters discussed
- Organising social events, fundraisers, health and well-being days, as well as taking full responsibility in collecting money on these events
- SRC Representatives are expected to participate in discussions to their full ability; this means giving their opinions and recommendations about the topic

**Sub Committees:**
- The Executive may set up or appoint committees to take on a particular function eg Fundraising, School Yard, TRIBES etc
- The aims of the committee will be clearly stated
- A committee meeting will be held when deemed absolutely necessary

**Alteration of the Constitution:**
The SRC constitution may only be altered by two thirds of the SRC Executive and also the support teacher
What we achieved in 2014:

- Constitution including SRC model, understanding of decision making models and how to facilitate an effective meeting
- Supported the development of student-led Roots and Shoots (sustainability) and Stand Out (diversity and inclusion) groups
- Suggestion boxes were embedded in all learning communities
- Support for further development of student voice
- Fundraisers including Footy Colours Day and Canteen Bandanna Day
- Lots of ideas to handover for next year and other campuses

Recommendations for the 2015 SRC:

Dear future SRC:

We have had some great suggestions from our suggestion boxes but since we started the SRC later in the year we didn’t have enough time to make dreams come true.

We thought we would pass on some recommendations that the 2014 SRC decided on together for you to think about for next year:

- Harder library books for the 3-5s
- Blue light disco for the 6s
- A fun run for charity
- Pyjama Day for the whole school
- More school camps
- Competitions
- Soccer goals
- Visits to other NBC campuses
- Keep working towards a bully free school
- Encourage TRIBES across the campus by looking at incentives

Expression of Interest

This is the current Expression of Interest form used to nominate for membership of the SRC. Students can nominate for a specific (e.g. EAL) position or for a mentor group representative.

The SRC is a student body representative council that acts as a voice for students at our school.

Our objective consists of many aims; some of these include: strengthening the Northern Bay CORE values and getting students’ ideas and opinions to make Peacock Campus a fun and welcoming place for all students.

Please fill in this form or contact one of the student leaders for your opportunity to be in the SRC by [insert closing date]

Name: ________________________ Mentor Group: ________________________

Why do you want to be in the SRC?

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

What, maybe even unique, qualities do you possess that can benefit the SRC?

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

What does being a leader mean to you?

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

Are you eligible for any of the following specific positions on the SRC? (please circle)

Koori Representative Bluearth Representative EAL Representative House/Sport Representative

Student Signature: ________________________

Parent/Guardian Signature: ________________________

Teacher Signature: ________________________

Date: / /
Alannah Hammett: I think SRC is important because it helps students build better relationships and make a better place for everyone to have the right to learn and enjoy school. So far I have learnt how to be organised, and I’ve also learnt how to run a meeting. Something I’m looking forward to this year is having more fundraisers and receiving letters from Hillary (a student in Uganda who we have sponsored for education).

Chloe Morrison: I think SRC is important because students can teach others how to be a good leader.

So far I have learnt that everybody gets a chance to speak up and share their opinions and ideas about how to make the school a better place.

Something I’m looking forward to this year is learning more leadership skills and improving my public speaking skills.

Harry Pickersgill: I think SRC is important because students have a say in how their school is running.

So far I have learnt how to be a good leader and I’ve improved my public speaking.

Something I’m looking forward to this year is to go to the College-wide SRC excursion coming up, and hanging out with the school leaders.

Hayley Paterson: I think SRC is important because the SRC is helping people to make the school a better place. So far I have learnt that everyone has a voice and they can raise their voice.

Something I’m looking forward to this year is to try and complete our first idea to help the school and make it a more enjoyable and safer place for all students to learn.

Jaxson Akhyar: I think SRC is important because it helps students to have a role in leadership. So far I have learnt more public speaking. Something I’m looking forward to this year is for the fundraising and the gold coin donation.

Jayden Antonio: I think SRC is important because it gives an opportunity for student to speak up and share their ideas and opinions. So far I have learnt being a leader helps you to feel more comfortable and be more organised.

Something I’m looking forward to this year is more fundraisers and receiving letters from Hillary in Uganda.

Jenny Setsuperkharn: I think SRC is important because it helps students to have a voice and speak up about how they want the school to be, so they can have a better learning space which they are able to enjoy, have fun and learn as best as possible.

So far I have learnt that being a leader gives you the courage to keep going; being a leader is not only about having a badge and standing up in assembly but it’s about being a good role model for students so they can have a brighter future. I’ve also learnt that everyone can be their own leader in their own ways.

Something I’m looking forward to this year is having more fundraisers and improving on my public speaking.

Jess Redmond: I think SRC is important because it builds confidence in student voice. So far I have learnt to share my ideas and be confident in public speaking.

Something I’m looking forward to this year is to help the SRC and give good ideas to make the school a better place.

Makaylah Prigg: I think SRC is important because student voice is important and everyone can have a say, not only the teachers. So far I have learnt the different opportunities in SRC and it’s not only about leadership (or having a title).

Something I’m looking forward to this year is doing something good for all the people in school and making their dreams come true.
Natalina Servello: I think SRC is important because you can become more confident in public speaking and also become a better leader! So far I have learnt how to become a better leader and a good role model for others.

Something I’m looking forward to this year is making the suggestions come true and making the school a better place to learn.

Nyawarga Malow: I think SRC is important because the students can see that it’s good to have responsibility and we can help people around the world too. So far I have learnt that’s it’s a big responsibility. It’s like looking after your family: you need to responsible, be organised and know what activities are coming next.

Something I’m looking forward to this year is fundraising and how much money we can raise.

Roghayeh Sadeghi: I think SRC is important because it helps student build their confidence in public speaking and lets people have a say in what is right, what is important to them and what they want to achieve. I also think the SRC is important because students are able to know that they can achieve by trying hard and giving their personal best at all times.

Through the SRC we learn that, if we are passionate about sharing ideas and making the school a safer and more enjoyable place to learn, we can do that easily with the help of others.

So far I have learnt how to be a great leader and a great role model for others to follow my footsteps and be successful throughout their journey in school. I’ve also learnt to think about my future and my actions and how they can affect others.

Something I’m looking forward to this year is to have the amazing opportunity to work with all the leaders around the College and to learn more leadership skills throughout my career and help others to share their ideas and make the school a better place.

Shaylin Ryder: SRCs are important because they build confidence in student voice. So far I have learnt how to speak up and be a good leader and stand up for others. My advice for this year’s SRC is to not be afraid to speak up for people including yourself. Something I’m looking forward to this year is hearing about Congress and having more fundraisers.

Steven Koneski: I think SRC is important because it gives students a better learning environment and it makes them feel safe. So far I have learnt that being yourself helps you be a better leader.

Something I’m looking forward to this year is helping my school and giving students a better environment to learn.

Tiana Prodanov: I think SRC is important because students have a say about what they want for school and how they can make it a more enjoyable and safer place to learn. So far I have learnt to help other people and speak up for others.

Something I’m looking forward to this year is seeing the school become a better school.

Ty Gilson: I think SRC is important because it gives students a chance to talk up and share their ideas about school and improve those learning as best as possible.

So far I have learnt that it’s good for students to talk up because it shows what the students think about the school instead of just always the teachers’ thoughts.

Something I’m looking forward to this year is receiving letters from Hillary and having more fundraisers to support education in Uganda.

Contact the SRC of Peacock Campus of Northern Bay P-12 College via Ash Pike: pike.ashlan.a@edumail.vic.gov.au
Whole Campus Approaches to Student Voice

The SRC is part of a whole campus approach to student voice. The following represents the diversity of practice of student voice at Northern Bay College, Peacock Campus - in the classroom, out of the classroom and within the community:

College-Wide SRCs

The Peacock Campus provides a model for SRC and Student Voice development across all five campuses of Northern Bay College.

We are currently looking at taking up the Teach the Teacher program, are meeting with all SRCs regularly (with a cross-campus meeting of representatives planned for early June) and will be continuing this work throughout the year. This is a main focus of our College’s Wellbeing and Engagement Team and is documented in the School Intervention Design Plan.

Where we are now in 2015

- 2015 Campus Leaders/SRC Executive have been building their understanding of the SRC constitution including decision-making models and running effective meetings
- Ongoing work at a campus level as well as College-wide, around building an understanding of student leadership opportunities and student voice as a concept in all areas across our school
- Presentations to the Year 6-8 learning community on leadership skills and opportunities at Peacock
- Campus Leaders/SRC executive have completed the nomination process for the 2015 SRC which is now up and running on a number of new ideas
- Peacock campus will be hosting our first College-wide cross-campus SRC meeting in early June
- Sponsored a student in Uganda through the Kirabo Foundation of Cotton On (www.kirabofoundation.org)
- NBC hosted the VicSRC Regional Conference in Geelong

The SRC at Goldsworthy Campus

The SRC at Northern Bay College proves to be a very valuable aspect of our school. One of our core beliefs is that all students should have a voice, and not only that, that the voices deserve to be heard.

First starting as a little group of four student leaders at my junior campus, Peacock, the Student Representative Council was already showing a change in the school, from little things like reducing litter, to much larger changes such as giving all students a welcoming and happy learning environment.

Yet that was only the birth to a much larger collection of SRCs. Now, in 2015, all five of our campuses have their own individual SRC, including the senior campus where I’m currently at.

The Goldsworthy senior campus SRC was established this year by Stoofa, one of the most motivational and influential people that anyone will ever meet. The journey was hard, but now we have an enthusiastic group of students who give a voice to the community. Through regular meetings, not only have we organised multiple changes and fundraisers for the school, we are also committed to helping the community of Geelong and Melbourne, first starting as a sleepover at the MCG for the homeless.

We are just getting started, but I believe the passionate people we have in the SRC means we have an exciting future.

Gypsy Akhyar, year 9, Goldsworthy Campus
2015 has been a big year for Student Leadership, Student Engagement and Student Voice at Mount Waverley Secondary College in Melbourne's eastern suburbs.

It has been a tradition at Mount Waverley SC for years to have a Year 12 Prefect Team, which is led by the four School Captains, as well as a Year 8 Leadership Team at our Junior Campus, with Junior School Captains and Junior Action Group leaders. This year, however, we have new Student Leadership Teams at other Year Levels on our Senior Campus.

At Year 11 there is a Student Leadership Team as well as a Student Connect Committee, and there is a Student Leadership Team at Year 10 ... and by July there will be one at Year 9 too! This year also saw the reintroduction of the Year 12 College Sports Captains and Senior and Intermediate House Captains for each of our six houses.

The leadership teams work together towards improving student-teacher relationships, increasing student engagement and connectedness to the College and encouraging community involvement within the College and broader community.

**Our Vision - Year 11 Leaders**

This year’s **Year 11 Student Leadership Team** is made up of 16 enthusiastic and creative students. At weekly meetings, we discuss issues concerning the student body and plan ways to overcome any problems. We invite different teachers to each meeting with the purpose of creating a positive relationship between the teachers and the student leaders. During the first few meetings, the team focused on setting goals for the year. We came up with four goals as part of our **vision** that we want to work towards to improve the College climate. These goals are **Student Wellbeing, Student Support, Student Voice** and **Student Engagement** (see below). We have based our projects and events on these goals.

An ongoing major project of ours is **Project Smile**. It focuses on the individual’s belief, equality amongst students and good vibes across the year level and campus. Our team tries to focus on the small things because we believe that it is the small things that make big changes. The student leader in charge of this project spoke at our year level assembly and, along with other leaders, put up posters with positive quotes around the school. A big part of cultivating **Project Smile** began and is furthered through the little yet effective gesture of screening a thought-provoking, inspiring or ‘viral’ video in our weekly year level (Year 11) assemblies; this has been effective in not only engaging our cohort and initiating healthy discussions, but sets a pace of enthusiasm and smiles for the rest of the day and, hopefully, week.

Our team also focuses on relationships between teachers and students. A group of student leaders is planning to create a **Dear Teacher** video where they interview students and ask them about what they like in a teacher. This will not only open up student voice but will also become an opportunity to appreciate our teachers.

This year at Year 11 we have two leadership teams: the **Student Leadership Team (SLT)** and the **Student Connect Committee (SCC)**. The SCC was formed due to the overwhelming...
number of Year 11 students wanting to improve our school environment and culture. It is made up of 15 enthusiastic students wishing to forge stronger bonds between students, as well as improve the working relationship between students and teachers. For this reason we have put effort into promoting and organising activities for the student body both within our year level and across the College. In comparison with the Student Leadership Team, the SCC meetings are less formal, leaving more room for improvisation.

Our inauguration task at the beginning of the year was to organise the annual trivia night at the Year 11 camp, which had previously been teacher-run. We held a few meetings to brainstorm ideas and came up with ways to engage the students, such as playing music in the background and changing the PowerPoint graphics to be more appealing. When the night came around, the feedback from both teachers and students gave us the confidence and enthusiasm we needed to kick-start our year.

A major project for the first semester has been Connect and Cre8. On Wednesday afternoons, when VCE students don’t have classes, a group of four to six SCC members walk up to the Junior Campus and attended Year 8 classes to assist the teachers and work with younger students. This came about as a result of our wish to create cross-campus bonds with the younger students on the Junior Campus. Both the Year 8 and Year 11 students have found the experience enjoyable and we have plans to expand the program by advertising it at assemblies, so as to involve all Year 11 students.

Most recently we organised a lunchtime dodgeball match! We set about advertising it with posters and at assemblies and home groups, using the tournament to raise awareness of our College production’s need of funds. On the day we had a very large turnout of students from all year levels and the spirit was infectious, with everyone getting involved including a team of enthusiastic teachers!

Starting a Tradition:
The Year 10 Leadership Team

The Year 10 Student Leadership Team is composed of a group of 19 very passionate and optimistic leaders, who are always willing to take on responsibilities and work collaboratively!

Our whole team has been involved with numerous activities, starting from hosting Year Level Assemblies, to attending the Regional VicSRC conference, and attending the Cystic Fibrosis Victoria Leadership Camp. The Camp was an incredible Leadership Development camp where we not only enhanced our leadership skills, but got the unique opportunity to meet numerous wonderful, like-minded people, and most importantly, we got to learn about Cystic Fibrosis (CF). From the skills acquired and knowledge gained on CF through this weekend camp, we are currently working on...
towards organising an event to raise awareness as well as fundraise for this life-threatening genetic disorder. Two of the Year 10 leaders also attended the UN Youth Victoria State Conference Camp and another two attended the Monash All Schools Leadership Program.

In March, our school celebrated National Close the Gap day to help raise awareness of the crisis facing Indigenous health. We organised the “30 for 2030 challenge” in which students choose to pledge to collect 30 names in support of the Close the Gap Coalition. We collected over 360 names for this pledge and, together with nearly 200,000 other Australians, we called on governments to take real, measurable action to achieve health equality by 2030! Our team has also fundraised for many organisations and good causes such as the Deafness Foundation, ANZAC Day, as well as our College production.

Once a week every Wednesday, a few of the Year 10 leaders play music in the yard at lunchtime. It is working out delightfully, because the presence of music makes the lunch time environment more engaging. It perks up the students’ moods, and it is more likely for students to go to their next classes in a fresher mood after they listen to some music. Some Year 10 leaders also have been involved with helping out at the College Open Night. We gave an insight into our high school life to the prospective students for 2016. We answered questions and showed them around the school. Our journey as leaders can only get better from here on and we hope to make 2015 a very successful year!

**Year 12 Leadership and the Year 12 Prefect Team**

The 2015 Year 12 Prefect Team (four captains and 20 Prefects) aim to foster positive relationships between our peers and teachers, support fellow students in their academic pursuits and increase student involvement in school activities. In an effort to support our cohort during the toughest academic year of our schooling to-date, the Prefect team has set up study groups for almost every VCE subject.

The Prefect Team also works closely with their Year Level Coordinators to form committees to organise the Year 12 Jumpers, Year 12 Formal, the Year 12 Yearbook, Valedictory Dinner, and activities such as Down-Ball Tournaments, Movie Night and Rock-climbing. We are also supporting a Year 12 student who is shaving her head as part of the World’s Greatest Shave.

Four Prefects attended the Red Cross Club Red Youth Ambassadors Program training day earlier this year. They travelled to Victoria University’s City Campus and spent the day learning about the Blood Service and how to become active Red25 Youth Ambassadors. Also in March, three College Prefects represented the school at the Lions Youth of the Year (YOTY) dinner. The competition’s application process began in November last year and involved a written application, interview, and a public speaking component. Earlier this year, two of the College Prefects attended the 2015 UN Youth Victorian State Conference, inspiring us to run a Model UN at school.

One of our Prefects, Netania Lim, was fortunate enough to attend the 20th National Schools’ Constitutional Convention in Canberra in March. This was a wonderful opportunity that increased her awareness of Australian politics and current issues, as they discussed a Bill of Rights in Australia. The ideas she discussed were brought to Year 11 and 12 students after her return to school.

**Leaders working together**

Year 11 and 12 leaders have formed a Teach the Teacher committee at MWSC. Our aim is to improve relationships between teachers and students. We are all passionate about creating opportunities to improve and strengthen student-teacher relationships, and we are excitedly looking forward to working together with VicSRC to improve the teaching and learning experience for both of us, as students and our teachers. Emma Myers from the VicSRC visited earlier this year, and will visit MWSC again when we host the first of two Teach the Teacher training days on 2nd June. We have already started putting together some teacher and student surveys to collect some data to guide our project.

The Year 10, 11 and 12 Leaders have worked collaboratively to organise events such as a Chinese New Year celebration (encouraging the local and international students to celebrate our school’s cultural diversity), a casual clothes day to promote Harmony Day, Casual Clothes Day (we raised $2306.65 for State Schools Relief), Cultural Diversity Week (a small committee was formed and organised lunchtime activities such as indicating on a map where the student was from) and National Close the Gap Day. Year 10 and Year 11 student leaders spoke at year
level assemblies and visited home groups to collect names for this challenge.

Following the recent Earthquake in Nepal, a group of students and staff (including many who visited Nepal on World Challenge at the end of last year) organised a week of fundraising activities to raise money to aid the thousands of Nepalese people now left homeless and/or without basic supplies such as food, water, housing and medical supplies. The student group (a mix of Year 10, 11 and 12 students) was led by House Captain Imogen (Year 11). Students spoke to Homegroups and at Year Level Assemblies at both the Junior Campus and Senior Campus, and put posters up around the school to promote the cause.

The activities included sausage sizzles at both campuses, music, chalk drawings, a colourful socks and scarves day, traditional Nepalese tea and biscuits for a gold coin donation and decorate your own cupcake day. All proceeds were donated to the Red Cross and the MCAF (Mother Children’s Art Foundation) to fund basic aid to the people of Nepal.

The Year 11 team plan to work with the soon-to-be Year 9 team to think about how the Year 8 to 9 Transition Program can be improved. Although it is several months away, we believe that this program is crucial for the settling in of Junior Campus students at the big and strange environment of the Senior Campus. As a useful and logical extension to our projects with the Year 8s, we, as the Year 11 Student Leadership Team, have also established a mentoring relationship with the Year 8 Leadership Team (including the Junior School Captains).

On Wednesday 22nd of April, a group of Year 10 and 11 Leaders attended the VicSRC regional conference at Haileybury College in Keysborough. We were greeted very warmly and got the opportunity to make quite a few friends from schools all over Melbourne's eastern suburbs. The day was fruitful as we came up with and shared ideas on how to improve our school - not just physically but also how to get Mount Waverley’s students to act upon creating a better learning environment. We want to improve the physical environment of our school, specifically aiming to reduce the amount of litter around school grounds. A few ideas of potential actions include raising awareness by creating positive peer pressure (by catchy videos or posters) and introducing school clean-up as part of detention.

Coming up this term, students from Years 9-12 will participate in the Red Shield Appeal. Ten of our Student Leaders are attending a World Vision Conference in the city, and will lead this year’s World Vision’s 40 Hour Famine fundraising (last year we raised over $9,000). Four of our Student Leaders have been selected to be Global Volunteer Network Youth Ambassadors, and together they are working towards fundraising $3,500 each to go overseas to help communities in need.

We are incredibly fortunate in the exciting opportunities that have been granted to us this year, and we hope we can continue to increase student voice and student engagement at Mount Waverley Secondary College. We are all passionate about being part of an effective Student Leadership Program and have learned many things from working with each of the Leadership Teams. We hope to be the face of positive change at Mount Waverley, working to make leadership an integral part of the College this year, and for years to come.

Tamanna Kibrea (Year 10)
Neha Salahuddin (Year 10)
Grace Lee (Year 11)
Annabelle Lim (Year 11)
Mihika De Bruyne (Year 11)
Netania Lim (Year 12)
and Hayley Dureau
(Head of Student Leadership)
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Once upon a time, long ago in the 90s, I was School Captain at my secondary school in South Australia. Full disclosure: I was also on behaviour contract at the time. The contract was historical and awarded to me in Year 10 after a series of misdemeanours, one of which was getting caught smoking on a school excursion. When I share this with student leaders, there are always looks of genuine shock and disbelief that there was ever a time that a miscreant like myself was allowed to hold such a position of leadership.

Having worked with hundreds of SRC members over recent months as facilitator of the VicSRC Regional Conferences, I have realised that many contemporary schools and principals would never allow a student with my poor behaviour record anywhere near their School Captaincy, or possibly even on the SRC. The vast majority of school captains I have met have been articulate, polite, perfectly likeable and presentable young people – different from myself at their age! However, the fact is that joining my school’s SRC and becoming School Captain was a life changing experience and unquestionably led me to my current occupation of teaching social and emotional learning skills and leadership in schools.

Please don’t misunderstand me. I have been impressed and delighted with the SRC representatives I have met at the conferences, and see a group of genuinely committed, passionate and impressive young people in our SRCs. But – I do sometimes wonder just how ‘representative’ our representatives truly are or how much of an insight they have into the lives and difficulties of some of their peers. To highlight this point and challenge SRC members to consider the broader student body I run an empathy activity called the ‘PowerWalk’.

The ‘PowerWalk’ is an activity I have developed and extended, based on a similar activity I came across when working with a group of same-sex attracted young people in the early 2000s through the Action Centre. At that time discussions about homophobia and the difficulties experienced by gay students were in their very early days and the ‘PowerWalk’ activity had been developed to show the differences in access, equality and safety between heterosexual and same-sex attracted students.

The premise was simple: pick four students from the class and give them a label, titled either ‘gay student’ or ‘straight student’. Ask them a series of yes/no questions based on this label, to which they respond by either taking a step forward for ‘yes’ or a step backwards for ‘no’ e.g. ‘Would you be able to bring your current boyfriend/girlfriend to the school formal?’ The labels are not disclosed until the end of the activity, by which time there is a physical representation of the different experiences of gay and straight students, with the straight students out in front and the gay students at the back. The activity was powerful because it was an interactive and engaging way to discuss inequity regarding sexuality with students and also because of the pure visual and physical symbolism of the results.

The expansion of the current activity to include a much broader range of students has not diminished its impact, and if anything leaves an even greater impression on students because it allows for every student in the class or workshop...
to be part of the activity. The broadening of the activity also opens the discussion up to the topic of ‘empathy’ and its role in SRCs.

**How the PowerWalk Works**

A broad range of ‘labels’ are distributed at random to all participants in the activity. These are descriptors such as: ‘A popular boy in the cool group,’ ‘A shy student,’ ‘A student who doesn’t speak much English,’ ‘A sports all-rounder,’ etc. Clarify to the whole group that the label they are holding denotes the person they are to become for the length of the activity and that they should keep this information to themselves. It is important to stress that for the purpose of the activity, they will need to step into the shoes of the student identity they are holding.

Students form a line across the middle of the room (or yard) and a series of yes/no questions are asked about their social, academic and familial experiences eg:

- “Would you have a lot of friends to hang out with at lunchtime?”
- “Would you feel comfortable inviting other students back to your home?”
- “Could you expect to get a leadership position at your school?”
- “Do you think you would get along well with your teachers?”

The participants must imagine how the student on their label would answer. If they think the students would answer ‘yes’ they take a step forward; ‘no’ is a step backward and, if unsure, they can stay where they are. At the end of the activity the participants remain standing where they are and reveal the identity of their label.

**Follow-Up Discussion**

Clearly, this activity must be followed by a discussion of its meaning and impact on participants. Inevitably some or all of the labels will describe actual members of the group participating and their insights into the activity’s accuracy can be valuable to the group, as well as a safety valve for expressing their own emotions. The questions asked during the activity will also impact upon the end result; if the questions are all about social experiences then the participant labels of ‘A straight A student’ or “A student who is really into computers” may end up at the back. If questions are instead about academic experiences eg “Do you think you would get along well with your teachers?” the dynamic changes and participants with these labels will end up further to the front.

Discussion questions should be tailored not only towards the experiences of the participants, but also what the activity reflects in regards to the learning objective at the time. Some examples from recent groups with young leaders are:

- How did you feel when you got your label?
- Did you know straight away whether your student would do well or badly?
- Do you think your school is fair to all student? Why? Why Not?
- What can teachers do to make a fairer environment for all students? Examples?
- What can SRCs do to make a fairer environment for all students? Examples?

If the activity is done with an inter-school group, we sometimes find that students with the same label are placed in both the front and the back group. The group can then be asked: “Why the difference?” “What is it about the way that a school operates that makes the difference?”

**Impact?**

There is a level of rhetoric in the popular media that our young people have lost their capacity for empathy, largely due to their interactions with social media. My experience in running this activity suggests otherwise and conversations with student leaders who participate in the ‘PowerWalk’ reflect a high level of empathy and a desire to create more equitable schools.

Students who seriously want to be good representatives engage seriously with this activity and take away its lessons. They become less dismissive or frustrated with the smokers and truants of their school and more interested in why these behaviours are occurring and whether the SRC can do anything to increase school engagement. They become less interested in punitive approaches to ‘undesirable’ behaviour and more creative in their approach to how these behaviours can be managed, or even whether they are always so ‘undesirable’ in the first place.

Such approaches from our student leaders can only increase social and peer cohesion, lead to greater school engagement and therefore better learning outcomes across the board – as well as more representative and effective SRCs.

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The International Democratic Education Conference was held in Nelson in Aotearoa/New Zealand from 8th–12th April 2015.

All IDECs are different and 2015 had its own unique character. The organising group hoped to give space and voice to Indigenous and young people and this was very evident in the participants from 30 different countries. There were young people from such diverse groups as Navajo and Hopi Nations, Australian Indigenous people, Cyprus, Venezuela, a strong presence from Taiwan, Hong Kong and China – as well as many of our old and new friends in the Democratic Education Community from Japan, Korea, Israel, UK and US, Puerto Rico, Brazil, Nepal, Finland...

Central to this diversity was the heart of the Maori youth and culture which permeated the whole event. The gathering was based at the Whakatu Marae and Founders Park and we were introduced to the Marae at a traditional powhiri, which is a moving and evocative welcome. The official opening of the conference was full of Maori spirit, music and ceremony and the inclusive creating of the IDEC 2015 symbol with stones.

We discovered more about the significance of the symbol of the octopus when Dr Rangimarie Turuki Rose Pere, a Maori elder who has been involved in education, community development and language revitalisation for the past 40 years, gave a passionate, challenging, cheeky and humourous session! She led us through a journey of sharing the oneness of the eight dimensions of total well-being and development. The energy is the Octopus whose legs represent the eight iwi/Tangata Whenua.

“This model of learning and teaching has been transmitted from our ancient ancestors Nga Potiki and Nga Uri-A-Maui, who have always lived here in New Zealand as Peace-keepers, and intermarried with our other ancestors who came to New Zealand in the Great Fleet from the Pacific Islands approximately a thousand years ago.”

Rangimarie Parata, who is Chair of Te Pa O Rakaihautu told us of the 21st Century Pa Wananga Learning Village and, as Rose had done, she emphasised the need and value of taking action, stepping up and Whanau determining their own future and embedding their language, stories and culture in any learning processes and curriculum. Like many indigenous youth around the world, the Maori still face many issues, but the young people who participated in IDEC showed talent, strength of spirit and confidence in their choices.

We had many and varied keynote speakers such as Kate Lipkis (Council in Schools), Birgitte Sundvall (the founder of the Alfa-Pedagogik School in Sweden), Yaacov Hecht speaking about Education Cities, Justo Menez Aramburu and Ana Yris Guzman Torres (from Nuestra Escuelita, Our Little School), Ann Qui (from isckool in Shanghai), Gail Thomas (from Soka University in USA) leading a discussion about Education Beyond Jobs, and Nikkei Harre leading us in The Infinite Game. Kageki Asakura (Japan), Tae Wook Ha (South Korea) and Reshef Burde (Israel) spoke about the situation in their countries where new laws about education will have major effects on the health of democratic education.

Youth-Led Sessions
I thought I would try to briefly mention some of the sessions that I attended that were led by the young people.

At this IDEC we had many young volunteers, parents and families who had had little or no experience of Democratic Education, so the workshop about School Meetings at Tamariki in Christchurch drew a large crowd of diverse and questioning participants. There was a large group of students from the school (primary ages) attending the conference and they were supposed to hold a meeting but they were having so much fun in the youth space, which was full of art and games and music and amazing performance and circus work etc, that they made a decision to continue on with the various
other activities they were enjoying! So the adults held an improvised meeting and showcased the central role it plays in the daily life of the students and the school.

The students from the Humanity School in Taiwan presented a drama portraying the difference between conventional schooling in Taiwan and that of their school. As well as showing the stark contrast between the pressures and demands placed on young people and their desire to participate and make decisions about their own lives, the whole drama was scripted in English and even those who could not speak English learnt their parts so well. They also presented an indigenous dance from Taiwan, which had some very similar characteristics to the Maori dances.

Some of the young people from the Navajo Nation have been learning how to use technology to tell their stories and they shared some wonderful short films that they had produced. Their honesty and humour even in the face of many of the difficulties in their lives meant they had captured some moving and original moments.

Ricky: How I started to make decisions
Will: What I learned on the School Council
Martin: Finding out who I am
Wei Huai: What the school gives us is freedom
Gee: Why we go mountain climbing

IDEC2016 will be held in Finland; IDEC2017 will be held in Israel; and IDEC2018 will be held in Nepal.

Cecelia Bradley
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Countries represented in the photo:
Cyprus, Nepal, Aotearoa/NZ, Israel, USA, Australia, UK, South Korea, Germany
In my ongoing studies to support meaningful student involvement, I have recently come across a number of historical examples I want to share. The following is a story from the US state of North Carolina.

Like much of the US in the 1960s, North Carolina (NC) was rife with racial strife and social turmoil. President John F Kennedy, Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr and US Attorney General Robert Kennedy had all been assassinated; young people were rampantly active throughout their communities; and an energy crisis was making the nation's economy rough at best.

In 1968, voters in NC elected a progressive, liberal state leader for schools named A Craig Phillips. When he took office early the next year, Phillips almost immediately appointed a 16-member committee called the Task Force on Student Involvement. The NC State Superintendent of Public Instruction's original purpose for the task force was to engage students in addressing race issues and other challenges across the state.

Within a month though, their participation was expanded to include most areas of public education. The 16 members were constantly in meetings, serving on curriculum advisory committees and accreditation teams, conducting surveys of student needs, participating in human relations and other in-service training programs, and promoting programs designed to improve the welfare of students.

The Task Force operated with a lot of deliberation and was very well-designed. Leadership was shared among four people: a student director, a high school senior and a part-time state employee, all working with a full-time adult director. The student members of the team were intentionally chosen to:

- represent the different parts of the state;
- reflect different racial, social, economic, and academic backgrounds; and
- act as a student voice to the State Department of Public Instruction.

Student members represented the Task Force on school accreditation teams, conferences and teacher workshops, and curriculum evaluation committees. They also visited schools on request to discuss different aspects of student involvement, and listened to students' and administrators' ideas. Much of their work was concentrated on helping students and educators work together to derive solutions to their own problems of apathy and unrest.

Locally, student members were involved in many school and community activities, and the Task Force supported student-oriented and student-run programs across the state. The Task Force also acted as a clearinghouse for student ideas on varied subjects, such as ecology, drugs, human relations, and curriculum, and transmit them to administrators, state officials, and other students. All these activities were directed toward spurring other students in the state to become constructively involved in their schools and communities.

The Task Force and its staff wrote several reports focused on students and educators working together to take responsibility for solving their educational problems. Their findings covered:

- general administrative policies, attitudes and actions of educators;
- attitudes and actions of students;
- extracurricular activities, student councils, human relations, and sensitive areas, including student elections for cheerleaders and prom queens, and curriculum.

A great summary paper written by Susan Vernon was published in 1970 and is available online at http://bit.ly/NCTFSInvolve.

The legacy of their work extends across four decades, driving exciting work in North Carolina and from now on, informing exciting work into the future across North America and around the world.

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Before You Were Alive #1
A Taskforce on Student Involvement
In October 1985, at the Victorian State Student Conference held in Geelong as part of an Education Department initiative in the International Year of Youth (IYY), the (then) Minister of Education (Hon Ian Cathie) announced the establishment of a Ministerial Working Party on Student Participation.

The Working Party was to consist of 27 members representing a wide range of sectional and system interests. Included in this membership of the Working Party were to be four students, representing the students in all Government and non-Government schools and TAFE Colleges.

At the State Student Conference in October, certain recommendations were drawn up to take to the Ministerial Working Party (MWP) (see Connect 37/38: 21 for further details). These were tabled at the first meeting of the MWP, held in December. The outcomes of these recommendations about student representatives on the MWP and the requirements laid down by the Minister of Education, resulted in a sub-committee being established to look at the issue of students and the MWP.

The concerns that the sub-committee had to keep in mind during their deliberations were:

1. That the students on the MWP were to be given credit and support for their work (a recommendation from the State Student Conference);
2. That there were to be four students and that they had to represent Government, non-Government and TAFE sectors.

This was no easy task. There were no representative student bodies in the state to go to in order to find four student members. We had a Statewide Student Conference, but the non-Government and TAFE sectors were not represented. There were also debates that took place about representation.

One of the options that was raised was that of a Student Research Team (SRT). The idea of a SRT was built on the need for credit and support. It could provide a team of students from whom a number of members could be selected to work on the MWP and it could allow for the participation and inclusion of students from other sectors in a variety of ways.

The sub-committee put forward its finding to the MWP in February (1986) and the Student Research Team model was adopted as one way of ensuring student members on the MWP. More importantly, it ensured that students were able to participate actively in a working party that was looking into how schools had been putting into practice the Government’s policies of student participation in their learning and in the decision making processes. The SRT is an educative approach to working with students, not an administrative approach.

What is the Student Research Team (SRT)?

The SRT is a development of the Youth Action Projects that have been in existence in Victorian schools for some time. The model builds on established structures and processes that allow for student participation in the design, management and assessment of their courses. The starting point was the State Executive of the Schools Year 12 and Tertiary Entrance Certificate Course. This Course, commonly known as STC, was an approved Year 12 course within HSC.

Adam Fletcher’s reminiscence (previous page) prompted my memory of a similar initiative that took place in 1986 in Victoria, Australia. And at the same time, in preparing a seminar, I unearthed a (long-forgotten) copy of Student Participation in Schools and TAFE the Report of the Ministerial Working Party on Student Participation, published by the Victorian Ministry of Education in 1987.

I was going to summarise the way that students worked with the Ministerial Working Party but, in looking back through the Connect archives, found an article from Bert Van Halen that did just that. So here is Bert’s outline of the process - from Connect 39, June 1986, 29 years ago this month.

The initiative was approved at the February meeting and then, through the regional coordinators of STC, the offer of a ‘subject’ was made to schools. As the regional representative on the MWP, I also contacted the Participation and Equity Program consultants and informed them of the SRT. This was done in order to make the offer to students in regions who were working on networks or who may have had some form of credit or support for work in the student participation area. The first round of offers resulted in students from three regions joining the team for Term 1.

In order to form the SRT, a regional consultant had to be found in each area. This was not easy, as they were required to take the role of the regional ‘teacher’. Many consultants were very interested, but they were not able to find the time, as they had already negotiated and established their work tasks for the year.

Students then had to identify a contact teacher in their school who could be of assistance and support to the students in the school. The contact...
teacher was also to work closely with regional consultants.

With the consultants, teachers and students identified, the first state meeting was called for March 6th. At this historic meeting, the whole idea and model took shape. The students and teachers met with members of the MWP and started negotiating a possible course outline, using the seven terms of reference [see box] as a starting point. These terms of reference were the tasks that the MWP had to work through, finishing up with a report that would provide the Minister with a picture of what was happening in the area of student participation, and recommendations for future improvements.

The make-up of the Student Research team includes students from the following schools:

**Northern Region:** Thomastown, Epping and Montmorency High Schools (Contact: Peter Mildenhall)

**Tullamarine Region:** Lynall Hall Community School, Moreland and Erinbank High Schools (Contact: Peter Dorrell)

**Western Region:** Braybrook, Kealba, Maribyrnong and Sunshine West High Schools (Contact: Bert Van Halen)

The SRT increased to about 30 students in Term 2. Most of the students are, in fact, in Year 12 from schools where STC Courses are offered. Not all students have been involved in student bodies such as SRCs and Networks, nor are all members of School Councils or on school committees. One student, a Year 11 student, is however a student representative on the Regional Board of Education. This mix of backgrounds has been very important, because it has provided a whole range of starting points, [and] forces those of us down the track a little to reflect carefully on what we are doing, and is also very representative of the students we will be working with.

The students elected two permanent members to the MWP. These students report back to the MWP about the progress of the SRT and take back issues to the SRT. These two students are supported by two other students who operate on a ‘floating’ basis.

As well as state meetings, each regional team meets as required. When the model was being developed, it was felt by many that a research assistant would be made available to support the team. However, this has not eventuated and most of the work of coordinating the tasks across the three regions has been left to the regional consultants and a management group from the MWP.

**Some of the things we have done!**

During term 1, the SRT worked on the first four terms of reference of the MWP.

Suitable research questions were designed, tasks shared between regions and schools, and suitable time-lines drawn up. Students surveyed and interviewed School Council members, teachers supporting students in their roles in decision-making practices in schools, researched past minutes of School Council and other committee meetings. This work enabled students to become familiar with developments in student participation and provided them with a starting point in their reading on the matter. Their findings were to become very valuable for their work in Term 2.

All schools and TAFE Colleges in Victoria were sent a survey letter in June, asking them to write about student participation in their schools, under five headings:

**Terms of Reference of the Ministerial Working Party on Student Participation**

1. To **provide an overview** of the current implementation of the Ministerial policy on student participation by:
   - consulting with a wide variety of groups with an interest in the area in order to facilitate broadly-based discussion and development; and
   - collecting and consolidating data from existing projects.

2. To **clarify** and further develop the notion of student participation as outlined in the Ministerial Papers.

3. To **examine** the relationship between student participation in decision-making processes and structures and
   - improved learning outcomes for all students;
   - the role of students in curriculum development;
   - the extent to which schools and TAFE colleges are able to establish an environment which encourages these processes and structures.

4. To **identify** the existing barriers to the implementation of government policy, and promote examples of current and other possible practices which provide for effective student participation.

5. To provide advice to the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board (VCAB) and other relevant authorities on methods whereby the proposed Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and other means of assessment provide accreditation for the work and learning undertaken by students participating in decision-making structures and other educational participation.

6. To provide advice on ways in which the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board and other relevant authorities can play a positive role in the encouragement of curriculum development and practices which empower all students in a variety of ways, only one of which will be formal student representation in decision-making bodies.

7. To recommend to the Minister appropriate strategies for the implementation of policies on student participation.
1. What ways have you found particularly effective in enabling students to participate in:
   a) decisions about their own learning?
   b) school decision-making structures?
2. What arrangements are in place, or are planned, to assist students to participate in these areas?
3. Are there any particular practices in your school which you believe would be helpful to the Working Party and to other schools?
4. Are there any problems which your school has met in attempting to involve students in these areas? In what ways have you attempted to overcome these?
5. Are there any initiatives taken by students in your school that you think should be brought to the attention of the Working Party?

The students’ work in Term 1 will provide them with lead questions and examples that they can use in assisting schools in filling out the survey and writing their school’s story. The SRT will work with teams of people from the MWP in analysing the survey results, writing them up and presenting draft papers to the MWP.

As well as this, the SRT will also be helping to produce a video, posters and workshop notes to be used in Term 3 as part of sharing the findings and presenting the first set of papers to the schools and TAFE Colleges in Victoria. This is planned to happen during Youth Participation Week, September 15th-20th, across the state.

In Term 3, it is hoped that the SRT will also be involved in a State Student Forum where teams of students from all the regions, representing Government, non-Government and TAFE students, will be able to work on many of the issues that will be raised at the regional meetings during Youth Participation Week and helping to work through, with students, other papers prepared by the MWP.

**Some Learning and Food for Thought**

*If you don’t do it, you’ll never know what would have happened if you had done it.*

Education systems, structures and adults still prefer to have students participating in their learning in a very educationally passive manner. At a recent seminar held with the MWP and the SRT, a more mature person was heard to say: “If we have students participating, there will be no time left for learning.” That may reflect accurately a commonly held view about student participation and learning. The SRT is a model that has shown that this is not necessarily the case.

What the SRT model has done is provide us with an educational model that could possibly help us with our difficult questions about student participation in the decision-making structures, especially beyond their school.

Working with the SRT has proven to me (not that I needed it) that students do want to mix with students outside their school communities. They do want to raise issues and work them through outside the subject constraints inside schools. Students in schools do want to have a far greater say in decisions about things that affect them.

What has to happen is for us to provide the opportunity for these developments to be supported, worked through and evaluated. We must not fall into the trap and come up only with models and answers that already exist within our present society.

**Bert Van Halen**
(then) Western Metropolitan Region PEP Consultant

from Connect 39, June 1986

In the next issue of Connect (#40, August 1986), Bert developed the SRT model further, to include the possibility of building in the experience of current school leavers and to indicate how this model can work in with other youth agencies in continuing student participation into a Student/Youth Policy Development model.

The Student Research Team published its own discussion paper and distributed it to schools. This is reprinted on the next page from Connect 50, 1988.
Report on Participation

Why Does Participation Matter?
It’s important to us so that people have a say and share in the decisions that affect their lives. That’s true for jobs, personal relationships, where people live, and so on. It means learning how to work cooperatively with other people.

All these don’t come naturally - we have to learn them somewhere. One of the best ways of learning something is by doing it and having a chance to think about it as well as talk about it.

So the participation of students in curriculum helps us learn how to control our own affairs and take part in a democratic society. It is also important because government policy supports the idea of student participation and we are helping to think how it might work in schools in the future.

If we want students to be involved in our own curriculum, we need to be supported by teachers, families and fellow students. We need support inside the classroom and outside. For example, in the classroom, we could start by negotiating homework, then move to bigger issues such as when an assignment should be completed, the contents of an assignment, and then planning a whole year’s course.

Outside the classroom, students may have increased influence in curriculum by starting small and working their way towards bigger things, for example:

- knowing how the student’s School Council works;
- organising social events such as walkathons;
- finding out what students need, such as a student phone;
- dealing with student problems, and helping to work out the school rules.

Learning and How It Happens
Learning takes place inside and outside classrooms. Parents, students and teachers all learn things in many ways and a variety of settings.

Learning takes place when we observe, read, write, think, discuss, argue ... and when:

- it is relevant and meaningful and everybody has a say;
- we work as individuals and as part of a group;
- we have good working relationships; and
- we can negotiate and build on previous experience.

Participating in school, at school, and through schooling, allows for learning to include and extend into the wider society.

If people participate in decision-making about their curriculum, then they may become more committed to their learning. With an increased participation in decision-making, more groups of people who previously may have been neglected or excluded from participating fully in their learning may be offered greater rewards from their schooling eg girls, migrants, Aborigines, the disabled, rurally isolated, and the economically disadvantaged.

Student Participation
Student participation means different things to different people, and takes different forms. For students, it means having a real say in what we learn, how we learn, and what the places and structures we learn in are like.

The easiest way to explain this is to look at some of the different ways students can participate as partners in education. The issues paper: Students: Partners in Education includes an outline of the ways in which many schools have enabled us to participate.

In the Classroom
We can participate in the classroom through:

- having opportunities for class discussions;
- sharing ideas and opinions;
- having a choice of topics or projects within subject areas;
- having a choice of subjects or electives;
- negotiating what and how we will learn in an option, a subject or a course;
- having a say in our own assessment.
Beyond the Classroom

Students also participate in many ways outside the classroom, such as being on School Councils, in sports teams, or being representatives on Regional Boards. Such examples are:

- student committees and SRCs;
- student membership on School Councils and sub-committees;
- regional student networks;
- students helping to plan curriculum days;
- student organisers for extracurricular activities such as theatre, bands, productions, socials, debating teams and sports teams; and
- student productions of radio and newspapers.

Students learn many skills and develop in many ways through participation in decision-making and activities both within and beyond the classroom.

We learn to:

- develop communication skills orally and in reading and writing;
- extend our knowledge of words, concepts and ideas;
- gain confidence in our own abilities;
- learn about decision-making structures and how to influence them;
- understand better the society in which we live; and
- become our own teachers and teachers of our peers.

Problems

What are some of the problems faced in making student participation happen?

- Students in particular areas are not aware of many issues in schools and colleges and across the state, or of their responsibilities and powers.
- Students don’t have enough time to participate actively, for example, not enough time to negotiate our work or to prepare before and after meetings.
- Some teachers and families don’t accept or actively support student participation.

How Can Student Participation Work?

Below are some examples identified by schools to the Ministerial Working Party’s survey of student participation:

- Creating a strong partnership of students, families and teachers in planning what is taught and learned at school;
- Students and teachers working together in the classroom to negotiate what is decided about projects, assessment, class discussions and subject outlines;
- Students having a say in decision-making e.g. the School Council, the Curriculum Committee; and setting up a strong student representative body;
- Setting up good communication links so that students, parents and teachers know about issues and concerns that face the school. Students and teachers need to have open and friendly relationships so that they can work together;
- Giving proper credit and support so that students’ participation can work; and
- Explaining documents and holding discussions before and after meetings. Students have difficulty understanding issues and structures in education in the ways they are officially presented.

Where To From Here?

The Ministerial Working Party has identified six key areas for discussion in relation to student participation in the school sector.

They are:

1. Why student participation?
2. Learning and decision-making
3. Student participation and equity
4. Support for student participation
5. Representation and students on committees
6. Accreditation of student participation

We hope that people will discuss these areas, realising that they are all inter-related.

From Connect 50, April 1988
VicSRC Congress Is Now Sold Out!

For the first time in VicSRC history, tickets have sold out six weeks early. The countdown to Congress 2015 is officially on!

Students in Years 7-12 from over 50 schools across Victoria are set to join the roar of student voices at Congress 2015. Delegates will not only determine the VicSRC policy platforms for 2015-2016 and elect a Student Executive to implement this; they are also making history for student voice in Victoria as we mark a decade of student advocacy and action at the 10th annual VicSRC Congress.

In the coming weeks, Congress delegates will receive their Pre-Conference Delegate Pack that contains key information on what to expect, what to bring and how to prepare for the event.

In the meantime, all delegates must ensure that they return their Permission Forms and Medical Forms to communications@vicsrc.org.au by Tuesday 23rd June 2015. You can find the permission forms here: http://ow.ly/NA5We

If you didn’t manage to get tickets this year, there are still ways to be involved:

Waitlist
We have started waitlisting for places should they become available. If you’d like your name or your school added to the waitlist, please contact Fiona Campbell, VicSRC Events & Communications Officer: communications@vicsrc.org.au or 03 9267 3777.

Congress scholarships
General Congress tickets may be sold out, but we also have five Congress Scholarships available for students who might otherwise not have the opportunity to attend. Students from low socio-economic, CALD and Indigenous backgrounds may apply until Friday 5th June. Find out more Congress Scholarships: http://ow.ly/NA6i4

Nominate for the Executive
Regardless of whether you are coming to Congress, all students can nominate for the 2015-2016 Executive team! Find out more about the VicSRC Nomination Process: http://ow.ly/NA6le

10th Annual VicSRC Congress 2015
Ormond College, University of Melbourne | 8 to 10 July 2015
This annual conference is a highlight on the VicSRC calendar. Over three days, the conference brings together secondary students from across Victoria to discuss and debate issues that are important to their school communities. The conference sets the policy agenda for the VicSRC for the coming year and appoints the Student Executive who will implement it. Students participate in student-led workshops, activities, and formal decision-making through a parliamentary-style congress.

2015 VicSRC Recognition Awards
Metro Melbourne
Thursday 22 October 2015
Celebrating the achievements of SRCs and presenting examples of best practice in student voice, student-led action and student participation in Victoria.
Imagine: 12 Conferences, 3 months, 1724 kilometres on the road, 7 sell-outs and 1000 students standing up and speaking out on the issues that matter most to them.

From Bendigo to Malvern, Pascoe Vale to Hamilton, Footscray to Stawell, Corio to Churchill, we travelled far and wide to work with group after group of students who care passionately about their education at the VicSRC Regional Conferences 2015.

“It helped me open up and taught me more about the importance and power of the SRC.”

Student, Gippsland conference

VicSRC Regional Conferences allow students to network across schools, gain new skills, work together on common issues and define the top issues that matter to Victorian students. In practice, the conferences did all this and more.

“We not only brainstormed and shared ideas, but we worked on solutions to the problems we face.”

Student, Metro North conference

The wave of student voice and action grew from our first conference in March at Stawell, to our 12th conference in May in the Melbourne CBD. In-depth discussions allowed students to find connections and common ground across schools on a range of key issues including school funding, governance, wellbeing and welfare, school culture, facilities, technology and the curriculum. Make sure you check out the Top 10 Regional Conference Issues that students identified across the whole series; these issues feed directly into the hot topics at Congress 2015.

“The opportunity to discuss the structure and activities of SRCs from other schools was great.”

Student, Hume conference

VicSRC extends an enormous thank you to all the students and councils who hosted the events: Northern Grampians Shire Council, Templestowe College, Malvern Central School, Bendigo Senior Secondary College, Baimbridge College, Benalla P-12 College, Kurnai College, Haileybury College, Footscray City College, Antonine College, Northern Bay P-12 College and Melbourne High School.

Our thanks to the Danijella and Mel from the Victorian Electoral Commission for providing engaging Teacher PD sessions alongside the conference, and last, but not least, to the amazing Kate Wilde, our conference facilitator from The Human Development Workshop.

Thank you once again for your ongoing support for student voice and student leadership in Victoria. We’re part of something bigger ... and together we are powerful!

Want to host a Regional Conference in 2016?

If you’d like to get involved, please contact Fiona Campbell, VicSRC Events and Communications Officer on communications@vicsrc.org.au
From March-May this year, the VicSRC consulted with 1000 students at 12 Regional Conferences across Victoria to determine the Top 10 issues that matter to students in 2015.

A vast range of issues emerged, but common threads tied them together across regions, sectors and ages. Determined by Victorian students, here are the Top 10 Issues that matter most to them in 2015.

We’ve heard the voices of Victorian students and we’re taking the hot topics to Congress 2015!

At Congress, each delegate is assigned to one of ten Issues Groups. They’ll work with their Issues Group throughout the event, building rapport and relationships. Working together on their issue, delegates will:

- Develop resolutions to bring to the parliamentary-style debate on Day 2
- Present an Action Pitch as part of the annual Congress Cup
- Create an Action Plan to drive change on the issues back at school and in the communities

The resolutions that pass at Congress become the VicSRC’s advocacy platforms for 2015-2016. We can’t wait share what Victorian students decide to shift from issues into state-wide action.

The Teach the Teacher program has recently launched a new online training course for students, teachers and principals at schools registered to run the program. The online course provides a step-by-step guide and resources for the program at your school.

What is Teach the Teacher?

Written by students, for students, Teach the Teacher is an innovative program (supported by the Victorian Student Representative Council with funding from the Victorian Department of Education and Training) in which students plan and lead discussions with teachers about learning and teaching issues identified by students.

The Teach the Teacher program provides the space to create positive change in school communities by engaging students and teachers in conversations so they can work together towards solutions. It helps develop, engage and clarify student voice to enhance teaching, learning, communication, trust and respect.

The Teach the Teacher program starts with conversations, but is not just ‘talk’. It involves a commitment to listen to the voices of students, to take their concerns seriously, and to build student-teacher partnerships for school improvement.

The VicSRC delivers training workshops to students to help develop skills and confidence to lead discussion sessions with their teachers around teaching and learning, and about how to create change by working together, finding solutions to improve the learning environments and making positive lasting impacts on their whole school community.

The workshops are delivered in clusters of 3-4 schools over two days, so you have the opportunity to network with like-minded students and teachers in your region and build on ideas and resources.

And for 2015 we’re offering these workshops for free!

If you already have a group of schools you work with, join in the Teach the Teacher program to further enhance your cluster. Not already in a cluster? That’s fine too; we can help. Places for 2015 are limited, so contact us about arranging a date for your workshop!

Visit our new online resource at www.teachtheteacher.org.au or contact Emma Myers on 9267 3714 or projects@vicsrc.org.au to discuss the Teach the Teacher program at your school.
Meet some VicSRC Executive members:

The VicSRC is run by a group of 15 students from across the state, who make up our Executive team. But who are they? Just like you, they are powerful voices. Meet our Executive and find out what makes them tick.

Kristen Sellings

First up: 16 year old Kristen Sellings from Yarram Secondary College.

Kristen Sellings, 16, is a young woman with something to say. Look beneath the Yarram Secondary College student’s quiet and unassuming demeanour and you’ll find quick wit, bubbling enthusiasm and steely determination. The aspiring author and Dr Who fan has a knack for cutting through the noise to the core of an issue or debate, which is one of the many skills Kristen brings to the VicSRC 2014-2015 Exec team.

“There are two people who have inspired me throughout various stages of my life; they are Roald Dahl and Ted Geisel/Dr Seuss. The stories that they each wrote broke so many rules of literature for their time, and guess what - they embraced that!”

“Because of them both … their zany, creative styles have now influenced my personality and my outlook on life.”

Kristen brings this creative approach to everything she does at a community level through her SRC, and at a state level with the VicSRC. Her journey with the VicSRC started at Congress 2013, when she was first elected to the Executive. But her journey with student voice and representation started long before that.

“Student voice, to me, is a right that all students should be able to have, to express their views, experiences and opinions on issues or projects that involve them,” muses Kristen.

“Through my involvement and knowledge of student voice, I also changed,” she continued. “I gained a wider sense of motivation, especially when our voice was shut down or kicked off to the side. I started to become more aware of the large obstacles and social stigmas that surround us - the student body - like a minefield, and how hard the journey to widening our impact would be.”

The journey, whilst hard, is not without its rewards. Seeing real outcomes emerge from the day-to-day effort and slog is a huge highlight.

“Towards the end of the year, our SRC tends to be very quiet, however this time of the year is usually when we begin to generate ideas for future projects, and also some improvements on how the SRC is run and organised,” Kristen tells us.

“One of the projects that we are planning for in 2015 is our ‘Random Acts of Kindness’ week, a positive mental health event generated by our SRC. It is something our SRC and school hasn’t done before, and is an event which is really exciting our group.”

Public speaking and confidence haven’t always come naturally to Kristen - she’s had to earn it, and is still earning it! She wants all students to know that their views are valued and that they can make change happen. But you’ve got to be willing to work for it.

“For all the students out there: don’t just complain to people - that will get you nowhere. Put yourself out there and actually do something to improve the issue instead of making it harder and more confusing for others,” affirmed Kristen.

“For teachers, don’t be afraid to step outside the box, to go out of the pages and create something that sticks with your instincts. And also, look after yourself more! You tell us to organise ourselves, to not study in the middle of the night, to be aware of our limits and say ‘NO’ occasionally. Practice what you preach more often!”

“And for the politicians out there: stop turning politics into a circus - it won’t get you any votes. Instead, go into communities, get real opinions from real people, and get to know the people who you represent. Keep fighting for our voice, and keep it true.”

As for what Kristen wants to be when she ‘grows up’? The sky is the limit.

“I have no idea what the name of my future career will be, due to my large string of interests, however I would love to do something that inspires people,” said Kristen.

“Whether it is as a teacher, actress, activist, chief, designer, writer or politician, you will be sure to see my input into some type of issue somewhere across the globe.”

Of that, we have no doubt!
Next up: 14 year old Sam Illobuchi from Frankston High School.
Sam is a young man of many talents.

You’d be hard pressed to find a better dressed 14 year old this side of New York City. He’s a master of the phablet, swiping from Facebook to Instagram, Snapchat to WhatsApp, Vine to Vimeo with almost inhuman speed. He’s a digital native, but more than that: he is keenly aware that social connectivity is a powerful conduit to give voice to those who feel voiceless.

“I feel like our generation is at a turning point,” says the Frankston High School student. “I feel that those in power are starting to realise that young people are important and the future of our world.”

It’s this sense of self belief and desire to be an agent of change that led Sam to the VicSRC Executive. He nominated himself at Congress 2014 because he believes that student voices should not only be heard, but listened to and acted on. To Sam and so many students like him, he’s determined not to let any opportunities fly by without taking hold.

A typical day in the shoes of Sam’s Student Leadership Committee (SLC) starts off with splitting into groups and planning the next upcoming event.

“Whether it’s a fundraiser, a casual dress day, a student involvement event or community occasion - we will work in our teams to think up ideas and how we can get people, expressly students, involved.”

Once they’ve nutted out the fundamentals, the team publicises the event using social media (check them out on Instagram!) and old-fashioned posters.

“To me, three of the top issues facing young people today are self-image, inequity and anxiety,” he says.

“I think one of the most powerful things about student voice and the VicSRC, is that it lets students know that they’re not alone. Their opinion matters. Their struggles matter. And together we can do something about it.”

When asked about the impact of student voice and how it’s changed him, Sam is reflective.

“Being on the VicSRC and taking part in the amazing programs that are run here makes me feel like I’m making a difference,” he says.

“I don’t know if I have changed as a person just yet. What drives me is the knowledge that there is so much more out there. There is so much more that I can learn!

“I may only be one person, but I know that I’m making a change.”

Armed with his phablet, his dress sense, his talent for social connection and his profound drive to make positive change, Sam aspires to be a politician.

“It may seem cliché, but I do think if I want to continue advocating for student voice and equal rights, the government is the best stage to do it!”

In light of his prospective career direction, Sam had four tips for today’s politicians.

“Put yourself in the nation’s shoes. Imagine things from the people’s point of view. Don’t always cater for the rich. Think of the 99%, not just the 1%.”

He’s got our vote!

All about Student Action Teams, including some hyper-linked mini-case studies, at:
www.asprinworld.com/student_action_teams

Student Voice Research and Practice
facebook group
www.facebook.com/groups/studentvoicepage/

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

Imagine you have all the time and the money in the world to be the **Student Leadership Coordinator** ... OK ... if you had all the time and money in the world you might be travelling around the world and not writing reports but let’s imagine you have been appointed your school’s **Student Leadership Coordinator full-time** ... What would you do? How would you fill in your time to justify your performance and development review? What would be your objectives?

I was privileged to be part of a conversation with our new Principal where I was given permission to ‘think big’ about student leadership at our school. We began by looking at our student leadership constitution where it states that the objective of our College’s Student Voice: “… is to recognise that students are equal players in decisions which affect our learning community.” This was the starting point of the conversation – about how we could make students equal players.

There are several aspects to this challenge:

**Developing Students’ Competence**

What do students need in order to be able to be ‘equal players’? How do we give them skills to allow them to have a voice? How do we provide them with the power to have a voice?

One of the best ways to develop students’ skills is through intensive leadership training. Camps provide the time and focus to work with students in order to build a leadership team. Here you can work on skill developments including public speaking, students running their own meetings and students actually having opportunities to develop their ideas fully. However camps can be expensive; they are time consuming for the organiser; it is easy to focus on what can go wrong when taking a groups of students on a camp ... but let’s think about the great opportunities that happen during camps and what can then be built on. Don’t be afraid to ‘**think big**’ and provide leadership training opportunities in a variety of settings including leadership camps, leadership training days and, if you are really restricted for time, leadership sessions focusing on one particular skill per session.

**Developing Appropriate Structures**

Where does Student Voice and your SRC/JSC fit into your school’s leadership and management structure? Is it on the fringe or central to the school’s strategic plan? How is it related to other school structures: School Council, Curriculum Committee etc?

Our student leadership program has just become a focus of our new strategic plan for the next five years. It is now the responsibility of the whole school, including all leaders, to incorporate student leadership within their programs. We are looking forward to developing a scope and sequence plan that encompasses student leadership from Grade 3 to Year 12. Within that scope and sequence we hope to include student camps, leadership training days, **Teach the Teacher** programs at different year levels, and peer support programs throughout the school ... just to mention a few ideas. Maybe there could even be a physical student leadership ‘space’ where we have all of our meetings and can decorate our walls!!!
Supporting Student Voice and Leadership
Who supports students in their partnerships with the school? Are support roles offered to the new first year teacher who is already just coping with being a teacher for the first time? On the other hand, is it led by the Assistant Principal/Principal? What are the positive and negatives of these? It is great to have a Principal/Assistant Principal involved but do they have enough time to put into the program and have ‘unexpected’ meetings they need to attend? A graduate teacher might be enthusiastic but do they have enough support networks so they know who to ask and how to get things happening?

Supporting students can be a lonely role, so think about how you can share the work – and have support for student voice spread across the roles of several teachers throughout the school. This can be done strategically in order to reinforce support in crucial parts of the school.

Creating Curriculum Spaces
What recognition is given to student voice and leadership within the school’s curriculum? This is often referred to as the ‘credit’ part of ‘credit and support’. We should be recognising the learning that happens for students through their roles within the school. We should also recognise that, without some form of credit, students’ participation in all sorts of activities will be restricted by their need to study and complete curriculum requirements. So how can we bring this work of representation into the curriculum?

Developing Teacher Confidence and Commitment
How can we improve commitment from all stakeholders in the College community to provide opportunities for voices to be heard? Are teachers ‘threatened’ by seeing students as equal players? How can we recognise teachers’ concerns and needs, and meet their requirements for professional development in this area?

Broadening Opportunities
And finally, how can we ensure that these opportunities to be equal players in the school apply to all students, not just those who are already competent and positive and involved? This will need a commitment to ‘thinking big’ about other ways to engage students. Not all students are interested in formal ways of participation, such as SRCs/JSCs or boards and committees. What other forms of participation are possible and encouraged? Student Action Teams, environment action groups, sports coaches – and so on: leadership roles that are available for all students. The SRC should be one way to support participation, not the only way!

Back to reality – time, energy and financial resources within your school and local community are all finite. Our challenge, as people interested in giving students a voice is to keep searching and finding opportunities for this to happen. To keep challenging people in leadership positions to listen to the voices of the students and create chances for students to have their voices heard!

Dianne Parkinson
Professional Learning Coordinator - VISTA Executive
SRC Teacher Adviser - Narre Warren South P-12 College

Join us for our Term 2 VISTA Meet Up!
Tuesday 7th July, 2015
10:00am - 1:00pm
Abbotsford Primary School
Lithgow Street, Abbotsford

Join us for a coffee, a chat and the opportunity to network with other SRC Teacher Advisers.
Based on feedback from our regional and rural members, we specifically arranged for this event to be during school holidays to allow time for travel and for them to attend.

Our inner city venue is just a short walk from the North Richmond Train Station and close to the 109 and 12 Tram Lines.

Why not make a day of it and throw in a visit to IKEA (just down the road), grab some lunch along Victoria Street and then head back into Melbourne for a spot of shopping.

You could also join your students prior to the VicSRC Annual Congress - kicking off on Wednesday 8th July.

FREE - BUT BOOKINGS ARE ESSENTIAL
To RSVP, visit our website at www.vistasrc.org

Got a question?
CALL THE VISTA HOTLINE
When you’re stuck with your Student Council, who are you gunna call? The VISTA Hotline!
Just give us a buzz on (03) 9013 6 SRC [9013 6772] and a member of our team will get back to you.

VISTA currently receives no additional funding to operate its programs and relies heavily on memberships to support its programs. Visit us at www.vistasrc.org or e-mail us at info@vistasrc.org for details on how to join.
I read somewhere (maybe it was J G Ballard’s *Empire of the Sun*, but I stand to be corrected) about what happened in some prisoner of war camps in Singapore, as the Japanese troops withdrew towards the end of World War 2. Unused to their freedom, the inmates then elected their own guards to maintain their imprisonment.

I’ve wondered for some time whether there’s an analogy there to the work of some Student Councils.

Are these student structures replicating processes in schools that maintain the marginalisation of some young people? Or are they (or can they be) liberatory, and transformative of those processes?

Michael Fielding asks and reminds us: What is all this activity [student voice] for? Whose interests does it serve? Is student voice a neutral technology or an inevitable expression of a set of values and assumptions, not just about teaching and learning, but about the kind of society we wish to live in? (see *Connect* 197: 11)

This became particularly pertinent recently in listening to students discuss their SRC concerns and work. Some raised the issue of disruptive students who prevented them from learning, and talked about ways they could be excluded from classes. In another example, students discussed how to stop other students (and teachers) from smoking. In both cases, the students discussing this were, not the students with ‘the problem’. There was a sense of ‘good’ students wanting to ‘do things’ to the ‘other’. Just as non-participatory approaches ‘do things to’ students rather than ‘with them’, these student groups were dangerously close to being ‘do things to’ students rather than ‘with them’, these ‘other’. Just as non-participatory approaches ‘do things to’ students rather than ‘with them’, these ‘other’. Just as non-participatory approaches ‘do things to’ students rather than ‘with them’, these ‘other’.

We need to ask whether these partnerships are intended to maintain the status quo, or to transform outcomes, relationships and the processes of education.

David Labaree, in an article back in 1997, analyses the struggles between public and private goods that play out within educational goals. He points out that we are in a time where the ‘private good’ of individual ‘social mobility’ dominates educational goals and intentions. We can see the purposes of Student Councils working within these struggles: are they about empowering individual leaders who will privately benefit from that experience; or are they about enhancing the public good of all students and educational approaches?

If the processes by which students are elected/appointed to Student Councils privilege only students who are already confident, articulate and successful (and who conform with existing norms), then these Councils are more likely to be agents to replicate than to transform. It may be in the interests of these students to maintain the processes that exclude other students. It is easy for these Councils to be the writing or unwriting vehicles for maintaining (and even extending) those divisions.

Unless we challenge them! And the ‘PowerWalk’ activity that Kate Wilde developed and outlines in this issue of *Connect* (pages 15 to 16) may provide a start for doing that, so long as it is followed up with considered discussions.

Adam Fletcher reminds us that there is ‘convenient’ and ‘inconvenient’ student voice in schools. He gives an example of seeing ‘bullying’ as ‘inconvenient student voice’ – and responding to it as such. If we are set up only to hear and reward the ‘convenient’ voices, then the processes of division and marginalisation will continue.

We need to be doing two things:

• developing other structures and means that hear, listen to, and include all voices;
• surfacing and discussing these issues, challenging students to be aware of their role (individually and organisationally) in replicating or transforming processes, and seeking opportunities to argue with all student (and other) voices ... both the ‘convenient’ and the ‘inconvenient’ ones.

We don’t have to agree with what students are saying just because they’re students’ voices. For example, if bullying is seen as a form of ‘inconvenient’ student voice, I’m not going to accept and agree with that voice. I’m going recognise it as student voice, but I’m going to argue with what it says. And similarly, by extension, I’m not going to necessarily agree with ‘convenient’ student voices, particularly those that want to conform to existing patterns of exclusion; I’m going to argue with them too.

But how we hear, listen to, acknowledge and argue with student voices – with respect and evidence – is vital. But argue we must, for me that argument will be around values of equity and inclusion that I hold. Partnerships can entrenched privilege – or they can challenge it.

Roger Holdsworth


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**Vale Joan Kirner**

As this issue of *Connect* was being put together, we heard the sad news of the death of Joan Kirner, first female Premier of Victoria, and Minister for Education in 1988.

Joan was a strong supporter of active student participation, as a teacher, a parent, an education activist and a parliamentarian. She was active in the development of the Education *Ministerial Papers* in the early to mid-1980s and then as Minister following on from the deliberations of the *Ministerial Working Party on Student Participation*. In particular Joan was a strong advocate around issues facing women and girls in education, and matters of equity were a high priority. She was always approachable, considered and passionate.

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We don’t have to agree with what students are saying just because they’re students’ voices. For example, if bullying is seen as a form of ‘inconvenient’ student voice, I’m not going to accept and agree with that voice. I’m going recognise it as student voice, but I’m going to argue with what it says. And similarly, by extension, I’m not going to necessarily agree with ‘convenient’ student voices, particularly those that want to conform to existing patterns of exclusion; I’m going to argue with them too.

But how we hear, listen to, acknowledge and argue with student voices – with respect and evidence – is vital. But argue we must, for me that argument will be around values of equity and inclusion that I hold. Partnerships can entrenched privilege – or they can challenge it.

Roger Holdsworth


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**Vale Joan Kirner**

As this issue of *Connect* was being put together, we heard the sad news of the death of Joan Kirner, first female Premier of Victoria, and Minister for Education in 1988.

Joan was a strong supporter of active student participation, as a teacher, a parent, an education activist and a parliamentarian. She was active in the development of the Education *Ministerial Papers* in the early to mid-1980s and then as Minister following on from the deliberations of the *Ministerial Working Party on Student Participation*. In particular Joan was a strong advocate around issues facing women and girls in education, and matters of equity were a high priority. She was always approachable, considered and passionate.

Adam Fletcher reminds us that there is ‘convenient’ and ‘inconvenient’ student voice in schools. He gives an example of seeing ‘bullying’ as ‘inconvenient student voice’ - and responding to it as such. If we are set up only to hear and reward the ‘convenient’ voices, then the processes of division and marginalisation will continue.

We need to be doing two things:

• developing other structures and means that hear, listen to, and include all voices;
• surfacing and discussing these issues, challenging students to be aware of their role (individually and organisationally) in replicating or transforming processes, and seeking opportunities to argue with all student (and other) voices ... both the ‘convenient’ and the ‘inconvenient’ ones.

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ACYS Defunded
Impacts of the loss of ACYS on youth services and young people

The Australian Clearing House for Youth Studies (ACYS) has been defunded in the latest Federal budget ... after 30 years of operation! The ACYS has been an important source of the latest news, information and resources for the youth sector for many years - including sharing of information on youth and student participation. The ACYS may now no longer exist, unless the Federal government’s decision is reversed, or another source of funding found.

Here is some information from the Clearing House about its operation and about the current situation:

What Does the ACYS Do?

Our aim
To ensure Australia's policies, programs and research for young people are high quality and reflect international best practice to nurture engaged and resilient young Australians.

Our outcomes
- Evidence-informed and proactive policymaking, practice and programs for young Australians;
- Informed and relevant applied research and choice of research topics that enhance policy, practice and programs for young Australians;
- A connected Australian youth sector, with breadth and depth of thinking; and
- Improved organisational efficiency and quality practice and programs with Australia’s youth sector.

How we achieve this

a. Provide practical, analytical resources on good practice:
   - briefings and snapshots on emerging issues for young people and key messages in developing good policy and practice, through Face the Facts and other reports;
   - case studies of good practice in working with and for young people;
   - webinars and podcasts exploring issues from a number of perspectives, including those of young people and those who work with and for young people; and
   - expert reviews from academics, practitioners and policymakers.

b. Present youth sector news and events round-ups:
   - daily website news, our monthly e-bulletin Youth Field Xpress (YFX), regular e-bulletins;
   - social media: Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn; and
   - event calendars.

c. Deliver information and helpdesk services:
   - enquiry services;
   - online library of information, contacts and resources;
   - data analysis; and
   - Youth Studies Australia (YSA) journal archive.

d. Offer organisational services:
   - editing and proofreading;
   - graphic design; and
   - book and report publishing.

What’s Unique About the ACYS?

Unlike other information and research services covering young people in Australia:
- we are specifically focused on young people and have over 30 years of experience in that field;
- we are objective and we don't campaign; and
- we are a free service, offering personal one-to-one research and information searches through our helpdesk, in addition to news, analysis and resources for the sector.

Who Uses the ACYS?

Everyone involved in the Australian youth sector:
- federal, state and local governments for policy and service development;
- academic researchers, social policy researchers and youth peak bodies; and
- service delivery organisations working with young people, such as community and welfare services, youth justice, education services, employment services.

Nearly 3000 subscribers access our monthly e-bulletin, Youth Field Xpress.

Around 700 to 900 users visit our website each day for information, news and resources.
What Have Been Our Impacts in the Youth Sector?

Stakeholders who completed our recent survey helped us understand and measure whether our products and services are delivering what they need to and whether they are helping make the impacts within your work we would like them to.

Impacts our stakeholders said we have within youth-related Policy Development:
- 48% of stakeholders who responded to our 2014 stakeholder survey said they have used ACYS products and services to help inform their youth-related policy (mainly through Youth Field Xpress, Youth Studies Australia, ACYS books and Face the Facts). Of those, 95% said that the resources were useful or very useful.

Examples of the impacts you told us we’ve helped to make:
- “Research and theoretical frameworks published in Youth Studies Australia have regularly informed the development of policy in a range of contexts. These have included organisational policy, collaborative projects and local government youth strategies.”
- “Because of its historical base, ACYS products cover a long period of policy development, and often these products were the only sources of information on youth-related policy. Your archives have youth policy documents in hard copy which the federal government themselves had not seen; for instance, at a time when government was developing a new youth policy, ACYS was able to give him information their own library did not have.”

Impacts our stakeholders said we’ve had on youth-related Research:
- 56% of stakeholders who responded to our 2014 stakeholder survey said they had used ACYS products and services to help inform youth-related research (mainly through Youth Field Xpress, Youth Studies Australia, ACYS books and Face the Facts). Of these, 95% said that the products were useful or very useful for this purpose.

Example of the impacts you told us we’ve helped to make:
- “My research involves tracing the impact of federal youth policy upon individuals’ lives with respect to the provision/lack of services. ACYS products help me to conduct this research because ACYS covers both research and service-related matters irrespective of the ‘silos’ the information comes from.”

Impacts our stakeholders said we’ve had on youth-related Practice and Programs:
- 38% of stakeholders who responded to our 2014 stakeholder survey said they had used ACYS products and services to inform their youth-related practice or programs (mainly through Youth Field Xpress, Youth Studies Australia, sector resources, ACYS books and the ACYS website news feed). Of those, all said the resources were useful or very useful.

Examples of the impacts you told us we’ve helped to make:
- “We opened a Drop In Space and used information from ACYS to ensure best practice and that policies were developed that would meet the needs of the organisation and also young people.”
- “These products helped provide insight on developing good practice in a number of areas as a youth work student and beginning practitioner, and informed development of programs such as a mentoring program for young people of refugee background which I assisted with developing.”

What Has Happened to ACYS’s Funding?
ACYS has been funded by the Federal Government for over 30 years. Currently, the Department of Education and Training’s Youth Innovation Team manages an open tender for contracting services for three years at a time. UTAS has consecutively won this tender process. The current contract, which ends on 30 June 2015, has been for $480,000 per year through the Department’s Youth Engagement budget.

In the Federal Budget 2015, the ‘youth engagement’ budget line is due to be reduced from $3,077,000 for 2014–15 to $534,000 for 2015–16 and 2016–17. All programs under this budget line that were not subject to an ongoing commitment between the Federal Government and the states have been cut.

What Will Be the Impacts of Losing the ACYS in the Youth Sector?
We have been overwhelmed with responses from the youth sector about the potential impacts of losing ACYS’s services. We will collate these examples and make them available via the ACYS website.

In the meantime, as a starting point:

1. Loss of time for front line delivery for youth services

   Services will have to spend more precious delivery time on locating information they need on good practice as both our news services and our free helpdesk service will no longer be available. Recent requests for reports to help services have included:

   Issues relating to young people themselves:
   - violence in relationships (NSW)
   - respectful relationships
   - young people and cosmetic surgery (SA)
   - justice reinvestment programs (Qld)
   - cyber bullying

   Issues relating to professional practice with young people:
   - clinical supervision (NSW)
   - youth mentoring
   - youth engagement strategies (all states)
   - ethics in youth work (Tas)
2. Loss of access to quality, free resources for organisations, researchers and policymakers, no matter where they are in Australia.

Policymakers, researchers and practitioners will lose an objective and free source of analysis and resources, including case studies of good practice, research, analysis and data on what works internationally and nationally in key service delivery areas, such as employment, education, health, housing and homelessness, and youth engagement to inform their work with young people.

3. Less opportunity for the sector to connect and learn from each other:

- By sharing good practice across the sector, we brought together organisations, researchers and policymakers that may not otherwise have known about each other, so they could learn from each others’ experiences.
- We also helped facilitate discussions across Federal Government departments on key policy areas, such as growing youth employment through entrepreneurship.
- We connected researchers to young people and practitioners, to ensure research about young people and youth work is robust and useful.

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Next year marks the 100th anniversary of the landmark book by John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*. Given that the book is our namesake, you can imagine we are a little excited. Here at D&E, we are interested in using this opportunity to connect with the ideas Dewey put forth 100 years ago. We'd like to invite you to be part of the conversation.

Submitting a paper

Longtime readers will be familiar with our ‘conversation’ format, in which feature articles are paired with responses from scholars. For our fall 2016 issue, we are inviting our readers to consider submitting a response not to another article, but to Dewey’s 1916 masterwork. The idea is to engage in a contemporary dialogue with Dewey’s ideas, investigating the resonance of his ideas today.

Many scholars cite Dewey’s work for its obvious emphasis on democratic education, but they do so in often cursory ways. Should we see *Democracy and Education* as a text with ideas relevant to today’s educational challenges, or are Dewey’s ideas anachronistic and irrelevant to our contemporary world? If there is relevance to be found, in what specific ways?

How do educators in domains other than philosophy draw upon Dewey’s ideas in their work, and how are these notions related to issues of democracy and education?

We welcome investigations of theory and of practice. Responses should be 3,000-5,000 words. Readers are also invited to submit traditional feature-length articles of original research or theoretical inquiry (5,000-8,000 words).

The deadline for consideration is May 1, 2016.
**Connect Publications: Order Form**

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ASPRINworld: the Connect website!
www.asprinworld.com/connect

Connect has a website at ASPRINworld. The Connect section of the website is slowly growing, with information about subscribing, index of recent back issue contents (hyperlinked to PDFs) and summaries of and order information for Student Councils and Beyond, Student Action Teams, Reaching High and Switched On to Learning.

Connect is now also archived and available electronically: research.acer.edu.au/connect

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

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

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Donate to support Connect
Connect now has no income except donations and sales of literature (previous page). By supporting Connect with donations, you keep us going. Even though we are now solely on-line, there are still costs associated with publication. To make a donation to the work of Connect, use the form in this issue or contact us for bank account details in order to make an electronic transfer of funds.

We gratefully acknowledge receipt of the following contributions since the last issue of Connect:

Supporters:
Christine Reed, Good Samaritan PS Roxburgh Park (Vic)

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

Australian:
Parents Voice (Parents Victoria, Wandong, Vic) Vol 41 Issues 4 & 5; December 2014; Vol 42 Issue 1; February 2015
Peacock Campus Student Report: 2014 SRC (Northern Bay P-12 College, Geelong, Vic)
Research Developments (ACER, Camberwell, Vic) June 2015
Student voice and participation in Victorian government schools 2014 (Department of Education and Training, Vic)
TLN Journal (Teacher Learning Network, Abbotsford, Vic) Vol 22 No 1; Autumn 2015

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

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

www.asprinworld.com/connect

www.asprinworld.com/connect & research.acer.edu.au/connect
All back issues of Connect from 1979 to the present (that’s now 35+ years!) are freely available on-line! Thanks to the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), all back issues of Connect have been scanned or up-loaded into the ACER’s Research Repository: ACEResearch.

You can find these issues of Connect at:

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

Let us know

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

Most importantly, please USE this resource.

All back copies of Connect are available on-line ... for free!

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