What matters most to students?

Issues raised, discussed, debated by students

- **Valuing Voice**: Restorative Practices and Student Participation in Decision Making: 7 schools
- **Student Voice Seminars and Conferences**: Cambridge and Dublin
- **Mental Health Awareness Week**: Suzanne Cory HS
- **Eyre Peninsula Student Conference**
- **International Networking in 1995**: I*EARN
- **VicSRC**: Year in Summary; Congress; Meeting the Minister; Executive Camp; Recognition Awards; 10th Birthday Dinner

**Resources:**
- International Journal of Student Voice
- Jump Start Workshop (Victoria)
- CEOM Student Participation Workshop
- Student Engagement in University Decision-Making and Governance
- Student Voice Seminar: 2016, USA
- Environmental Resource Kit for SRCs
- Connect ... on facebook ... archived ... available on-line ... access to other resources on-line ...
This Issue:

I was sad to miss the VicSRC's 2015 Congress in July ... the first time in many years. I was travelling at the time ... attending the Student Voice Seminar in Cambridge and then off elsewhere in northern Europe (hence also this delayed double issue of Connect.)

So this issue allows me to capture some of the outcomes and spirit of that event ... and share that with you. What happened there doesn't just apply to one group of secondary students in one state of Australia. There are common issues and concerns - and common ways of addressing these - that resonate internationally. The students from England and Cambridge whom I met in Cambridge talked of their own initiatives as school- and system-based researchers around engagement, governance, relevance and learning approaches. And at a subsequent event in Dublin, primary and secondary school students also presented about their research and concerns.

International networking and sharing ... a new frontier? No! As Bill Coppinger (and others) remind us in this issue, early seeds were being sown 20 years ago, with students video-conferencing and sharing projects through I*EARN. They ask: What have we learnt? What has been retained and surprised? What has been lost or forgotten? This article also reminds us that, 20 years ago, these students were working on initiatives (around climate change, pollution, the Holocaust and so on) that not only involved global contact and collaboration, but also produced valuable student contributions to shaping their world and societies.

These themes continue.

In the major piece in this issue, a group of researchers and writers within the Faculty of Law at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) outline their work around restorative practices and student participation. They significantly ask: Can one occur without the other? Can we imagine restorative practices that don't acknowledge students as shared decision-makers in schools? Can there be student participation in school decision-making (including the operation of Student Councils) that is not based on restorative principles? This sounds like the opening of a fascinating conversation from two 'fields' that perhaps haven't met ... until now. Or where they have, the interaction hasn't been overly explored.

Next Issue ...

Next Issue: #216: December 2015

Deadline for material: end of November, 2015
Valuing Voices
Restorative Practices and Student Participation in Decision Making in Seven Australian Schools

Democracy in Schools:
Student participation in school decision-making - encouraging responsibility and citizenship

The teaching of Civics and Citizenship in schools continues to be a focus for state and federal curriculum authorities. However, we know that this teaching also generally still fails to engage students in democratic processes - processes in which they must, by law, participate from the age of 18. Meanwhile, the number of young people who are disengaged from school, as indicated by disciplinary exclusion or truancy, continues to be high and rising. In addressing such problems, the policy and legislation approaches available to school tend to be reactive rather than proactive. This is an international issue – not one occurring just in Australia. We believe these observations are closely linked.

Within schools internationally and within many Australian schools, we can also see a shift towards participatory and restorative practices. We have been involved with a research project that has explored some of these interactions. The project looked at the overlap and interaction of participatory and restorative practices in a cohort of schools in New South Wales for several years. Its outcomes have been reported in two articles in the International Journal of Law & Education, Vol 19 Nos 1 & 2 (2014). We're presenting here a précis of these articles (with permission) including summaries of the literature we drew on. The original articles cite full references for this literature. Here we include a limited reproduction of some study outcomes as well as a summary of its major findings.

The ULE articles provide a comprehensive analysis of the research to date, and then discuss the project: ‘Participative and restorative practices in schools: the engagement of children and young people and the development of citizenship, through democratic education’, which has been undertaken by the writers, a team of legal academics. The project focused on a small number of schools that have, to varying degrees, embraced these principles in their operations. We ultimately aimed, through this research, to provide evidence that would inform the discussion and assist in advancing the incorporation of these concepts within education policy and legislation.

In this research project, conducted in the schools between 2010 and 2012, our specific research questions and aims, as reported in the above articles, were to explore:

- to what extent is education a process in which children and young people may be active, valued and significant participants?
- what processes may be incorporated within the management and governance of a school to provide for a meaningful involvement of students in building the school community and in solving problems within that community?
- what is the extent to which participatory and restorative practices are incorporated within the processes of the cohort of schools in New South Wales that operate on democratic principles?

Children should be perceived as partners in the educational process along with parents, teachers, governors and local authorities, with a great deal to contribute as well as learn. 1

This report draws on two articles previously published in the International Journal of Law & Education, Vol 19 Nos 1 & 2 (2014). Those original articles cite full references for the literature summary and research study. Sections of this article are reproduced here from the original articles; other areas summarise the research that is reported there.
what is the effect of these processes, from the perception of students, parents and teaching staff of these schools?

We wanted to understand how participatory and restorative practices may be included within school processes in Australia and how they can:

• assist the engagement of students in their school communities and in their education within those communities;
• enable restorative rather than retributive approaches to conflict resolution and discipline in schools;
• inculcate citizenship and human rights principles through the incorporation of democratic practice within school communities;
• provide young people with the tools, knowledge and experience to be able to assimilate knowledge and make informed choices within a democratic society, and the interest to do so.6

Terms

‘Participatory practices’ are those that develop students’ citizenship skills and empower them to participate in school decision-making; these may occur within the classroom, the wider school community and even in the broader community.

‘Restorative practices’ are directed to conflict resolution and relationship-building in the school community. They aim to reduce anti-social behaviour, conflict and disciplinary issues: reducing suspensions and exclusion of students, and keeping young people in school as far as is possible. Improvement in student behaviour within the school has positive benefits for the wider school community, including staff and parents, and is shown to improve academic performance. These practices – such as ‘conferencing’, class ‘circles’, ‘chats’, peer mediation, and one on one meetings between staff and students – encourage all young people to take responsibility for their behaviour.

Schools that commit to participatory and restorative practices are often referred to as ‘restorative’ or ‘democratic’ schools.7

The consideration of the practice of citizenship in schools is timely now in light of the recent development by ACARA8 of the Civics and Citizenship Curriculum. The curriculum recognises the importance of young people’s engagement in this area, and of the provision of tools for their development as democratic citizens. The aim of the curriculum for Years 3-10 is stated as: “Civics and Citizenship develops students’ understanding of Australia’s political and legal systems and effective participatory citizenship in contemporary Australian society. The Civics and Citizenship curriculum will enable students to develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, values and dispositions to be active and informed citizens in local, national, regional and global contexts”.9

Our research, along with the Australian and international literature, argues that, in order to go any way towards fulfilling that purpose, formal learning must be accompanied by a change in school processes and procedures to embrace citizenship practices.

Existing Knowledge

The existing literature covers a wide range of schools, regions and cohorts, revealing practices across a wide spectrum – from the tokenistic to the meaningful. There are reports of classroom participatory practices that foster students’ citizenship skills and empower them to participate in schools’ decision making, that range from negotiated class rules, assessments and learning practices (for example, giving students a choice of individual or group learning) to class councils and class meetings.10

At the level of school communities, participatory practices include student representative councils, student leadership programs, peer support, and student officers (such as sports captains)11. In other participatory practices, students work outside the school community, for example in ‘student action team’ programs where students tackle a real school or broader community problem.12

The research describes a similar range of restorative practices, where students play an active role in school approaches to conflict and antisocial behaviour. Most commonly, schools use ‘conferencing’ and ‘circles’. Conferencing involves a meeting that addresses a particular issue; frequently this is a small meeting to address specific student wrongdoing, with the offender(s), victim(s), their parents, teachers and/or the principal in attendance. The conferences aim to get a clear sense of what occurred and to work together to remedy it. If a serious incident or an epidemic of problems have occurred, some schools extend this approach to include the whole school community through large conferences. By contrast, circles don’t necessarily address particular wrongdoings but are often a way to build community in order to enhance the learning environment. For example, a Catholic primary school in Melbourne adopted ‘social circles’ to build strong relationships between teachers and students, and reduce the need for disciplinary action.14

We have noted that, simply put, conferences deal with conflicts as they arise, while circles ensure fewer conflicts arise in the first place.

The literature stresses the importance of language: language that encourages honest discussion, language that uses problem-solving questions, and language that treats incidents of wrongdoing that crop up throughout the day as teaching...
opportunities, rather than as something that has to be quickly curbed with discipline\textsuperscript{15}. Such approaches help embed a democratic philosophy in every facet of school-life and, in doing so, support the implementation of democratic practices. This ‘whole school approach’ includes a change in everyday teaching styles, and marks a more participatory/restorative/democratic cultural shift.

Schools involved in such practices believe that a ‘whole school approach’ to participatory and restorative practices is vital. The literature suggests that we cannot view democratic practices in isolation but that they can only flourish if the school’s culture and ethos is ‘democratic’ enough to sustain it. Democratic practices are ‘not a program; you have to understand the philosophy and agree/commit to it for it to be effective\textsuperscript{16}.

The student voice is central to all democratic practice. However, studies have noted that students may resist democratic practices because they have only experience of, and have been conditioned to accept, traditional disciplinarian teaching approaches. Studies, such as that of Ponder and Lewis-Ferrell\textsuperscript{17}, suggest the need to ease students into changes as an educative process. For example, before implementing an ‘active citizenship’ project in her class, a primary school teacher discussed with students about how they would define a ‘good citizen’. Over the next two weeks, the class read children’s literature on different ideas of citizenship (including real examples of citizens taking action in their community).

Schools implement such practices in different ways. Ireland et al contrasts how two schools implemented a student representative council:

\textbf{A poorly-developed student voice}

Decision making in the school tends to be top-down in nature, the power of the school council is considerably limited and it has low status, as revealed in interviews with staff and students. One teacher interviewed suggested that there is a lack of a culture of students taking responsibility in the school. The operation of the school council relies heavily on the input of the sixth formers who run it and varies over time depending on how much they contribute (for example, in 2004/5 there was a dearth of council meetings). Student participation in the student council decreases as you go up the school and student contributions are not always appropriate due to students lacking an understanding of school processes.

\textbf{A well-developed student voice}

The school’s head teacher is a champion for citizenship education, and puts particular emphasis on the experiential and implicit teaching of citizenship. Over the past two years, the school council has been considerably developed. Every tutor group elects a representative to the council. Older council representatives are involved in interviewing new members of staff. The students were satisfied with the operation of the school council and, as one student noted, ‘I think it’s effective because it’s not just the big issues that get changes, but the smaller issues too’. The school council is complemented by a student ‘Teaching and Learning Forum’ where a select group of students who have received training, give feedback about the teaching and learning. Students were enthusiastic about the ‘Forum’. They explained: ‘loads of students have been picked to go... and talk about how the lessons are going... and talk about how to improve them; there have definitely been changes according to what we’ve said’\textsuperscript{18}.

A whole school approach includes tackling student resistance as well as ensuring that students develop appropriate democratic and communication skills. The success of the latter school cited above relies on a more democratic and less ‘top-down’ approach. The council does not exist as a medium for participation in isolation but is reinforced by other initiatives such as the election process and the student ‘Teaching and Learning Forum’.

\textbf{Benefits}

We looked at the literature about the benefits experienced by students and others following the inception of democratic practices. There is evidence of positive results in terms of:

\begin{itemize}
  \item improved school community feelings;
  \item generally better and more positive behaviour among students;
  \item less interpersonal conflict;
  \item a reduction in disciplinary referrals;
  \item improved academic result; and
  \item generally calmer school environments.
\end{itemize}

Several studies investigating restorative practices could similarly point to ‘hard indicators’ of their success: decreases in the incidence of absenteeism, detentions and suspensions and reports of violence. ‘Hard indicators’ aside, all participants – students, teachers,
counselors, principals, family members – in interviews, focus groups and surveys conducted across the literature generally found participatory and restorative practices beneficial.

**Students**

Studies report that students were very positive about democratic approaches in their schools. Such approaches also provided multiple benefits in terms of students’ mental and personal well-being, and were effective in addressing bullying, conflict, breakdown of relationships, alienation and reintegration of marginalised students.

Some studies also suggest participatory and restorative practices improve students’ academic performance, leading to improvements in the quality and quantity of work produced, student questioning, revision and homework:

> You cannot separate behaviour from academics. When students feel good and safe and have solid relationships with teachers, their academic performance improves.

Restorative practices freed students’ learning environments from disruptions. Participatory practices gave students a sense of ownership over their studies. When students had a say in how they studied (for example, group work, class discussions) and what they studied (for example, when students voted on which curriculum option they prefer), they were found to be more dedicated to studies, and improved academic results follow.

A few articles suggested that restorative and participatory practices make students better citizens, particularly through providing an ‘atmosphere of security and trust’ for students to ‘experience and practise their democratic skills’.

Similarly, restorative practices provide:

> ... a formal way to teach about the ethics and ideals of justice, citizenship, and positive relationships. The experience suggests that restorative practices can provide students with important opportunities to understand the impact of their behaviour on others and promote accountability within a community or collective context. According to participants, the best environment for such transformation is one in which notions of democracy, student voice, and participation are consistent or aspirational features of school practice.

**Families**

Few articles examined outcomes for students’ families. Where they did, they focused on restorative practices, since conferences often involve the offenders’/victims’ parents. These generally had the support of parents, with benefits of being part of the decision-making process, being more supportive of decisions when they are made, and creating stronger relationships between parents and the school.

**Staff**

Throughout the literature, teachers and principals (as well as students) report personal benefits from a ‘calmer’ school and classroom environment fostered by democratic approaches. Staff say that restorative practices not only lead to better relationships with students, but better relationships with other teachers. Many teachers and principals say that participatory and (especially) restorative practices have transformed them professionally.

On the other hand, while teachers consider democratic practices have provided a breakthrough for their students and themselves, the literature also documents many examples of teachers suspicious of these practices and reluctant to implement them. These initial reservations disappeared in many cases with proper implementation of practices, and the benefits were more frequently reported. Teachers who remained unimpressed generally came from schools where practices were implemented poorly.

**Challenges**

While the benefits of democratic practices are widely reported, there is also agreement that successful implementation is often difficult and resource-intensive. The problem is not that these practices do not work, but that they can be burdensome to implement.

Challenges to the implementation of restorative practices have been more widely reported than those to participatory practices. Since restorative practices are employed as conflicts emerge, these tensions and dysfunctions are often already a significant challenge in the school. Participatory practices, however, are often being implemented in more stable environments.

**Staff resistance**

The literature often documents teacher reluctance or skepticism about democratic and restorative practices. The personal style of the teachers, and the nature of their relationship with students, can shape their attitudes to restorative responses to conflict:

Restorative practices involve participants in collective problem solving, and it can be problematic when teachers are unable to engage students in such a process. The Assistant Principal from Peninsula Secondary College summed it up this way: ‘There can be problems if the staff member is part of the issue. They may be good teachers but they don’t relate well to kids.’

**Student resistance**

Some schools also experienced resistance from students who, like teachers, are culturally conditioned to accept the correctness of traditional authoritarian structures. Some of this resistance may come from students’ desire for a more active role in their schools, but then being skeptical as to whether the practices being implemented can achieve this. One study of various participatory practices in place at a wide range of high schools across the United Kingdom, provided an example of the sorts of problems students interviewed in the study had with school (student) councils: feeling uninformed about the council’s role, the council meeting too infrequently, and the council being given too little power. Many of the problems stemmed, not from the democratic practices themselves, but from how poorly or half-heartedly they were implemented.

**Family resistance**

Efforts need to be made to engage families in the process of restorative practices. Even where families are engaged, power sharing may be difficult where schools assume that ‘their role is one of control of process and procedure’.

**The traditional authoritarian culture**

The implementation of democratic practices is challenging if there is not a cultural change within the school to accommodate them. Schools might have troubles if they are empowering some students but not others or only operating in some classrooms. Similarly, with restorative practices, an inconsistent approach may create more acute problems: sending confused messages
or being seen to be unfair to students, if conflicts are dealt with in contradictory ways, depending on whether a ‘restorative’ teacher or a ‘traditional authoritarian’ teacher is in charge.

Staff/student/family resistance is, in part, because of the traditional authoritarian culture these participants are trained in and/or accustomed to. Unless the culture changes, democratic and restorative approaches may suffer from ‘internal inertia’:

Every principal, teacher, counsellor, and student has been socialised in a culture of retribution, and its language, even veneration, permeates all sanctioning processes. Even when restorative practices are fully adopted, it is hard to accept them without suspicion. Where a partial staff implements the practices and where training, even for these staff members, is not comprehensive, we can expect the tension between retribution and restoration to be a significant obstacle.27

Resource constraints
The successful implementation of a democratic approach requires both the will and the capacity to change. While a ‘whole school approach’ is a solution, it is also a challenge in itself, requiring the whole school to shift to a more democratic ethos. This can be resource intensive if the school is not already founded on democratic principles.

Some schools had concerns with funding in order to afford training and ongoing support; many also had concerns with another resource: time. For teachers who are already time-poor, restorative practices, in particular, were perceived to be burdensome. Traditional methods of discipline appeared to be more time efficient for, while suspensions can be handed out swiftly, circles and conferences take time, organisation and contemplation. And these cultural changes may take years to implement.

However, most schools ultimately found the ‘democratisation’ of their schools a worthwhile investment of resources. While it is acknowledged that proper implementation can be time-consuming, the practices can ultimately save time and energy in the long-term; they help create a ‘calmer’ school where staff have less conflict and wrongdoing to deal with.

School Rules
It is suggested that schools need to rethink their rules to support a more democratic philosophy. Restorative practices ‘need to run hand-in-hand with clear school rules’; schools need to modify their Codes of Conduct to be in line with these practices. Some schools suggest not having ‘specific rules’ but ‘general principles’ – so students are actively engaged to understand and follow basic values, such as ‘respect’, ‘tolerance’ and ‘equal rights’, rather than simply unthinkingly following a list of ‘dos and don’ts’, particularly if it’s for the sake of avoiding punishment.28

Summing Up the Literature
When setting out to make a school more democratic, it is inevitable that there will be challenges and teething problems relating to participant resistance, resource constraints and/or student unrest. The literature that we surveyed in our study – specifically the literature that was based in a diverse range of schools’ first-hand experiences – strongly argues that the benefits from these changes are worthwhile, and are enjoyed across the spectrum. There are important short-term outcomes of participatory and restorative practices for students, teachers, staff, families and even the broader community, for example a calmer school environment with less conflict and wrongdoing. Similarly, there are long-term benefits: students learn life-long relationship, citizenship and communication skills; they improve academic performance; personal and community well-being is enhanced. The literature says, in summary, that despite the difficulties in transforming a school to a more democratic model, such a transformation is well worth it.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CROC) has led to a global focus on the rights of children. In addition to the right to, and rights in education, the right of participation is set out in Article 12(1), and links seen between the development of citizenship principles through democratic practices in schools and nation-building.29 Key research in Australia, the UK and Europe, the US and New Zealand around citizenship education and restorative practice in schools leads to three notable conclusions:

• the failure of civics education programs in schools to prepare young people to function as citizens in a democratic society;
• the need for schools in implementing effective active citizenship programs, to ‘demonstrate through their own internal structures and mechanisms that they operate as a democratic institution’; and
• the beneficial effects on school cultures of the implementation of varying degrees of participatory and restorative practices.

Our research project is set against this worldwide background of research into, and implementation of, restorative and democratic practice in schools. In considering the exercise of the right to participation of children and young people in decision-making in our education environments and our school communities, we set out to consider the range of practices, how they are implemented and the responses to them, in a small group of New South Wales schools. We looked at school policies, observed school practices and interviewed students, teachers and parents, to gain a picture of the ways in which participatory and restorative practices may be implemented in schools and their effectiveness.
Practices in Seven Australian Schools

The seven schools in our study are located in both Sydney and regional NSW. They had either been identified as having implemented democratic or restorative practices, or had expressed interest in being involved in the study after attending presentations on the background to the project. After discussing our research in detail with the schools, the principals and the school boards (where relevant) gave their approval for participation – and in practice were enthusiastic and accommodating.

The schools come from different parts of the education sector: state, private, religious, and primary and secondary. We wanted a diverse group of schools in the study but it soon became apparent that democratic and restorative practices were less common in high schools – and those high schools that used such processes tended to be religious schools. We were often told that such practices were ‘too hard’ for large state high schools; they were simply too big or were struggling with many issues with little support.

The research included interviews with members of the school community; observation of school meetings, conflict resolution processes and school activities; and analysis of published school policies and materials.

Overview of the Schools

Schools that have introduced student participatory practices sit on a spectrum. For example, the first school in this study, Casuarina13, explicitly identifies as a fully democratic school. Here, the two aspects of our study – participatory practices in school decision making and restorative practice – were inevitably and closely intertwined. Both are integral to a culture in which young people have a voice, a responsibility for, and an engagement in, their educational environment. In the other schools, we found a wide variety of practices and perceptions of democratic or restorative practices in schools13.

In the more ‘traditional’ schools, practices are set out to varying degrees within school policy documents and promotional material. Many have incorporated some democratic principles and practices within their statements, structures and processes, referring to their practices variously as ‘restorative justice’ in the narrow sense relating to school discipline, or ‘restorative practice’ in a wider sense as embracing a whole school philosophy.

The seven schools are:

- **Casuarina**: an independent pre and primary school (ages 3 to 12 years) in a reasonably affluent area of Sydney, founded on principles of innovation in education thinking and child-centred education. It has not always had an easy time with education authorities.
- **LillyPilly**: a state primary school within an area of Sydney that is predominantly middle class and well-educated. There has been an increase in the school enrolment in recent years, which is attributed largely to its ‘inclusive restorative philosophy’ – based on ‘listening, reflection and the use of respectful, open-minded questioning techniques that promote communication, risk-taking, self-review and the learning of new skills and behaviours by students’ (from the school’s promotional material).
- **Wattle**: also a state primary school in Sydney. It has similarly experienced rapid growth in recent years, due largely to the expansion of large apartment developments in the area, coupled with the desirability of the area for new immigrants. The school is a reflection of the culturally and racially diverse community in which it sits.
- **Jacaranda**: a relatively new and reasonably small regional Catholic High School. It has been set up to embrace some student participatory and restorative practices (rather than these being developed later, as was the case with the older established schools that were studied).
- **Kauri**: a regional New South Wales primary school, some two hours’ drive from Sydney. It is one of the six ‘feeder’ schools into Wallangara.
- **Wallangara**: a large co-educational state high school that is the partner high school within the community of schools in the regional area. The combination of Kauri and Wallangara was intended to provide an interesting study of the continuum of practices in the primary/high school transition.
- **Gumtree**: also a large co-educational high school. It is in the outskirts of Sydney, in a relatively low socio-economic catchment.

The following summaries of our impressions of the schools focussed on the research questions: the formal provisions set out within school policies and website school promotional material; the nature of participation evident from our interviews and observations; the body/ies for student participation – the membership of these bodies and the sorts of decisions they are able to make, student autonomy in these bodies, and how they are viewed by the school community including students, teachers and parents. These accounts are edited from more detailed outlines in the original articles about this research.
Summary of processes and perceptions at these schools

Casuarina

Casuarina is one of a group of schools that sit outside the education mainstream. Their philosophy is that ‘Article 26(2) of the International Declaration of Children’s Rights, which is directed towards freedom, tolerance and understanding, constitutes a framework’ for the school’s day-to-day practice. As far as possible, the school relies upon student voice in every aspect, from the schedule of students’ learning, to the day-to-day running of the school community, including behavior management and conflict resolution. The school philosophy reflects ideas that: ‘A fundamental principle is that children are more motivated to learn, and they learn better, to the extent that they have a choice over how and what they learn.’

Casuarina describes itself as a fully democratic school, and we saw what this entails in our observations of practices and our interviews with students, parents and teachers. A whole school approach to inclusion, participation and responsibility is evident in the use of shared language, beliefs and commitment. The school’s Articles of Association state that it will provide an environment that:

- respects the individuality of the child,
- fosters self-determination in the child ... and stresses co-operation rather than competition, allowing for pupil participation in the affairs of the school and to encourage involvement in the community outside the school.

All members of the school community formulated its Core Beliefs and Values, including that the school:

- ‘empower[s] children with communication skills so that they can learn to take responsibility for themselves, to cooperate with others and to effectively resolve conflicts’ and
- is committed to ‘transparent, democratic, consultative and contestable governance that is accessible to teachers, parents and children.’ (School statement)

Formally, student participation occurs through class meetings and the weekly whole school meetings. Each class, of every age group, takes it in turns to organise the agenda and chair the school meetings. The agenda may be formed from ideas and issues in class meetings, but may also come from individuals. After discussion, issues are voted upon, with each individual’s vote carrying equal weight. ‘Agreements’ rather than rules are made collectively at school meetings.

Other practices also incorporate student voice in learning. For example, in one junior class, the teacher said she would tell the students what the curriculum needed to cover, and they would together produce ideas for how they wished to cover this, which she would then develop as a class work plan.

The school philosophy, values and beliefs are evident in practice, including the use of language used in all school interactions eg ‘I’ statements, and ‘agreements’ rather than ‘rules’. While there was a focus on individual students’ responsibility for self-paced learning, and the flexibility of teachers to accommodate each student’s needs, classes also ‘pulled together’ as a community, respecting each others’ needs and the needs of the whole community, as well as a lack of competitiveness. At a class level, students had a say in their learning environment; at a school level, they showed respect for others and shared responsibility for the whole school environment (at school meetings and in interviews), as well as a caring interaction between the older and younger children.

As said above, Casuarina is small, independent, primary and pre-primary, and relatively homogeneous. This could contribute to the success of its practices. There was a strong feeling of community togetherness, supportiveness and closeness, and active participation in behaviour management as well as conflict resolution. Students at all levels were able to clearly talk about their role in the school, including their relationships with peers and their learning. Issues of behaviour and peer conflict within the school were dealt with either by the students themselves through the conflict resolution skills they learnt at the school, or by the school as a whole (in the case of wider issues).

Teachers and students worked together, discussing how and why things should be done, rather than teachers being at the front of the class by a whiteboard. To teach in a school such as this was, on the one hand, incredibly challenging and confronting, and on the other, strongly rewarding. Rather than the traditional model of acceptance that what the teacher says, goes, the children were questioning; everything was flexible and negotiable. We were told that it took a certain type of personality in teachers to work in this school. This was addressed through particular training in the school’s philosophy and practices eg all teachers were required to attend a specific conflict resolution course, which was in line with the school’s philosophy. Parents also were encouraged to do this course. This issue of the training of teachers in democratic and restorative practices became a familiar theme at other schools and concern was often expressed in this regard.
Kauri

Kauri’s written policies define very clear processes for student participation. Student participation in decision making is integrated into the student wellbeing policy, which explicitly links it to enhancing school discipline by setting out the rights and responsibilities of all members of the school community, not just the students. Taking students’ views into account in matters of school relationships seems to go further than an emphasis on ‘restorative practice’ that embraces some student participation.

Kauri describes forms of student participation and leadership that target the whole cohort, not just senior students; this is important as the inclusion of all students has been shown to be challenging. Two familiar mechanisms are set out clearly in the policy: the Student Representative Council (the SRC) and the class meetings. Their focus is on responsibility, another familiar value.

Student participation played a major role in relationship building and conflict resolution, largely due to the enthusiasm of the school principal in embedding the principles of Glasser’s Choice Theory into the school. These were practised through ‘circles’ in individual classrooms, where a ball was handed round, and only the person holding it was able to speak. The children seemed to respect this process and spoke openly about what was bothering them, such as another child’s behaviour generally or towards them. The other child (or children) was then asked how they believed the problem could be put right. The processes observed were orderly, and the children seemed to be engaged in and respectful of them.

At class meetings, students put proposals to the SRC member attending, and these were opened up for class discussion. The proposals were put to a vote and those accepted by the majority were taken forward to the SRC to discuss; the SRC in turn raised the ones they deemed appropriate with the teaching staff. We observed in class meetings that only about one third of the students were actively involved in putting forward ideas and in the discussions that followed. However, the atmosphere was generally conducive to student input (although on one occasion we noticed that the amount of discussion was closely controlled by the teacher present).

While there was a great deal of enthusiasm for these processes on the part of the teachers, we observed that they maintained a tight control on what transpired. The parents interviewed were aware of the avenues for student participation and the students we interviewed also responded positively: “you do have a say”. One teacher described it as a “fair dinkum say” rather than just notional. The same teacher said that the school advertises for a particular sort of teacher as someone “involved in non-coercive behaviour management”.

LillyPilly

Restorative practice is described in LillyPilly’s policy documents as more than just a set of processes that are reactive to problems. Its underlying philosophy is embedded in the school culture and in classroom teaching and learning. There is not the same system of ‘negotiated learning’ as at Casuarina, but LillyPilly’s emphasis on relationships and responsibility is, in many respects, similar.

While the school’s policy sets out a number of processes and strategies to be used in the event of inappropriate or unacceptable behavior (and this is different to Casuarina and more reminiscent of a traditional school), restorative practice plays a major role in conflict, particularly with conferences in ‘classroom, corridor and playground’ as needed. Circles are used and children spoke very positively about this method of dealing with problems, talking about ‘owning the behaviour’ and ‘no blame’. The school policy also talks about peer mediation in bullying situations, but this was not mentioned in any interviews.

The formal approaches to student participation differ from those at Casuarina and Kauri. The student representative body uses a parliamentary framework intended to model and practise democracy, with numbers of children able to participate each year. They are either ‘senators’ or ‘members of a house of representatives’ in bodies that have regular formal meetings. One parent said that the number of opportunities for children to participate reflected the school culture of ‘having a go’. However, children were not as involved in decision making across all facets of the school as they were at Casuarina. They talked mainly about their participation in practical matters around the school, such as having a ‘bubbler’ in a certain place in the playground, or to do with things they felt the students needed and arrangements for fundraising for them.

LillyPilly also has a philosophy of voice, listening, inclusiveness, reflection and respect, and we saw this in classroom processes such as ‘circles’. While it is relatively traditional in terms of classroom layout, teaching and lesson design and content, restorative practice forms the basis of the learning experience. The emphasis is on a common language, such as use of ‘I’ statements and having ‘voice space’, dialogue, responsibility and consequences.

The Assistant Principal said that changing the school culture had made a huge difference to the school, and embedding the philosophy was largely due to the dedication of the previous Principal and had survived past her leaving the school. This was hugely significant in light of the experience with other schools, where restorative practice had been a ‘crusade’ of a keen individual and had not lasted once that person had gone elsewhere.

We were told that LillyPilly had changed from having the worst reputation in the area, to being sought after as a school and also becoming the centre of the local community. Teachers and parents emphasised the need for commitment from everyone – that all in the school community have to ‘be on board’ and that restorative practices needed to be taken home for use by families. One parent told of her daughter who, at age 5 years, said to her at home: “You’re not sharing the voice space”; she was initially taken aback as feeling that she should be the voice of authority in the house, but then realised this was part of the school’s philosophy of all having a voice, and listening to others. She regarded this as a positive step in her child’s development.

Teachers whom we interviewed were positive about restorative practice: it was empowering for children, it enhanced their love of learning, and the children felt safe, confident and comfortable. While the school was structured and traditional, this view was certainly the impression we gained from visits to the school.
Wattle

Wattle has no official student participation policy, however it says that it promotes values around justice and democracy and active participation. There is a strong sense of community and we could see the connection between parents, teachers and staff. The Assistant Principal knew the names of parents coming into the school as well as the names of the pre-school siblings. One parent said: “I think the school does a lot to explain what is happening.” All parents interviewed commented on the school’s welcoming character and on the sense of community when they joined the school.

The student community is diverse; it is larger than Casuarina but smaller than LillyPilly. Wattle particularly acknowledges Indigenous culture, with a Torres Strait and Indigenous group, school ceremonies for ‘Sorry Day’ and National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) week, as well as indigenous artwork in the school reception. We were told of an example of the significance of incorporating indigenous culture into the school. An ex-Year 6 student from the school now attended a religious high school that did not recognise NAIDOC week. She told the High School Principal what her primary school had done and, as a result, the high school recognised NAIDOC week in the school community.

The school considered itself to have a commitment to meaningful student participation, largely undertaken by class meetings and the Student Representative Council (SRC). Student decision making, however, was mainly focused on the playground and environment, for example, the SRC achieved changes in the school, such as recycling, bubblers and a whiteboard in the playground, the installation of play equipment and the addition of soap in the toilets. Teachers cited the ways in which students could participate, such as fundraising. However, larger decisions were not particularly student-focused, for example, a cake stall involved the students but without the students having input as to where the proceeds would go. Part of the reason for this was seen to be the age of the children. So student participation was seen to be ‘teacher-driven’ and based on a ‘top-down approach’.

One Year 6 student said he had a “little bit to say” in the decisions about school, but for most students, their responses focused on the friendship and positive feelings they enjoyed as peer support buddies and as school leaders. Student leaders are chosen through a whole school vote, with interested Year 5 students making presentations as to why they should be voted for, as one teacher described the process: “like politicians.” Another Year 6 student commented that being a leader is “getting to know what it is to be a teacher, seeing how hard it is, appreciating what our teachers do.”

Parents saw the school structure as positive, allowing the school to be safe and providing an opportunity for students to develop great ‘self-esteem’. As one parent commented: “there is an expectation that children will do the right thing – a level of trust.”

The school promoted restorative practice through classroom charts and reference in its Annual Report to teacher training in such practices. The students and staff were reminded of the restorative practice principles with charts in classrooms, offices and hall, setting out the steps in the ‘Restorative Justice Plan’. When asked if they knew what restorative justice was, students pointed to the plan and, when asked what it meant, two Year 6 students responded with: “sometimes talking to each other, cooperating with the teacher; sometimes the teacher will tell us to say sorry” and “negotiating, works like a treaty or agreement.”

While the language of restorative practice is incorporated into school policy and refresher courses in restorative justice are offered to new and existing staff, there is no formal program. Most of the staff interviewed embraced a restorative justice philosophy, although there appeared to be no clear guidelines and a lack of consistency in its application. As one teacher put it: “[It] needs to be structured, 1-2-3 reminders, need clear procedures for next stage. Follow through at end may not be consistent; what’s the next step here?” and also commented that individual teachers seemed to “do their own thing.”

Discussions highlighted how crucial training is, both initially and as an ongoing process. Some teachers here had received initial training that, as one teacher commented, made them feel “empowered”, while other teachers had not been trained. One teacher commented on how difficult it was in their first year dealing with “challenging behaviour”.

11 October 2015
**Jacaranda**

Jacaranda has no official policy about student participation in decision making generally. However it has policies regarding restorative practice(s) around conflict resolution and learning. We wondered whether, without it being articulated, members of the school community considered student participation to be a feature of restorative practice.

*This gave rise to many questions: is student participation less important, and can there be a school premised on restorative practice where participation in decision-making is not considered important? What is the relationship between the two?*

There was a very limited opportunity for student participation in whole school structures. Students apply for leadership and facilitator positions much like a job and are then selected to be leaders in particular houses. There is no democratic process of voting. However, there is a process for student participation in the quality, in addition to the process, of teaching and learning, called *Connected Learning Experiences (CLE)*. Student facilitators take students out of classes to form focus groups to discuss ideas about teaching and subject (unit) planning; through this means, students are meant to have direct input in what is done. This sounded rather challenging for the teachers and there were comments that teachers either loved it or hated it, and that some feel threatened by it. One teacher said: “For students I think the process is a bit invisible” and went on to say that there is ‘rhetoric and reality in the classroom; they are told that it is distributive leadership, that ideas are valued – but not really.” Another teacher said that students do not have meaningful decision-making in the way the school runs. She said: “I wish they did, but we are better than other schools”.

The students selected for leadership roles are seen to mirror staff qualities. The students interviewed said that they were happy with the system because it was not about popularity. They said that they felt they had big input in CLE and described the process positively, but we wondered whether there was an understanding of whether their input was really valued or not. Students said that changes had been made based on what the students said, but they were not able to give any examples.

Jacaranda has a well-developed behaviour management framework that is very different to other schools. Restorative practice(s) are part of a policy that is based on making sure that all members of the school community are in the right relationship with each other and the world. This framework uses a different language to that used in other schools and it talks about ‘acts of connection’, ‘disconnection’ and ‘reconnection’. It is based on familiar values of inclusiveness, community, choice, equality, respect and sensitivity. Restorative practice is based on the use of particular processes - asking certain questions and circles. There are, however, significant differences. At Jacaranda, the processes are prescribed and the ‘reconnections’ look, to all intents and purposes, to be detentions. The students interviewed didn’t seem to have definite views one way or another about these and accepted them, though some did say they can be for too minor things in their view (one group gave the example about putting their bags in the wrong place in the school) rather than for relationship problems.

In-service teacher training and a theoretical basis for restorative practice are provided. One teacher said that, when a particular restorative process is concluded, there is a much more settled feeling, so he was of the view that it is effective. Another teacher saw this as one of the strongest dimensions of the school.

**Wallangara**

Wallangara is a large state high school whose aim is to set up common language and procedures with its feeder schools such as Kauri. In reality, there are difficulties in implementing this because of the differences in the size and nature of the schools. Kauri has a strong philosophy of restorative practice (as described above) based on Glasser’s Choice Theory, but it did not feel as if Wallangara could be called a restorative school. The school policies are silent on restorative practice and the only nod in that direction seems to be the peer mediation program offered to students in junior years. The students spoke positively about this, although it seemed that the process was very seldom used and students had very little understanding of the principles behind it and its operation.

The school policy says that the school fosters student leadership, but there is no indication that the students participate in decisions that affect the school. One parent thought that the Student Representative Council (SRC) had a lot of ‘pull’, but the examples given were largely to do with social occasions. Students saw the SRC as organised, holding regular meetings with agendas. Being a member of the SRC was seen to develop good social skills, and was seen by the principal as being about service in the community.

The Deputy Head Boy was a young man with a real enthusiasm for greater student participation. He talked about ideas he was working on for involving the younger members of the school community in decision making in the school, not just through the SRC, but also in programs such as approaches in the school to deal with peer conflict. He had produced an Anti-Bullying Booklet, which appeared to be a valuable resource and was a very worthwhile student initiative.

The discipline policy incorporates traditional options and doesn’t mention restorative practice. The principal strongly supported the need for suspensions as showing students ‘boundaries’; he said that this preferred disciplinary option worked well in the school, and in most cases did not detrimentally affect the student concerned or the school community. He expressly said that there is no time to do restorative justice. This was perhaps understandable in such a large school, as demands on resources must present considerable challenges. The students who were interviewed generally expressed their opinion that it was a ‘fairly peaceful’ school, which indicates that, despite the rather piecemeal approach to principles of citizenship practice, something was working. So, while at this school there seemed to be the ‘unpinnings’ of restorative principles, it has to be accepted that the implementation of such measures is much more complex in a large diverse high school.
Gumtree

Gumtree is a large and diverse co-educational high school. We observed and discussed with teachers and students a student voice innovation known as the Student Commission. The idea for the Commission, which is thus far unique in Australia, came from a presentation at a 2010 conference, attended by the Principal and some of the teachers, about Student Commissions and learning in the Harris Federation of Schools. Gumtree's Principal was immediately impressed with the results shown from this system. The school conducted an analysis to discover what areas teachers thought that student voice could be involved in through Student Commissions; as a result, four areas of school life were identified: school environments, learning, leadership and community perception.

Originally, a cross section of students – rather than just the 'good kids' – was to be encouraged to become Student Commissioners; disappointingly this did not happen and it attracted predominantly the most diligent students, described as the 'future leaders' of the school. A great deal of planning went into establishing the Commission, with student focus groups and a staff development day to achieve a wide consensus of ideas. Thirteen teachers volunteered to become mentors for the program and, when visited, there were 23 teachers involved. Parents were also consulted; they showed considerable keenness, with many attending the launch night with students and teacher/mentors.

A training day for the students involved working through all four headings, developing projects within the policies and procedures of the school, but also discussing matters such as developing leadership, critical thinking and 'having a say'. The school distinguishes the Commission from the school's Student Representative Council (SRC), which is more involved in organising special events in the school, while the Commission aims to develop a culture of meaningful student involvement in school decision making on an ongoing basis that is incorporated into school culture.

Meetings of different branches of the Student Commission were made up of students from a wide range of backgrounds and ethnicity. Groups run particular projects and see meetings on school uniforms, the school environment (the playground and the classrooms), communication and teacher interaction. In each group, students were able to clearly articulate their aims and objectives and to discuss the processes they had used to ascertain the views of the student body; examples were for the proposed school uniform and the playground layout and resourcing. There was a high level of involvement of one particular teacher in these meetings but this was in the role of mentor, assisting the students to take ownership of the particular project and to cope with difficulties in working together as a group and in interaction between group members. The leadership group and the teacher interaction group both discussed administering surveys to elicit the views of students, and the problems they encountered both with some students taking this seriously, and with some teachers who they found ‘rude and unavailable’. They discussed the need for both teachers and students to respect one another.

Feedback from students on the early operation of the Student Commission said that it had an important role in both getting their ideas and being their voice, in bringing changes that would improve the school, and in implementing what they wanted. On the other hand, they found some of the teacher mentors difficult to talk to and unhelpful, and said that it was difficult to allocate time for the work involved on top of their other work and activities.

Gumtree has a peer support system that addresses conflict in the school. This has been operating for five years and essentially involves more senior students (Year 10) contacting the new Year 7 students at orientation and mentoring them for the first term of their first year. The program involves anti-discrimination and anti-bullying themes. Students are also trained as peer mediators in Year 9, which was identified as the most problematic cohort. Matters are generally referred to the mediators through the year advisor or by student complaint. Both these programs are regarded as connected and part of student welfare generally.

Discussion

The term ‘school democracy’ seems easy in theory but is clearly difficult in practice. As citizens of a democratic system, it may be easy for us to understand the concept but actually putting this into practice it in the context of a school where there is a myriad of other practical considerations is not so smooth. We can say: ‘In democratic societies, schools – among their other purposes – ought to serve as incubators of democracy’, but for many educators, that is limited to formal citizenship studies in the classroom.

If we are to go beyond this, we find that ideas about ‘practising democracy’ or ‘practising citizenship’ in schools, cover a broad spectrum. There are ‘democratic schools’ and there are schools with varying degrees of ‘democratic processes’ or ‘citizenship processes’. Similarly, there are schools with ‘restorative practice or practices’ or schools that identify themselves as ‘restorative schools’. And when schools discuss behaviour management and peer conflict, such as bullying, they also often use a narrower vernacular of ‘restorative justice’, taken from the criminal justice system.

As well as the types of approaches, we wanted also to look at their effectiveness but we struggled with the question: how is this to be measured? From the time we spent in each school, we gained impressions of its atmosphere, peacefulness and cohesion. Almost all the students were confident, and seemed to be engaged in, and proud of, their schools. These seem to be indicators of effectiveness.

How are such practices developed and, more importantly, sustained? The need for teacher education in democratic measures, including citizenship education and restorative practice, came through as a central theme in our research. Teachers spoke about the absence of training and education in their degree and the lack of, or limited, professional training in specific practices; both at the time of commencing at a new school and as on-going development. Some schools provided in-service training in restorative practices; there was general agreement that this was essential. All teachers in the school community must be competent and confident in facilitating these processes and practices. We believe that an understanding of the philosophy and the practices of citizenship education, restorative practice and student engagement and participation should be a core part of the undergraduate curriculum in education courses.
Conclusion

Our most significant observation was of the positive effect of greater student participation on school cultures. Our research, even with a small sample, demonstrates clearly the value of engaging the student voice in meaningful decisions within the school community, in a way through which everyone feels they can make a contribution that is taken seriously.

Many processes were being implemented, most going further than reliance solely on the Student Representative Council: class meetings, Student Commissions and ‘parliaments’ that involved children at all levels in the school. This is important. The major challenge was to have processes with wide engagement in terms of age, experience, and extending further than those children and young people who were generally considered to ‘toe the line’.

We reiterate the importance of communication and language. In the individual interactions between students and between staff and students, and on-going discussion involving the wider school community, the language used needs to emphasise respect and responsibility.

The practices of these schools shows that it is possible, with scant resources, to introduce participatory and restorative processes and for them to be embraced in the heart of the school’s philosophy and culture. This is often due to the tireless work of an individual, at least in the early stages. While the importance of the leadership of the school principal cannot be over-emphasised, the concept of democratic measures deserves wider and more serious consideration, including at a tertiary and government level.

At one school, when teachers were asked to discuss what is needed for ‘citizenship’ or ‘democratic’ principles to be put into practice in schools, they agreed on (as cited in our original articles):

1. A clear philosophy and statement of values developed with consensus - subject to change as approaches progress;
2. A balancing of the requirements of parents for academic success, and principles of flexibility and negotiable learning;
3. Training of staff;
4. A ‘buy-in’ of all staff, parents and children to change;
5. A group to meet regularly within the school to see what was working and what was not;
6. A commitment by all members of the school community to continuous training, trialling of ideas, review and reflection.

These seem to us to provide a useful set of principles for schools that are embracing restorative or democratic practices.

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References and Notes

3. In New South Wales in 2012, the total for long suspensions was 18,186, up from 16,814 in 2011, which in turn was up from around 14,000 in 2008 and 2009. Non-attendance rates in NSW for 2011 and 2012 hovered around 10% - though it must be remembered that these figures may be impacted by illness and natural disasters such as floods. In 2012, 590 cases were referred for compulsory attendance enforcement action under new measures introduced in 2011. This represents a significant increase from the 413 cases referred in 2011. https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/about-us/statistics-and-research/key-statistics-and-reports/
4. Though it must be noted that in recent years the New South Wales Department of Education and Communities has introduced new measures to enforce school attendance that are proactive rather than punitive (prior to 2011 prosecution was the only official option). However the measures continue to be triggered by non-attendance rather than innovations designed to encourage attendance.


7 S Varnham, M Evers & T Booth T (2011) ‘Let’s Ask the Kids: Practising Citizenship and Democracy in Australian Schools.’ International Journal of Law and Education 16(2): 75
8 The Federal Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority.
11 S Wilson (2002); R Holdsworth (2003); C Matthews (2004)
23 G Shaw (2007)
24 G Shaw (2007)
31 In addition to the increasing amount of research in this area, set out above in this article, for an Australian trial, see P Blood & M Thorsborne (2005) The Challenge of Culture Change: Embedding Restorative Practice in Schools. Paper presented at the Sixth Annual Conference on Conferencing, Circles and other Restorative Practices: Building a Global Alliance for Restorative Practices and Family Empowerment, Sydney, Australia, 3-5 March
32 The schools have been given names of trees by way of de-identification.
33 S Varnham, T Booth & M Evers (2011) – the preceding article from this research.
34 This school provided the case study in the first article relating to this project: S Varnham, T Booth & M Evers (2011)
35 Many of these schools in Australia and New Zealand belong to organisations such as the International Democratic Education Network (IDEN).
37 It incorporates the rules of the New South Wales Department for Education, Training and Communities. Co-incidentally, it is noted that core values of the New South Wales Department of Education, Training and Communities include respect, which may indicate a shift in the Department philosophy. There seems to be considerable flexibility in the implementation of these values at the school level and how they will work remains to be seen.
39 This could of course have been because there had been no call for this process to be invoked.
40 It is important to note that LillyPilly used one particular ‘trainer’ and he had helped them introduce their brand of restorative practice into the school. Casuarina’s ‘democracy’ however was based more on the philosophies common to the democratic school movement worldwide. For example, it is largely modelled on Summerhill School in the UK.
42 We were told that some work is also going into changing the culture of the Student Representative Council (SRC).
Connect 214-215: 16

Point Cook Senior Secondary College, Vic

Teach the Teacher

To support and encourage young adult learners to achieve their maximum potential, Point Cook Senior Secondary has used the Teach the Teacher program to engage and support students and to foster continuous growth for all.

Back in September, 15 students from the Point Cook SRC attended the Teach the Teacher Creative Conversations workshop run by the VicSRC, along with twelve students from Suzanne Cory High School in Werribee.

Students worked together to identify the best aspects of each of their schools, and what areas they would like to see enhanced.

Four goals were identified:

• To improve student-teacher relationships and build a better foundation for open communication and feedback
• To achieve the objective of student leadership meetings and coming to a positive conclusion
• To get the external locks of the toilet doors open, so students don't need to ask for teachers' permission
• To reduce the prices of the school canteen

With these goals in mind, students planned a professional learning session for their teachers with the help of the Student Engagement Coordinator, Laura Newman. New to this role, Laura has identified the need for a strong student voice in a structure appropriate to a senior school, that assists student transitions into the school from schools in the area and abroad and fosters students having more responsibilities.

“I wanted to get our students involved in Teach the Teacher as it was a leadership program that allowed students the space to develop ideas and projects that were specific to their situation and needs. It fitted a senior school environment,” Laura said.

Students invited leading teachers to the Professional Development session, and introduced the topics.

Students noted that the session started off quietly and awkwardly. To 'break the ice' and to encourage more teachers to talk, one student quickly wrote and performed a rap on what student voice means to them. And the conversations began!

By creating an opportunity for open dialogue, students were able to discuss the topics and teachers were able to respond and identify why some things were the way they were.

Students learned:

• that teachers aren't responsible for everything that happens at school; for example the canteen operates as a separate business;
• that teachers are regularly having meetings to discuss the different ways they teach;
• that there are leading teachers who are responsible for teaching and learning at the school, and regularly update teachers on professional learning opportunities;
• the reason the toilet doors were locked in the first place.

The Teach the Teacher program allows students to sit down with their teachers to have a conversation and give and receive feedback, a process that hadn’t previously been done before.

The students at Point Cook Senior Secondary College are happy to report the following outcomes from their Professional Development session with teachers:

• All external toilet doors have been unlocked, which will significantly reduce interruption to the staff room;
• There is more appreciation of the roles of the teacher and their continued learning and development for the benefit of students;
• There is recognition and understanding of school governance and the way the school operates; and that teachers aren't responsible for making all the decisions;
• Perspective from students and teachers were shared on what makes a teacher more approachable.

The students reflected:

• “We reduced the social distance between us and the Assistant Principal and a leading teacher.”
• “Us as students, were able to communicate and voice our opinions.”
• “It's a constructive and judge-free environment.”

Students have scheduled a second Professional Development session with teachers in a student leadership role, who want to become more involved and will continue to run the program next year.

“The students are proud to be involved in giving feedback to teachers – and even though they get a lot of in-house monitoring and leadership training, there is a different impact from having outside facilitators come in as well.” (Laura Newman)

Are you interested in Teach the Teacher in 2016?

Contact Emma Myers on 9267 3714 or projects@vicsrc.org.au

Visit www.teachtheteacher.org.au to find out more.
Eyre Peninsula students raise their voices on issues

Students from across the Eyre Peninsula region in South Australia recently joined in Streaky Bay to share ideas at the annual Eyre Peninsula Student Voice Conference.

Hosted by Streaky Bay Area School at the Streaky Bay Sports Complex, almost 100 students from Whyalla, Wudinna, Lock, Kimba, Elliston, Streaky Bay, Karcultaby, Ceduna, Cowell, Cleve and Tumby Bay attended.

From 10am until 2pm, the students engaged in numerous skill-building activities and discussions, while building inter-school relationships.

The student-directed event is a result of student representatives taking the year to decide on topics to tackle, share ideas about and discuss them with each other. Via video conference over the course of the year, an agenda for the day was planned to reflect topics of importance to the students. The 2015 event covered the importance of personal wellbeing, mental health and youth suicide.

Streaky Bay Area School principal Chris Roberts said his students shared their unique initiative of providing constructive teacher feedback.

“The students engage in a process throughout the year where they survey each other about what they do and don’t like about the teaching methods in the classroom to help improve the way they can learn,” Mr Roberts said.

“Generally they will say: ‘well we really like when you do this but not so much when you do this’. It’s a fantastic process and one we believe should be shared with other schools and see if they feel it would be beneficial for them as well,” he said.

“It’s fantastic and we feel it works really well for us; it’s a way we can up-skill other people with something different they may want to take back to their school.”

The agenda involved guest speaker Dr Conrad Newman, a psychiatrist from Noarlunga Health Service to discuss the role of the community response to suicide and a White Ribbon Ambassador student from Whyalla High School to discuss violence against women.

Streaky Bay student councilor Mischa Karp said it was the first time the school had hosted the event during the five years it has been running.

“In previous years it has well and truly shown it’s a positive experience to connect with other communities and hear the issues they face and how they deal with them, or even understand how they all share similar experiences and are not alone,” Mr Karp said.

“It’s also a way of drawing the students together to gain a valuable networking experience; it really opens up social networking that doesn’t involve sport and the usual platforms forms for students,” he said.

Drawn from a report in the West Coast Sentinel, September 11, 2015 www.westcoastsentinel.com.au
**SRCs in Focus: Student leadership at Mac.Rob**

**Student Representative Council.** These are powerful words. A vast majority of schools in metropolitan and rural Victoria have established an SRC, where passionate students in each year level represent their whole cohort and stand as a driving force for change, for the better.

At Mac.Rob, we believe that we must take charge of our own education. We value differing opinions and believe that every single student has a right to speak, and be heard. This year, as part of trying to foster healthy relationships between teachers and students and making the school environment more comfortable, the SRC started an initiative called **Creating Conversations.** This aimed to evoke rich discussion around what our school community believes are areas for improvement, ideas for refining the way we do things, and spaces wherein there are further opportunities for open dialogue. Among other things, we are also trying to introduce students on teacher recruitment panels.

Through these advances, we aim to level the differences between the Administrative Staff and students. The decisions made affect us, so it only seems fair that we have a right to contribute in the process. While discussions were being held by both the students and teachers, concerning similar ideas about the development and future of our school, these remained confined to just the one group.

Both parties have information of value which, when shared, would be much more suitable to provide a holistic solution to a common problem.

We are currently working towards creating a more equal platform for students and teachers to collaborate. As of next year, student representatives will work in conjunction with the Executive Leadership to share ideas and work on initiatives around the areas of curriculum, pedagogy, student wellbeing, buildings and grounds, and administrative matters. We are very much trying to take our education into our own hands, and make decisions that affect us, ourselves. By no means does this mean our teachers are redundant - we only seek to have a greater say, a greater importance in the decision making of our school.

We believe student voice needs to be accompanied by student action. Backed by a team of driven, passionate girls like myself, we hope to make a real difference for the better.

Demi Tangri

#VicSRCVoices is a rolling series of articles driven by the stories and experiences of student representatives. It’s about who we are, what we value, what drives us to act, and what fuels our passions to advocate for what we believe in. Here, Demi Tangri (16) gives us the inside look at The Mac. Robertson Girls’ High School, and how the Creating Conversations initiative is paving the way for great student-teacher relationships.
Mental Health Awareness Week (MHAW)

MHAW 2015 started off at Suzanne Cory High School in Werribee (west of Melbourne) on Monday 7th September with an assembly presentation by the SRC team and school psychologists (Josh and Dru). We unpacked the reasons why we chose to hold all our emotions in. Our school’s wellbeing staff reminded us how they are here for each of us during the struggles we face, and most importantly the struggles we do not need to face alone. It was a way to slowly get students thinking about the value of genuine conversations and support.

After school on the Monday, we stayed back after school to put up sticky notes on the student lockers of Suzanne Cory. We ran around with a gust of energy, reading and laughing at the bad puns and jokes we wrote, and resonating with the inspirational quotes. The next morning when students came to their lockers, they were greeted with a sticky note which hopefully brought a smile to their faces.

During Wednesday lunch time in the auditorium, we screened The Pursuit of Happyness. It was a relaxing lunch time spent watching Will Smith and his son progressing through the emotional storyline.

Thursday was national ‘R U OKAY day?! It reminded our school community of the importance of conversations. When we have regular face to face conversations with each other, it helps create a positive chain of reactions. When we ask the question, and readily await the answer without judgement, our friends know that they are able to comfortably come and talk to us whenever they need.

At our first Cory Con on the Friday, we carried out the theme of ‘Be your own hero’. Students were encouraged to dress up as their favourite character from a book, comic, movie or TV show. It helped us realise how that we are as strong as superheroes. We are like the people we admire: much like us they face hardships too, and have the strength to pick themselves back up again.

At lunch, the SRC team set up a lemonade stand for students to come along and have a free drink, get a Beyond Blue wrist band and ribbon badge in support of positive mental health. The doors of the Agora were also opened, and we shifted out some of the tables to the area outside for students to sit and enjoy their lunch or have a picnic with their friends in the great weather. Although the Mental Health Awareness Week lasted for just one week, the messages it sent will last for a lifetime: to be there for each other through the good and bad days.

It was a week that took a term to plan, but passed very quickly. Massive thank you to the SRC team, Ms Chui, Mr Ryan, Josh & Dru, along with the countless numbers of students and teachers for supporting the idea from the start to the very end.

Liang Xue
SRC 2015
As the peak body representing students in Victoria, we are thrilled to wrap up this last 12 months celebrating students, SRCs, and schools that are leading the way in student voice.

Advocacy
“We can’t call ourselves the education state if we aren’t looking after the education and wellbeing of our students.”

Student (15)
The Mac.Robertson Girl’s High School

The VicSRC contributes to the provision of policy advice and analysis to government that is student-centred and informed by the VicSRC Executive team and extensive consultations with students. We aim to build a greater public profile of student voice, provide advice and feedback on policy, initiatives and programs relating to students and education (also see page 27).

In 2014-2015, VicSRC contributed consultation, policy input and practical assistance to the following Department of Education and Training policies and consultations:

• Strengthening regional relationships and support
• Engaging Families in Learning
• Consultation on Technical Schools
• Consultation and advice on the Education State (right)
• State budget briefing
• Student transition consultation and report submission
• The Literacy Strategy
• Greater Schools Network consultation forum

In addition, VicSRC has provided support and advice to other projects, departments and officials from the VCAA, Victorian Institute of Teaching, Office for Youth, Adobe Youth Voices project, and Sam Hibbins, Member for Prahran.

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

Student
Metro North conference

In 2015, VicSRC Regional Conferences allowed students to network across schools, gain new skills, work together on common issues and define the top issues that matter to Victorian students. 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.

Top 10 Issues in 2015:
1. Bullying
2. School funding
3. Facilities
4. School culture
5. Student wellbeing and welfare
6. School clusters
7. School leadership and governance
8. Student-Teacher relationships
9. Environmental issues
10. Curriculum

Education State Submission
A student perspective on the future of education in Victoria

We can’t call ourselves the education state if we aren’t looking after the education and wellbeing of our students.

15 year old student, The Mac.Robertson’s Girl’s High School

What’s it all about?
In launching the Education State consultation in June 2015, the Andrews Labor Government asked all Victorians to have their say about the future of our education system. Capturing student voice is crucial in this project. Students are at the centre of education in schools. They have strong understandings and ideas about what works, and ways to improve learning and teaching. We see the consultation process as a critical opportunity to talk about the importance of student voice in education, and to provide practical and tangible examples.

Who took part?
In an effort to capture the thoughts, feedback and ideas of Victorian students about the Education State, VicSRC sent out a survey to all member schools. The survey received a very strong response, from 352 students across 32 schools. These areas of focus align with the VicSRC policy statements developed over the last decade as well as the areas of interest set by the 170 students who attended the VicSRC’s 2015 Congress.

What are the main concerns for students in Victoria?
Student responses revolved around the key areas:
• The school environment and student engagement
• The curriculum
• Funding and equality
• Wellbeing
Teach the Teacher

“The program bridges the communication gap between teachers and students and will be used as a complementary aid for our teachers, where teachers do not feel intimidated or threatened by constructive criticism, but rather empowered with the support and feedback from their own students.”

Madu Balashanmugan, Tim Li Huang
Year 11 and 12 Leadership Team
Mount Waverley Secondary College

Teach the Teacher is a student-led professional development program for teachers. It brings students and teachers together to talk about learning and teaching, and the school environment.

The program starts with conversations, and provides a space to make positive changes together. It involves a commitment to listening to the voices of students, to taking their concerns seriously, and to building student-teacher partnerships for school improvement.

In 2014-2015, we launched a new website to support schools deliver the program: www.teachtheteacher.org.au and provided resources, training and support to 20 new schools. (see page 16)

Engagement
Communications

As an organisation, our communications approach is all about telling our story and putting students front and centre.

Our media profile has grown, with 18 media mentions across print, radio, TV and online publications through 2014-2015, with students commenting on issues that affect their education and schooling.

The VicSRC monthly e-Newsletter is distributed monthly to communicate with 1000 students and teachers across Victoria, with an above-industry open rate average of 24%.

The VicSRC has grown across social media, increasing our reach and impact across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. As at the end of June 2015, our Facebook likes had risen from 673 to 1,012. Likewise, Twitter followers have increased from 244 to 533, and Instagram increased to 211 followers.

The positive impact on social media is evident in the reach and statistics from Congress 2015: over 30,000 people interacted with VicSRC during the event! (see pages 22 to 26.)

Recognition

VicSRC Recognition Awards

“Some days, the world is either for you or against you. When it’s against you, be patient. When it’s for you, be humble.”

Sophie Williams
Student Leader of the Year, 2014

The VicSRC Recognition Awards are about celebrating the achievements of SRCs and presenting examples of best practice in student voice, student-led action and student participation. 2014 marked the first year that VicSRC has presented the VicSRC Recognition Awards as a stand-alone event.

Attended by the Minister for Education, our event saw over 50 applications from 28 schools across the state. They showcased stories of student-led action by SRCs and other student groups, of schools challenging restricted understandings of the importance of student voice, and of SRCs working hard to ensure the authenticity of shared decision-making between students and teachers.

Our finalists blew us away with their dedication, humour and profound commitment to authentic student voice. (Also see pages 28-29.)

Sustainability

The VicSRC Executive

The VicSRC Student Executive continues to lead the organisation forward, driving strategy and decision making at all levels. The Executive meets monthly at the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria to provide leadership over the direction of the VicSRC and work on resolutions passed at Congress. (see pages 26, 31)

We have spoken on panels, been MCs at events, and have participated in a number of stakeholder forums to provide feedback and advice to the Department of Education and Training. In 2014-2015 we attended two camps, held a strategic planning day in January and planned extensively for Congress 2015. (see page 31)

The VicSRC Executive team led campaigns and action on across five key areas:

1. Interschool collaboration
2. Student wellbeing counsellors
3. Green initiatives (see page 34)
4. Extracurricular activities, and
5. Campaigning for the Education Maintenance Allowance.

We continue to grow, and over the past 12 months VicSRC received an increase in funding from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development for 2014-2017. We are also grateful for the support of Newsboys Foundation and Catholic Education Office Melbourne which enables us to continue to enhance the impact of student voice across Victoria.
This year the VicSRC celebrated ten years of student action in style at the 10th annual VicSRC Congress! Congress took place over three days in the July school holidays at the beautiful Ormond College in Melbourne CBD. We had over 170 students come from far and wide across Victoria to attend the camp, some traveling great lengths to join in the roar of student voices. Our aim for Congress this year was to hear what secondary students think are most important issues to tackle in 2015-2016 – both on the state level and locally in delegates’ individual communities.

On day one, students arrived at Ormond College where they were allocated their rooms, escorted by our lovely Executive members. After settling in, the day began with a welcome for the delegates and an outline of what the three days would look like. There was a quick report back from the 2014-2015 Executive on the projects they’d been working on since last year’s Congress.

Then we were off! The delegates split into their Issues Groups to get to know each other and begin workshopping their issues.

After lunch we were visited by the Minister for Education, Hon James Merlino, who gave a speech in support of VicSRC’s work and the changes all students are making to education. A Q & A session gave delegates the chance to ask some hard hitting questions of the Minister about his plans for education in the future.

The afternoon was then made up of two rotating skills workshops where the delegates got to choose sessions that they were interested in. We ended the day in style with the long-awaited Harry Potter-themed Gala dinner. Dressed in costumes and with tables decorated in the spirit of Hogwarts, we ate, laughed, listened to motivating speeches and danced to music by Flybz, an inspirational African-Australian rap duo.

After a morning check-in on day two, the delegates moved into their Issues Groups again to do some last minute planning of their Belief Statements to be presented at the formal Congress sitting. After refuelling at morning tea, the Congress debate began. The delegates deliberated on issues ranging from bullying and school curriculum to student governance and environmental issues. After intense debate, eight Belief Statements were passed through Congress and overall delegates were impressed with the result (see next page for details of these).

Day two was big, but it wasn’t done yet! Students finalised their Action Pitches for a Big Idea they’d like the 2015-2016 VicSRC Executive to
Belief Statements 2015-2016

The VicSRC has committed to eight Belief Statements passed by delegates at this year’s Congress:

Facilities
The VicSRC believes that all schools should meet required standards that ensure equipment and facilities are professional, safe, modern and well maintained. All teachers, students and classrooms must have their needs catered for. Schools should be provided with adequate and equitable funding through communication with the school community; areas which require improvements may be discovered and clarified.

Student-Teacher Relationships
The VicSRC believes that the foundations of the relationship between a teacher and a student must be built upon mutual trust, respect and unwavering support. Each party must be able to communicate effectively to ensure a healthy environment for learning.

School Leadership and Governance
The VicSRC believes that there should be mandatory student involvement in decision-making processes by partaking in high level policy meetings including, but not limited to, School Council meetings.

Student Wellbeing and Welfare
The VicSRC believes that all students must be able to feel safe in the school environment. Students should readily have access to support including counsellors and teachers. This establishes an environment that promotes student wellbeing and welfare to reduce the incidence of negative experiences.

School Funding
The VicSRC believes that the distribution of funds should be measured and monitored fairly through a needs basis and to the standard of the VicSRC.

School Clusters
The VicSRC believes in an educational community that works together, sharing good practice and supporting each other in their work. Colleges should be supported by programs and initiatives that use clustering.

Environmental Issues
The VicSRC believes that all Victorian schools should endeavour to reduce the negative factors that contribute to environmental issues in schools and promote a more sustainable step for the students of tomorrow. This can be placed in a bigger picture by raising awareness and educating school communities, with the support of the government, with this learning being tested using a ranking system.

Curriculum
The VicSRC believes that students should have the opportunity to pursue a wide range of interests in specialised curriculum. Schools should be accommodating to the needs of the students and should be more flexible towards individuals providing the opportunity to participate in a wider range of subjects from a younger age.

Congress Report Available

The full 2015 VicSRC Congress Report is now available for downloading from the VicSRC website: http://ow.ly/T9Tha

This report contains all the details of Congress - intentions, a report of what happened, Belief Statements and Action Pitch … and lots of photos of three days of discussion, debate, decision-making … as well as laughter and energy.

Tess Shacklock
Templestowe College
Congress Coordinator and VicSRC Executive 2014-2015
As one delegate noted: “Congress this year was not merely a discussion without any real power, but the place for students to start achieving change.”

Working within Issues Groups, delegates were tasked with developing a bold and innovative idea around key issues affecting students today. Creative ideas flowed around bullying, student-teacher relationships, leadership and governance, through to curriculum and school culture. The idea behind the action pitch was to present an actionable ‘solution’ to these issues. In groups, students pitched ten ideas and delegates voted on the pitches that they wanted the VicSRC Executive to action in 2015-2016.

Congress this year was not merely a discussion without any real power, but the place for students to start achieving change. The action pitch promotes a holistic view of the issues facing students today and thereby promoting better, relevant, and achievable solutions.

The successful action pitch this year was from the ‘School Governance and Leadership’ Issues Group. The group dealt with both how schools are governed and administered, and how students can be part of that process. Beginning with a (now iconic within Congress) chant, “We Want a Choice, Give Us a Voice!” the Action Pitch called for a renewed focus on students being placed to help make higher level decisions in school. It called for mandatory students on School Councils to give students a real voice in decision making, but more than that, it was a call for students to be treated as respected partners in the journey of education.

“We believe that there should be mandatory student involvement in decision making processes by partaking in key policy meetings including, but not limited to, School Council meetings. We need to run a campaign, hire professionals, or recruit volunteers and provide training to schools to get our student voices heard. We want a choice, give us a voice! It’s our education!”

While schools value student input, and may take limited and often tokenistic measures to gauge student opinion, how many schools actively involve students in the decision-making process for high level decisions? This is what we want to change.

This Action Pitch holds great possibilities; it truly resonated with the students’ desire to transform their education system for the better. Our Executive team relish the opportunity to develop and implement this campaign in the next 12 months. One of the direct lines from the action pitch went:

“We believe that there should be mandatory student involvement in decision making processes ... by partaking in key policy meetings including, but not limited to, School Council meetings.”

The fact that this Action Pitch was voted by students, as their first priority, shows how true this statement rings to students from all of Victoria.

Lucas Muehleisen
John Monash Science School
VicSRC Executive member for 2014-2015

“We believe that there should be mandatory student involvement in decision making processes by partaking in key policy meetings including, but not limited to, School Council meetings... We want a choice, give us a voice! It’s our education!”
93% of students felt they could actively start to create change in their school environments by taking action post-Congress.

#VicSRCpledge campaign
23 pledge posts of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram
We are the roar of student voices

“Such an amazing organisation. The VicSRC has really helped other students and myself open our eyes on how doing something even so little can turn into something massive. Congress was absolutely fantastic; what an amazing opportunity to come up with great ideas, have fun and make new friends!”

Delegate, Congress 2015

What it was all about

The VicSRC Congress was a three-day explosion of student voice. Running over three days and two nights in July 2015, 170 secondary students from across Victoria came together to debate, decide and act on the issues that matter most to their education.

Through interactive workshops and parliamentary-style debate, students determined the VicSRC policy agenda for the coming year, and also appointed the Student Executive that will implement it.

Key outcomes

1. Students felt that Congress instilled an environment that fostered student voice by giving them a platform to be heard, and
2. Congress helped create clear actions they could take back with them into their school communities

Why it matters

Students felt that Congress gave them the opportunity for their voices to be heard by providing them the space to generate in-depth discussions on issues that directly affect them and their education.

93% of students felt they could actively start to create change in their school environments by taking action post-Congress

This shows the inspiring and purposeful experience Congress enabled by being empowered and supported to take action post-Congress to create positive change in their school communities. Congress 2015 enabled students from across Victoria to connect and share their ideas and experiences and take what they learnt and implement action in their schools.

100% of volunteers felt supported throughout Congress

The volunteers expressed that the welfare and wellbeing of both the crew and students were always a high priority. The Crew expressed that their needs were constantly taken into account which helped foster an overall supportive environment for both crew and student delegates.

98% of delegates rated their experience at Congress ‘Good’ or ‘Excellent’

Feedback gained from the student delegates and crew highlighted that the overall experience of Congress was incredibly positive as it created a supportive and innovative environment for students to come together to stand up, speak out and act on issues that affect their education.

33,930 unique people engaged with VicSRC on Facebook during Congress 2015

Recommendations

The evaluation presented five key recommendations to enhance the Congress experience for both the student delegates and volunteers in 2016:

Recommendation 1: An equitable Executive election process
Recommendation 2: Increased free time
Recommendation 3: Opportunities to meet more students
Recommendation 4: Sessions supporting different learning styles
Recommendation 5: Crew training and mentoring
Recommendation 6: That the VicSRC model of Congress is retained and funded in 2016

Thank you to everyone who joined the roar of student voices in 2015!

You can read more about these recommendations and findings in the full evaluation report, which you can find at: www.vicsrc.org.au

Executive 2015-16

A new Student Executive of the VicSRC was elected at the 2015 VicSRC Congress. The following students are charged with managing the organisation and implementing Congress decisions for the next 12 months:

Liz Chiem (Year 11, Mount Waverley Secondary College)
Marine Chu (Year 11, Mac.Robertson Girls’ High School)
Spencer Davis (Year 9, Footscray City College)
Shania Hallyburton (Year 11, Brauer College)
Danai Harawa (Year 9, Frankston High School)
William Hornstra (Year 10, Trafalgar High School)
Sam Ilobuchi (Year 9, Frankston High School)
Demi Irwin (Year 11, Rochester Secondary College)
Simana Latu (Year 10, Copperfield College, Kings Park)
Kristin Sellings (Year 11, Yarram Secondary College)
Dave Serpell (Year 11, Northern College of the Arts and Technology)
Matty Sievers (Year 11, Bendigo Senior Secondary College)
Margaret Tran (Year 11, Mac.Robertson Girls’ High School)
Victoria Vassallo (Year 11, Catholic Regional College, Melton)
Thomas Velican (Year 11, Nossal High School)
Early in October, on behalf of the VicSRC, three Executive members (Danai Harawa, Victoria Vassallo and I) were able to meet with the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education, Hon. James Merlino.

The meeting was an opportunity to quickly update the Minister on the VicSRC’s work, particularly the outcomes from Congress. We took the time to present ideas on how the VicSRC can assist the Government with rolling out the Education State reforms, to introduce our vision for a Student Voice Hub and to present our Primary School Engagement Strategy.

The Government launch of the Education State reforms provided students with opportunities to be heard and to engage comprehensively with consultation processes. Victorian students’ main concerns were to increase student voice and opportunities to be involved in school decision making. The Government’s commitment to empowering students and giving them greater say in the decisions that affect their learning and their lives at school, is a very encouraging start to transforming our education system for the better. We had some ideas on how to help.

In 2016, schools are going to be asked to choose one of six initiatives within the Framework for Improving Student Outcomes. As a student run organisation, the VicSRC presented a few pieces of work we have been developing. We strive for an education system where learning is responsive to the needs of students, where our voices are valued in every aspect of education, so we had some practical ways to assist with the ‘Empowering students and building school pride’ initiative within the framework.

We proposed the establishment and operation of a Victorian Student Voice Hub (SVH). The Student Voice Hub is to provide information and capacity to students, teachers, principals and the community as they commit to working on strategies within the Framework for Improving Student Outcomes. The Hub will be a student-led service, driven and directed by students in partnership with other experts in the field, a place to gain access to contemporary, international and local information and resources, appropriate support and advice, and best-practice training. The Hub will draw together existing resources and initiatives and build upon these to ensure that ‘student voice’ practice goes beyond tokenism, that Student Voice is extended and built upon the VicSRC’s core work and programs.

We proposed that these initiatives have a public Ministerial launch in July 2016 at the VicSRC Congress. The details of both projects will be directed by the VicSRC Executive team in partnership with its employed staff, key stakeholders and associated experts within the sector.

The Minister’s response was very positive. He proposed some short term actions to encourage schools to choose the “Empowering students and building school pride” initiative. As setting up the Student Voice Hub would require time, his suggestions were around holding conferences at schools that demonstrate high levels of student leadership or having resources of programs that advocate for student voice to be available.

At this meeting we presented Minister Merlino with the gift of a printed canvas, representing the voices of students. The artwork was created by a Graphic Facilitator to capture the VicSRC Congress debate, visualising the voices of students and issues that we care about. We hope that the Minister will hang it somewhere he will see it every day and be reminded of the priorities of students of Victoria.

He expressed how impressive the artwork was, that the matters of students were to be put up where the whole Department could see, so they can continue working to represent the voices of students.

Following up on the meeting, the Minister stated that he would bring our ideas up to the Department and see how the Government can continue to support the work of the VicSRC and improve Victoria’s education system. We are looking forward to furthering our work with the Government and are expecting many positive results.

We are enjoying devising these projects and how they will work in practice. We look forward to exploring further possibilities in the future.

Liz Chiem
VicSRC Executive
Mount Waverley Secondary College
After two full days of shortlisting and judging of 59 nominations from 34 schools across Victoria, we are delighted to announce our top 15 finalists for 2015! Our finalists come from all across the state with incredible stories of advocacy and action putting students front and centre in their education system.

### Group Action Award

**Ave Maria College:**  
**Senior Leadership Team**

“As a team we brainstormed a diverse range of ideas that we felt addressed the needs of all Ave Maria students. We were dedicated to improving the social environment within our college. The Initiative ‘AloVEly Week’ was implemented to engage students from across all year levels, providing them with interesting, diverse, and engaging activities and opportunities that improved the overall social environment of Ave Maria College.”

**Mount Waverley Secondary College:**  
**SRC**

“Our aim has been to improve student teacher relationships. The team has achieved whole school change, working across the college to improve student teacher relationships, and using student voice to form our goals and to amplify it. It’s been so exciting to be part of such a vibrant, passionate, dynamic group, we all bring something different to the team, but together, we are making a massive difference to the school, and that’s something we can all be very proud of.”

**Winter’s Flat Primary School:**  
**Community Leaders**

“Community Leaders have transformed our whole school community. Our ‘1.2.3 Layers program’ is where students make daily weather announcements suggesting the appropriate layers to wear reducing the use of heaters. Building on this, students have created sustainability awards for showing care to the environment. **Nude Food everyday** has changed the way parents shop, purchasing healthier and less packaged options.”

### Outstanding SRC of the Year Award

**Bendigo Senior Secondary College:**  
**BSSC Student Council**

“Our SRC strives to create positive change. This year our Council has restructured our formula to increase productivity and engagement. This includes having two presidents, one from each year level; a newsletter, which circulates around the Council so all members are up to date and included; and the majority of our time dedicated to sub-committees. Our Council is creative. Our Council is dedicated. Our Council is outstanding.”

**Sacred Heart College Geelong:**  
**SRC**

“We are strongly student led, and guided through the help of numerous staff. Every committee is in charge of their own area of the school. The Learning and Ingenuity Committee aim to promote good study strategies and an enthusiasm for learning. The Social Justice/Faith and Spirituality Committees have supported the wider school community through their initiative ‘MAD’- Make a difference...”

**Sandringham East Primary School:**  
**Junior School Council**

“The JSC has modified the structure of the Council to include Grade 1-6 students and are working at developing their voice in not only the school but the broader community as well. Working with the School Council and Strategic Planning committee, the JSC has consulted on upgrades to the school playground and are in the initial stages of development of a transition program for local kinder children as they prepare to start school.”

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**2015 VicSRC Recognition Awards**  
**Metro Melbourne; Thursday 29 October 2015**

Celebrating the achievements of SRCs and presenting examples of best practice in student voice, student-led action and student participation in Victoria.
SRC Teacher Advisor Award

Sarah Kreltszheim:
Brighton Secondary College

“She believes in everyone, she empowers everyone and she cares about everyone. Being the SRC president this year I have had the pleasure working very closely with her. She is always looking to expand leadership in our school and give students a bigger voice. She has never said no to an idea we have brought to her; she has talked to us and come to compromises with how we can create achievable outcomes.”

Whole School Approach to Student Voice

Bendigo South East College: SRC

“By sharing the decision making between student and staff, more ideas are generated, different perspectives are gained and a greater student-teacher relationship is formed. For example, at our college swimming carnival, SRC ran a photobooth instagram competition. Giving more students a chance to contribute has encouraged their peers to do the same, creating a chain reaction.”

St Kevin’s Primary School, Lower Templestowe: SRC

“The SRC are involved in interviewing for new staff members and provide feedback on who would be most suitable for the position. They ask their own questions and share their impressions. The SRC worked with students, parents and staff to design and implement an Agreed Code of Conduct. They gathered data from all stakeholders based on the question: How do we need to behave to make our school a happy, safe learning environment?”

Newsboys Foundation Youth Leadership Award

Tess Shacklock, 17:
Templestowe College

“Before I got into leadership I was very shy and that affected my participation. I didn’t enjoy speaking up, but with a bit of courage, overcoming my personal insecurities and in return I gained a lot of confidence. Some students can get stuck in the mindset that their opinions aren’t important, when in reality they are the most important of all! That’s why I am so passionate about student voice as I hope for a future where no students feel powerless.”

Roghayeh Sadeghi, 13:
Northern Bay P-12 College, Peacock Campus

“I have challenged myself to be the best person I can be. I am one of the Campus Leaders. Over the past few years I have encouraged students to do their best, be comfortable with themselves and others, regardless of background, religion, sexuality, gender and differences. Student voice is everything! I strongly believe that young leaders have the power and knowledge to make the world go around!”

Hayley Dureau:
Mount Waverley Secondary College

“We have grown immensely over the past year as a result of working with Miss Dureau. Her passion for giving students an opportunity to reach their full potential and achieve their goals inspires us. She has a bright, optimistic personality, a wonderful sense of humour that never fails to cheer us up. She always works with the Student Leaders productively and never shuts down our sometimes crazy ideas, always trying to find ways to use our ideas in some way.”

St Kevin’s Primary School, Lower Templestowe:

“The students run their JSC, come up with ideas and put these ideas into action. They work with the whole school community to do this: the staff, parents and students. They have made many changes in the school through their work. It is good that the students can talk about things that are important to them and feel comfortable in doing this with staff and the School Council.”

Roghayeh Sadeghi, 13:
Northern Bay P-12 College, Peacock Campus

“Students can get stuck in the mindset that their opinions aren’t important, when in reality they are the most important of all! That’s why I am so passionate about student voice as I hope for a future where no students feel powerless.”

Anamika Chowdhury, 18:
The Mac.Robertson Girls’ High School

“Both students and staff have valid and worthwhile perspectives on the issues affecting our school, and both groups have things they can learn from each other. This has been my leading vision this year, to offer a platform where students are given the opportunity to actively shape our school’s development, and have strived to visibly show the potential and power of student voice and empowerment.”

2015 VicSRC Recognition Awards

October 2015
2015 marks 10 years of the VicSRC and Congress, with the roar of student voice building over a decade of student-led advocacy and action. On Friday 18th September, members from the past, present and future of VicSRC came as one to celebrate the ten amazing years that have empowered students to be more than just the ‘learners’. It was a night filled with joy, laughter, tears and many memories that will never be forgotten.

We had two special guests, James Tonson and Georgia Kennelly who shared their wisdom and past memories with the group. James Tonson was the first ever VicSRC coordinator back in 2006; with his three mates Roger Holdsworth, Scott Duncan and Dave Mould, he helped to build the organisation to what it is now. He spoke about the challenges that were faced before 2006 and during the rocky years after the initiation of the VicSRC.

Georgia is the second-longest serving VicSRC Executive member, beginning in 2007 and ending her four year term in 2010. She spoke about the recent actions of the VicSRC and how it has changed her to be the person who she is today. They were both true attributes to the history of the VicSRC.

The night followed on with the presentation of the Ryan Gunn Life Service Awards. Ryan Gunn was a former VicSRC Executive member who passed away due to leukaemia some years ago so these awards are our tribute to him. These awards recognises an individual who has made a lasting contribution to VicSRC – someone who has inspired and supported others. The first recipient was Georgie Ferrari, YACVic’s Chief Executive Officer, for her ongoing support, right from the beginning when she helped to establish the auspice arrangement with VicSRC and was fundamental in helping the organisation secure funding. Scott Duncan, founder of the Victorian Institute of SRC Teacher (VISTA), was awarded for his passion and guidance whilst watching the organisation that he helped to build grow. His love for student voice is admirable. The third recipient was Dave Mould, the Director of Second Strike. Dave has been a long-time supporter, helping this organisation in its infancy, providing training, support, advice and driving! He has been one of the instrumental drivers of this organisation. The final recipient was Roger Holdsworth who is our longest-serving student voice advocate in the southern hemisphere. He has provided the VicSRC with lots of training, advice and knowledge that has very much shaped this organisation to what it is today.

The open-mic night began with a roll as volunteers, staff and past and present Executive members stepped up to share their memories. Times of joy, sadness, humour and disappointment were all shared with the group. This by far, was one of the best highlights of the night. It proved to me how much like a family the VicSRC has grown to become. No matter when you’ve joined, the VicSRC imprint and the urge for student empowerment will always be a part of us.

The night ended with a blast, with the Nostalgia Pack raffle being drawn (lucky winner was Liz Chiem) and the cutting of the cake. It was a very successful night that brought together all the people who have contributed into making the organisation as large as it is today. The night would never have happened without the hard work of our staff: Fiona Campbell, Krista Seddon, Emma Myers; our special guests Georgie Ferrari, Leo Fieldgrass, Gail McHardy, Sharon Healy and Zac Pretlove; the supporters, Piper, Liz Kalas, Scott Duncan, Tim Eric, Georgia Kennelly, James Tonson and Justin Jaramillo. Finally a huge thank you to all the past, present and future VicSRC Executive members who have driven, are driving or will drive this organisation forward.

The VicSRC’s 10th anniversary just proves how important this organisation is in amplifying student voice.

Margaret Tran
VicSRC Executive
When a new group of people comes together to run an organisation, such as a Student Representative Council or, in our case, the VicSRC, we need an opportunity to gain information, orientation and planning to work together. But we also need a chance to develop as a team. What should such an introduction include? Our recent camp shows what is possible.

We are Executive Members of the VicSRC for the 2015-16 year. During the recent school holidays, we held an Executive camp – for us to enjoy and get to know our teams better, as well as to plan for the year ahead. It was held over three days at a fabulous venue known as the Bastow Institute.

We planned both our action teams and our project teams. The latter was a little hard for us considering that the person running the team was unavailable to attend the camp – which points to the need to have all members present if possible.

During our second full day, we were lucky to spend it with Brett de Hoedt, from Hootville Communications, who provided valuable media training. Through his lively and buoyant communications skills he taught us the importance of being a presenter rather than just a speech giver. The day involved various examples of how to give the best presentation, alongside many chances to be pushed to our limits ... to get up and give it a real go. We all walked away from this experience with an understanding of the importance of a well-timed pause, the use of stories and examples, and the benefits of knowing your audience and interacting with them to hold their focus and engagement.

We also learnt the importance of having a strong knowledge about the content we will be talking about when approached by the media. The day addressed many frequently asked questions, as well as our own burning questions, which we should be prepared for about the VicSRC and our roles as Executive members.

The Vic SRC Executive camp was an informative and eye opening experience. It allowed Executive members to grow and develop as a team, and it inspired us to make a difference, be heard and be productive in regards to student voice. The Executive camp allowed us to further understand and clarify the concepts that are involved within the VicSRC and therefore created confidence and passion within ourselves.

It was a great experience that created everlasting friendships and inspired great ideas to express student voice.

Victoria Vassallo, Shania Hallyburton and William Hornstra

And a personal reflection:
I thoroughly enjoyed the event, however due to my autism, I was uncomfortable talking to people at first. The camp actually got me to know people as the time passed. This was helped by the icebreakers like the one word reflection, and the letter game.

This event helped me get to know the Executive, and those I will be working with, as well as getting started on all of the things we are doing (mine was curriculum). It was a little hard for me to communicate with others, but this camp improved that.

While this event was in a good venue for the events, it was a bit far to travel to, especially for the regional Executive members.

William Hornstra
Launching the new VicSRC Environmental Resource Kit

The VicSRC Executive is excited to share our updated resource to help students take action on green initiatives in their schools.

At the 2014 VicSRC Congress, secondary students from around the state voted for ‘an increase of green initiatives in schools with the aim of increasing environmental awareness and sustainability in schools’.

Why does it matter?
Green initiatives matter. Our environment matters. Protecting and preserving our resources, increasing access to environmental education, and reducing our carbon footprint to increase environmental sustainability matters. Students across Victoria voiced their concerns at Congress 2014 and determined that we must help Victoria - and in particular, Victorian schools - become more environmentally sound places for years to come.

The VicSRC Environmental Resource Kit
2014-2015 VicSRC Executive members, Margaret Tran, Sam Ilobuchi and Tess Shacklock led the charge to help educate Victorian students and increase awareness generally about climate change and the things that students and their school organisations (SRCs and similar groups) can do to help improve their school and community - including ways to be more environmentally sustainable.

Students told us that they want their schools to be more environmentally friendly and that they want to be part of making these necessary changes. When VicSRC looked into this, we found that there are a lot of organisations and groups that want schools to be more environmentally friendly too.

The 2015 edition of the VicSRC Environmental Resource Kit is a guide for students and teachers to provide a brief introduction to some of the best opportunities and organisations we found, including the Australian Youth Climate Coalition, CERES, the National Solar Schools Program, Students of Sustainability and more.

We hope that it helps you take action in your school, and we hope you find the information useful in your quest for an environmentally friendly school!

Download your copy of the VicSRC Environmental Resource Kit at www.vicsrc.org.au

Margaret Tran, Sam Ilobuchi and Tess Shacklock
VicSRC Executive, 2014-2015

Are you a VicSRC Member School? .... Membership discounts

Did you know that you can receive discounted event prices if you have a VicSRC Membership?

If you are not a member school and would like to take advantage of discounted ticket prices to the VicSRC Congress and Regional Conferences, simply select ‘VicSRC Membership (Annual School Membership)’ at the start of your online registration. Or check about membership on-line at:

Need help? Unsure if you are a member? Contact Fiona Campbell, VicSRC Events and Communications Officer on 03 9267 3777 or communications@vicsrc.org.au

To sign up to the VicSRC online e-newsletter … visit:
www.vicsrc.org.au/joinin/mailinglist

The VicSRC receives funding support from the Victorian Department of Education and Training and the Catholic Education Office, Melbourne. It is auspiced by and based at the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YAC Vic). It can be reached there on 03 9267 3744 or, for the cost of a local call from outside Melbourne, on 1300 727 176; or by email: manager@vicsrc.org.au
The 5th Student Voice Seminar/Conference was held at the University of Cambridge (UK) from 22nd to 24th June this year. This was the final event in this series, organised by Professor Alison Cook-Sather (Mary Katharine Woodworth Professor of Education at Bryn Mawr College and Jean Rudduck Visiting Scholar at the University of Cambridge from 2010 to 2015) and Dr Bethan Morgan (University of Cambridge), and dedicated to the memory and work of Professor Jean Rudduck around student/pupil voice.

But it won't be the final Conference to be held, and participants in this year’s event spent some time planning future directions – see later in this report.

The event combined both formal presentations and informal ‘unconference’ sessions, which allowed participants to meet, define and discuss topics of interest and concern. Approximately 70 people took part, from all round the world: researchers, academics, teachers, students, administrators and others – and from primary, secondary and tertiary education. The strength of these sessions has been the concept of ‘linking across the lines’: bringing together people from diverse fields, backgrounds and educational contexts, for common dialogue. We all share an interest in and commitment to the idea of ‘student voice,’ however diversely that is defined.

**Day 1**

The seminar began with a welcome and background from Alison, followed by an ice-breaker activity that had us seeking and finding partners for a ‘dance card.’

The opening keynote address by Professor Michael Fielding reflected on the legacy of Jean Rudduck’s work and its place in stimulating and driving current educational thinking: “Lighting the Slow Fuse of Possibility: A celebration of Jean Rudduck’s contribution to Student Voice as a transformative educational force.” (This address is available from the Seminar’s website: see later.)

The first of the Explorations of Research and Practice in Diverse Settings sessions offered participants a choice among four one-hour presentations and discussions:

Two secondary school students – Miranda Wernay Dagsson (President of The Association of Danish Pupils 2014-15) and Mads Leijtved Rasmussen (Vice-President of The Association of Danish Pupils 2015-16) – plus Cecilie Tang-Brock (Organisational Consultant) presented on ‘Pupil Engagement - A Means for Increased Academic Ability, Social Commitment and Well-being.'

In other sessions, Catherine Bovill (Senior Lecturer, University of Glasgow) presented on ‘Identifying Your Underlying Assumptions in Co-Creating Learning and Teaching: The Importance of Language and Behaviour,’ in association with Dan Bishop (Researcher at the University of Lincoln) presenting on ‘Conceptualising the Student-University Relationship within a UK higher education institute,’ Stephanie Serriere (Penn State University) presented her work with Dana Mitra on ‘Fostering Civic Engagement in the Elementary Grades in an Era of Accountability’ alongside with Vicky Wasner (doctoral candidate,
Durham University) on ‘A Democratic Approach to Global Citizenship and International Mindedness: Empowering and Engaging Students in Meaningful, Critical Dialogue’; and Pam Burnard (University of Cambridge) and Paul Greenberg (‘Creatubbles’ Director) presented on ‘Towards a framework for analyzing a digital arts global project: Undertaking voice research with ‘Creatubbles’, an innovative digital platform building global communities of engaged children and young people through multimodal creativities’ alongside Liz Dunne (University of Exeter) on ‘Students as Change Agents: the Change Agents initiative at the University of Exeter’.

The first Un-Conference Session was titled ‘Continued and New Directions for Practice and Scholarship’. Some participants had defined proposed areas of discussion prior to the seminar, and other topics emerged in discussions. This was an opportunity for a less formal mode of engagement: a chance to raise, brainstorm and argue over ideas. Various conversations occurred, including groups around:

Acknowledging, Balancing, and Distributing Power:
- Emotion and power/ knowledge relations in student voice: Exploring teachers’ responses to students’ research.
- Different conceptual frameworks of models of power relations in student voice work.
- The balance of knowledge and power between researcher and co-researchers.

Digital media: Social media applications and/or multimodality for facilitating student voice.

From co-creation by the educational institution towards students as change agents: Exploring different approaches to student voice by comparing case studies, which outlined ideas for a paper in progress and provided an invitation to contribute as a co-author.

After lunch, the focus was on reports of approaches around Students as (Co-)Researchers Across Contexts. All Seminar participants took part and were invited initially to report on any studies in which they had been involved, and also to formulate some questions. We were asked (individually and then in small groups) to:

- Briefly describe the project or study through which students are co-researchers.
- Why do you have students as co-researchers? What is the benefit? (eg how does it change the way you do research, the outcomes or insights?)
- What, if any, particular challenges or obstacles have you faced?
- What questions do you have for others who do such work?
- What have you learnt about the process of students as co-researchers and what advice do you have for others hoping to do such work?

This process of individual and group reflection was then followed by a panel of secondary students from several projects where they were researchers or co-researchers, providing descriptions of their work and answering and discussing questions. A whole group discussion wrapped up the session, drawing on written responses to the questions and on student researcher responses.

The afternoon concluded with a chance to mingle and talk, based on one-page summaries that were ‘Celebrations of Current Iterations of Student Voice’, and then a more formal meeting discussing a proposal for an online Student Voice Journal (see separate article in this issue of Connect).

Day 2

On Tuesday, the second day, the Seminar started with a further set of presentations of current research and practice in diverse settings.

Cherie Woolmer (doctoral candidate, University of Glasgow) presented on ‘Co-creating Curricula in Higher Education: Exploring Perceptions of Staff and Students’; Catherine Burke (Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge) and Karen Könings (Maastricht University, Department of Educational Development & Research, The Netherlands) presented on ‘History as an Agent in Participatory Design of the ‘Future Building School’: A Case Study’, Eve Mayes (University of Sydney) presented on ‘Diverging Longitudinal Accounts of ‘Change’ Over Four Years in a Low SocioEconomic School Setting: Power and Emotion in a ‘Student Voice’ Initiative’ alongside Pauline Fitzgerald (Senior Education Officer, State Library of NSW, Australia) on ‘Designing for Emotional Engagement and Empathetic Understanding: Consulting Young People’; and Rory Gallagher (Thomas Hardy School, Dorset) presented on ‘The Challenges Faced by Schools to Implementing Student Agency Projects’.

The second Un-Conference session include discussions around:

Fostering and Sustaining Genuine Engagement:
- Moving beyond ‘cute’: how do we ensure deep commitment to listening to student voice and acting in partnership?
- Engaging the resistant (students and staff)
- How to maintain the enthusiasm for student voice work

Teaching and Supporting Young People in Research:
- Teaching research methods to young people (teenagers)
- Data analysis and ownership of data o Ethics and participation
- 'What do student representatives/activists want from researchers, teachers and other practitioners?'

In the second keynote address after lunch, Professor Susan Groundwater-Smith addressed 'Understanding Praxis in the Context of Cultural Institutions: A tribute to Jean Rudduck'. (Again, this address is available on the seminar website.)

In the third round of research and practice presentations, we chose among: Ger Halbert (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment) and Paula Flynn (Trinity College, Dublin) on 'Student Voice: Accessing Student Insights on Their Learning to Facilitate Co-Construction in Curricular Development' alongside Daniella Hall (Penn State University) on 'Fledging the Nest: Navigating Parental Resistance to Literacy-Based Development of Young Adolescents’ Intellectual Independence and Voice'; Karen D. Könings (Maastricht University, Department of Educational Development & Research, The Netherlands) and Catherine Bovill (University of Glasgow, Scotland) on 'Developing a Rubric for Student Voice Work'; Kate Wall (Durham University), Julia Flutter (Cambridge University) and Carol Robinson (Brighton University) on 'Ethical Implications of Eliciting Young Children’s Voices: Developing Knowledge & Understanding of How Article 12 Is Enacted with Children Under 7'; and Chae-Young Kim (Research Associate, Children’s Research Centre, Faculty of Education and Language Studies, The Open University) on 'Children As Researchers: Exploring Conceptual and Empirical Ambiguities'.

Each of these seminars has been considering how to take Student Voice work further. This year there was a session on 'Carrying Student Voice Forward: How to have an impact' in which participants reflected individually on 'What strategies or approaches have you used or could you imagine that would help ensure that student voice work is carried forward and has an impact?' These were then shared in small groups and reported to the whole group.

The afternoon concluded with 'An Appreciation of the Jean Rudduck Visiting Scholar: Alison Cook-Sather, her work and leadership' from Dr Lena Bahou.

Day 3
The final day was very practically focused. Participants had asked for practical ideas, strategies and tools to take back to their own workplaces. So the first session was focused on 'Filling Your Tool Box: Practical approaches to Student Voice work in teaching and research'. Small groups shared resources, and interrogated ideas around various requests:

Navigating ownership in student voice work, both in terms of process and product.

eg "I'm particularly interested to learn how colleagues are having these discussions with the students involved and what we think the ethical tensions might be related to ownership (during and beyond) student voice work."

A sort of 'starter pack' of ideas for starting a proper students as researchers project at my school.

"It's something that I really want to start up next year, much like the student researcher group that presented last year. Maybe some helpful hints and tips to make sure that the project runs smoothly. Also, it might be useful to me to hear what other people have said to their various Head Teachers to get them on board with the idea/usefulness of having a Student Researcher project."

"Actual worksheets or practical strategies used in the first time students and staff meet to set out on a partnership."

Using and analysing data.

"I am currently spending some time considering the most effective means of involving participants in the analysis of collected data - particularly video footage - and would welcome discussion with others as to how they involve participants in this process in an authentic manner."

Digital media.

"Uses of social media applications and/or multimodality for facilitating student voice."

"Tools, templates, processes etc for capturing digital portraits and digital stories from students."

Finally, a session focused on developing plans for the future of these Student Voice gatherings. Ideas were discussed around possible venues for next year ... and beyond. A proposal from Vermont, USA, was discussed and approved for exploration. Possibilities for the formation of a formal or semi-formal body to link and carry forward Student Voice work was considered, and some participants volunteered to work on this ... and ideas are currently being canvassed. Possible funding sources for international Student Voice work was discussed ... but with no specific resolution.
Reflections

The Seminar closed with some reflections from participants:

“The sun shines on the end of #camstuvoice2015. What a fantastic three days! Much to follow up on.” (Cherie Woolmer)

“Thanks for an inspiring three days of collaborative learning about student voice from preschool to HE and in cultural institutions.” (Students as Partners, The Higher Education Academy)

“Inspiring, motivating, collegial, collaborative and with great people making a fantastic three days; thanks all!” (Dan Bishop)

“What an inspirational couple of days in the company of some of the leading international thinkers, writers and actors in the field of student voice. It was an honour to have been invited ... to participate and to present my own ideas and research, and I am so glad to have made the journey across to Cambridge from the West Country! My journey was by no means the furthest or longest, as there were delegates from Australia, South Korea, the US, Ireland, Scotland, Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, Canada, Greece, Spain, and I probably missed a few out too. There were students from schools in England and Denmark, whose contributions were some of my take-away moments of the seminars.

“The warmth and passion for education of everyone there was a welcome reminder that we are not alone in what we are all trying to do in our own educational contexts. It was a special privilege for me to meet some of the people who had inspired and motivated my research and my teaching practice – Michael Fielding and Alison Cook-Sather in particular.

“One of the highlights for me was the Danish students’ surprise at some of the comments of the English students! The democratic values embedded within Danish education appear not to be so present or self-evident in our English schools. Another highlight was the frank and open discussion between lecturers, researchers, teachers and students in the ‘un-conference’ sessions – which were rich and rewarding, allowing a voice to all, and fostering a real co-construction of our common aims and values.” (Rory Gallagher)

Personal reflections of an inclusive kind

“A firm believer in the potential of education to be a powerful, transformative force, Michael Fielding’s words in his keynote speech resonated with me, and I knew that I was in the right place. Having been a lone, submerged silenced voice in my life as a practitioner researcher, I was glad to feel a sense of reaffirmation about my decision to make the journey over from Switzerland to be at this fifth seminar on student voice; hitherto unknown, foreign territory to me. The idea of ‘re-imagining’ what it means to be a student or a teacher is what drives my interest in student voice; being able to ‘re-see’ each other is what social interactions should be founded upon, and is a principle upon which teacher-student relationships should be based. We live in times where being able to tick certain boxes and jump through certain hoops are all too often seen as the educational goals in themselves, and the processes that are involved in getting there are only the means to economic ends, rather than being valued as the creative, collaborative and knowledge-constructing processes that they have the potential to be.

“My own presentation on my proposed research project was an initially daunting affair; some people in the room had been the inspiration for some of my own most productive and creative thinking, and my initial fears were that the ideas that I had spent the best part of two years nurturing and developing would fall flat on the ears of these experts! Yet how wrong I was, and how different I felt on leaving that room; I felt included and valued. Having received praise for my efforts and been offered suggestions as to how to take my work forward and keep criticality and ethics as the driving forces, I felt that I may just be on the right tracks.

“The discussions on power fascinated and excited me. The idea of power to versus power over people is an interesting concept that allows us to think about our own understandings about what power means to us. One comment that will remain with me is Susan Groundwater-Smith’s remark about the danger of over-use of the word empowerment as if it were a gift to be handed from one person to another. Trying to romanticise this term and fantasise that some kind of emancipation can happen as a result of someone having created conditions in which we can do that, is implying that becoming empowered does not involve some kind of struggle. If I am in fact planning on claiming that my own research will allow students to become empowered by having a voice as researchers, I must be careful not to be too naive and utopian about this. Whatever does happen, I walk away from these seminars carrying my critically reflexive mind to my corner of the world where there exists, as Lena Bahou said, my own ‘pocket of hope.” (Vicky Wasner, Switzerland: victoria.wasner@iszl.ch)

Roger Holdsworth and Alison Cook-Sather

Further details can be found at the Seminar website: http://ow.ly/T9xHM including texts and audio of the keynote addresses, the full program with presentation abstracts, papers from participants and some blogged reflections. In addition, participants (including some following the seminar internationally) were tweeting comments on each day, and these tweets are Storified on this website - thanks to Bethan Morgan.
Learner Voice Conference at Trinity College Dublin (Ireland): June 2015

Nothing About Us Without Us!
Listening to the Voices of Our Students

The Learner Voice Conference, ‘Nothing about us without us; listening to the voices of our students’ took place on 26th-27th June 2015 at Trinity College, The University of Dublin, Eire. It received extremely positive feedback from participants across a broad representation of stakeholders in education, including students from primary, secondary and tertiary education, parents, teachers, principals, policy makers, researchers and academics. It was truly a learning community encompassing learner voice in action!

One delegate summed it up by stating he was “inspired and energised for two days in TCD – it was the first time I personally felt that student voice was being validated in the Irish education community as the Student Voice / Learner Voice / Pupil Voice community both emerged and became one. It was great to listen to all the speakers, including Alison and Dana, as well as all of us working here in Ireland and to see our work reflecting and reflected in a whole range of settings. Bringing the voices of the young primary school students and the older PP students added real authenticity to the conference”

Another delegate came away “totally inspired, and richer for the networking with those of like mind, some of whom I believe will join forces in the foreseeable future, to transform the educational experience in this country for many, especially for those who are at risk of falling through the cracks in its processing system”.

On behalf of the Inclusion in Education and Society Research Group (IES), I was delighted to host our Learner Voice Conference, “Nothing about us without us”: Listening to the voices of our students! in Trinity College, The University of Dublin on 26th–27th June 2015. The two day event featured a broad range of presentations, reflecting current international research and practice with respect to ‘voice’ in education, most especially, student voices.

Dr. Alison Cook-Sather, an esteemed and prolific author and researcher in the areas of student voice, engagement and partnership in educational research, was an inspiring keynote speaker, which in itself was a wonderful occasion for our conference community and the School of Education, Trinity College Dublin.

Across the two days of this conference, the opportunity to discuss and interrogate the challenges and opportunities, especially pertinent to the ‘trajectory of student voice in...”

From: https://www.tcd.ie/Education/conferences/

educational research’ (Cook-Sather 2014) were led and heard by a broad representation of stakeholders and interested parties. These included students from primary, secondary and third level education; teachers; principals; parents; policy makers; researchers; and academics. In total, 66 presenters contributed to the conference. This overwhelming level of active participation reflects a significant interest in the areas of ‘voice’ and narrative methodologies in the educational context and environment. The spectrum of topics that were discussed and examined ranged from ‘marginalised voice’ through to ‘tattoo as visual literacy’.

I have had the tremendous pleasure of co-participating in student voice research continuously since 2008 and, as a result of my experiences, I am convinced that there is great potential for learning on the part of all participants who engage in or are impacted upon by this practice. Consequently, some of my recent studies have been conducted under the title of ‘Learner Voice’ to emphasise the community of learners who are both involved and impacted upon in the process, reflected in the title of this conference. Although the predominant conference theme was on the voices of students, it was also an opportunity to listen to multiple perspectives of learners who are interested in ‘education’ or ‘voice’ or indeed both!

The Dublin Learner Voice conference was blended strong research with deep lessons in practice. Nearly all the sessions included learners as a part of the presentations, from primary school students to secondary school students and college as well. It was a rare example of how researchers and learners can both strengthen their work through dialogue with one another.

The sessions were well facilitated and scaffolded to help to ensure that the participants could all feel that they could participate, be heard and learn as well. It was a terrific model for future events and I came away inspired.

The pictures show students presenting at the conference, including Kaden Litzinger and her teacher (on the Skype pictures) who shared their work on student voice research, in which Kaden talked about her research on how dress codes shame girls.

Dana Mitra

Acknowledgement:
Sincere thanks to Darren McPhail, Sarah Dempsey and Darren Byrne for the art work ‘student voice: nothing about us without us!’

To mark this 20th anniversary of the Melbourne conference, I would love to hear from the pioneers and leaders who assembled in 1995 to get your perspectives, insights and wisdom:

Where are we now? What did we get right? What did we miss? What challenges remain?

I am also very interested to see the changes that have occurred and encourage you to share any old and new photos of changes to your classrooms and teaching practice!

The internationalisation of education has perhaps never been more important.

In October 1995, Connect magazine, focussed on student participation, documented some of our early work in their October-December double issue: http://research.acer.edu.au/connect/vol1995/iss95/

I have now set up an account of this journey at: http://bit.ly/melbourne20 and encourage you to share comments there - as many have already done.

Twenty years is a long time, yet I wonder what hindsight and reflection provides for us ‘down-the-track?’ We find ourselves in 2015 with unimagined connectivity, networked infrastructure, devices such as phones and tablets that were truly ‘science-fiction’ in 1995 – a year before Australian scientist John O’Sullivan patented wi-fi technology.

More importantly, the canon of research into teaching and learning has expanded significantly. I am interested to hear your observations on teaching practice and its relationship with networked technologies.

This was a time when ‘the internet’ was still a concept unknown to many and certainly schools, education officials and governments were still very much in the earliest stages of developing responses to this technology. Yet Victorian schools were at the epicentre of telecommunications and online collaboration. Australian and particularly Victorian schools were, in the early stages, amongst the global leaders to connect their classrooms with the world. Such efforts appear [to me] even more relevant today than in 1995.

In particular, but in no order, my colleagues in the WhaleSong Foundation (Andrew Hocking, Trish Bulluss, Cathy Coppinger, Kathy Skidmore, Frank McNamara and Ian Parry) were genuinely at the global forefront of the telecommunications revolution. ‘Revolution’ seems such a mis-used term but the work of these people to engage not only their students, but hundreds and hundreds of other schools and teachers, was quite a feat, considering all were volunteers and working full-time.

This group became the nucleus of the first iteration of the I*EARN Australia Centre.

First Official Video Phone Call – VCAB 1991

Between 1989 and 1993, six schools in particular: Broadford Secondary College, Tranby Aboriginal College (NSW), Broadford Primary School, Puckapunyal Primary School, Wandong Primary School and Mansfield Secondary College achieved some incredible firsts, establishing video-links (the first ever video-phone link from Australia), secure online student ‘conference rooms,’ student international exchange programs focussing on the history of the Holocaust, global publishing programs involving ozone and climate scientists around the world, global art exchanges and establishing a ‘First Peoples’ project, the first of its kind in the world, just to name a few.

Of course, much of this was ‘pre-browser’ technology.

In addition, we partnered with the Asia Education Foundation to support their Magenet Schools program. Ten pilot schools, in total, were selected with at least one from each State and Territory in Australia. Each school received personal training and then linked with I*EARN schools in Korea, Japan and China, as well as other I*EARN Schools in the USA.

By 1994, a number of us had spent time in Argentina with Daniel Reyes, Rosy Aguilla and Adriana Vilella at the inaugural I*EARN Teachers’ Conference in Puerta Madryn, Argentina. The driving force of Peter Copen and Ed Gargert and the rest of the International Management Team had established a global network of schools and educators.

We knew the classroom would change. We suspected the classroom had to change. Twenty years on, has it changed? In what ways?

The Global Classroom Project

In November of 1994, The Directorate of School Education in Victoria agreed to support the WhaleSong Foundation’s design of a two year plan to co-ordinate and implement a Statewide telecommunications project for ‘all’ Victorian Schools based on the I*EARN model.

This saw the establishment of the Victorian Global Classroom Project and a huge response from the teaching workforce to engage in the use of this

An End to Intolerance – Holocaust Genocide Project
technology. Bruce Rigby and later, Rita Ellul from the Department of Education were instrumental in assisting the group and expanding this further into one of the longest running projects of its type. Participating schools were given access to electronic mail, conferences and other Internet services including the World Wide Web, Gopher and Usenet News.

In July of 1995, these many hundreds of educators gathered in Melbourne.

It is worth noting these pioneer schools and their teams. If you work in these schools or with colleagues that were involved in the 1995 Teachers Conference, I encourage you to leave a few thoughts in the comments section (see below).

‘The Originals’: Phase 1 Global Classroom

Irymple Primary School; Wodonga Primary School; Goroke Secondary College; Bandiana Primary School; Puckapunyal Primary School; Mansfield Secondary College; Kyneton Secondary College; Lakes Entrance Secondary College; Sunshine SC West Sunshine Campus; Swan Hill North Primary School; Sale High School; Lake Bolac Secondary College; Grovedale West Primary School; Southwood Primary School; Essex Heights Primary School; Hoppers Crossing Secondary College; Bendigo Senior Secondary College; Grovedale Secondary College.

Some of these pioneers are, thankfully, still in front of a classroom or involved in education in some way, so if you have a chance to ‘pat’ one of these amazing educators on the back and say ‘thanks’, you should do so...

We look forward to hearing from you.

20 years... it was time then – time to make connections, create new projects, explore exciting opportunities that had never been available to educators before. It was inspiring.

And yet, now 20 years on, with more connectivity at our fingertips than in human history and a myriad of devices available, has the conversation about educational innovation and learning depth moved forward as far as we had hoped it would?

I wonder really how far we have come as a system?

...I think that the past 20 years have seen a focus on the tools – the resources, the devices, the bandwidth, the apps – with less emphasis on the teaching and learning we want to see happening.

Prensky uses a nice description which I now share with the school leaders I encounter: let’s focus more on the verbs (what we want our students to be able to do such as: communicate, collaborate, create, problem-solve, negotiate, build awareness, share, investigate etc) rather than the nouns (the tools, like the apps and devices).

Doing so is device-independent and future-proofing. It’s what *I*EARN was all about 20 years ago: making authentic connections, devising engaging problems to solve, recording students’ learning journeys and celebrating their progress.

If we can revisit this more profoundly, and move away from the seductive love affair with the noun... then I reckon we can pave the way for deeper innovation.

...Last year I was talking with some Year 10s in a school who do skype or polycom linkups routinely... it’s no big deal to them to talk with an expert in the US or a teacher in India. But when I asked them what this meant for their learning, for themselves as learners, for themselves as global citizens, they looked at me like I had two heads.

Intercultural understanding? Global citizenship? Meaningful connections? Making a difference? I was taken aback with the silence.

It seems we knew more about what we wanted our learners to be able to be and do... and we need to go a bit old school again on this. Instead of saying “let’s get cracking on a global project” because it’s educationally sexy... [we should] get involved because these kids can make authentic connections that help to make the world a better, smaller, more connected, more empathic, more tolerant and kinder place. But also build in that metacognitive reflection.

These kids are more connected now that ever before in human history – with that comes great potential (and great fear for some)... but they need to know how to navigate this world, be empowered, responsible, thoughtful citizens of the world that they can change and be in.

Nikki Deighton

I agree entirely with Nikki – some of our initial ideals have been subsumed by the reality of how the ‘internet thing’ has evolved, but which, in hindsight, are entirely predictable.

Nevertheless, here are my observations:

1. I just got back from a year 7 class where two incidents highlight how things have radically changed. One kid asked: “So how much is left of the circus maximus in Rome?” I simply said: “Check google earth and get back to me”. We then spent a few minutes, along with a few of his mates, looking at the images and interpreting them. Another kid asked: “Did all the people in Pompeii end up as casts?”, to which I replied: “No idea – I’ve never asked that before. Where can you check that?” She discovered within two minutes that it’s supposed that 2000 people died, and they’ve found 1100 casts – so we had a quick chat about what might have happened to the rest. Easy!

Kids are very empowered to find knowledge, and if led correctly, interpret that really well.

But:

2. Do they communicate better? Our initial projects focused on global discussion; I think that’s been lost – at least in the classroom sense. Why? My first gut reaction is that it takes time and effort, and we’re generally not willing to set aside that time.

3. How do you measure what my Year 7s just did? Given the headlines about NAPLAN results this morning, measurement of data rules the educational world right now, and we as a society have forgotten just how much better kids are today at gathering information and processing it – because we don’t even try to measure it.

4. Inequality of access is a personal bugbear of mine: it costs a lot to be ‘globally connected’ and while we have a great take-up of students with iPads at Year 7, as the devices age and the price drops, the percentage of kids using them regularly at Year 10 is quite low. Parents are, quite rightly, skeptical about the seemingly endless need to upgrade, while adding to Apple’s bottom line. Many kids quite simply can’t afford them. Perhaps we did it better when we had just a couple of devices and we had to share more!

5. Corporatisation and bureaucratisation of the whole idea. I subscribe to a blog by Diane Ravitch, who bemoans the influence of Pearson education and Apple in the push to privatisate education in the
USA. The influence of the ‘grass roots’ movements of groups such as IEARN have been overtaken by big money, with the subsequent loss of control by practitioners of the profession. Our original ideals have become slaves to those in society who want to put things into tick boxes.

6. We haven’t fully worked out the etiquette of the internet age, and the negative sides of human nature have, predictably, muddied the water. As a year level coordinator, I spend a lot of my time dealing with cyber bullying – but as Nikki mentions, we’re dealing with the narks here – kids clearly used to throw ink at each other in the ‘good old days’; the technology is somewhat irrelevant.

So yes, we’ve come a long way, but overall we need to wrest back the control of what we do, and stay strong about what we originally envisioned: communication, understanding and empathy.

We did it so well in the 90s because we were all fired up by something new and exciting – and we saw the very best of people and what they could do. Re-discovering that excitement with the new is our challenge now.

Kathy Skidmore

Thanks as always for your input. Although we are no longer ‘at-the-coal-face’, you and I both know many who are. It is my sense, based on their experiences, that the progress appears sporadic, uneven and in some cases, hard to identify at all. I think your question about systemic reform is the real question.

The original global classroom and related projects were very much about teachers, teaching and classrooms. Classroom practice, classroom design and collaboration across systems and cultures was what energised so many thousands of teachers (and still does).

Predictably, when leadership of such innovations turns from practitioners to system-level actors, invariably, the focus and often even the premise of the original innovation changes. Computer-student ratios, infrastructure, system-wide-productivity, standardisation and contractual design while often necessary in early stages (certainly to ensure equity), often overrides and ultimately consumes the premise of improved teaching and learning.

The ‘what’ and the ‘how’ consumes the ‘why’?

I think you would agree that we have seen many examples of that, both at home and internationally...

You were one of those genuine ‘practitioner-leaders’ and yet I sense (without wanting to put words in your mouth) that you have the same mis-givings as me. The ‘project’ remains ‘behind-the-curve’.

How far have we come? My current answer is: not nearly as far as I thought!

I am still very surprised that we have not seen profound changes in the teaching and learning of, for example, languages.

I saw the power of a small country high-school in 1990, begin to link classrooms of French, Vietnamese, Chinese and Japanese students and source that very rarest of educational opportunities, native speakers sharing conversational language on a periodic and regular basis. It was obvious that this was the future for access to languages, yet at that time, it was supported only with email, and very expensive video phone calls and standard calls.

I still wonder why in 2015 we do not have commonplace access to partner-classrooms for all language students? Skype, video-conferencing, international character support of all major operating systems and yet I observe many language classrooms that are teaching the same way I was taught in the 1970s?

This confuses me.

I also ponder professional development and collaborative leadership networks and whether the technology has assisted in improving practice in these areas?

I could certainly make similar cases regarding the teaching of mathematics, history, geography, literature, earth sciences and others. Of course I am very aware of the exceptional examples of progress and change, but these have not been systemised (as far as I can tell) and still remain exceptions-to-the-rule.

What do you think?

I am very interested to hear what the wonderful group of educators that began the journey 20-25 years ago believe are the gains made and the challenges that remain.

Bill Coppinger

At Swan Hill North Primary School we took the step to go 1:1 devices in 2007 which was initially met with mixed feelings. Today in 2015 we have every child in the school (except prep) with their own device. (Preps have 1:2) ...

What did we get right?

We use the SAMR model to guide our work and quality of task – ‘The Task Predicts Performance’ as defined by Richard Elmore. This ensures that tasks are done in such a way that are not a ‘substitute’ for what could be done without technology but that they are done in such a way that could not have been achieved without technology.

SAMR Model Overview

1. Substitution: Technology acts as a direct tool substitute, with no functional change

2. Augmentation: Technology acts as a direct tool substitute, with functional improvement

3. Modification: Technology allows for significant task redesign

4. Redefinition: Technology allows for the creation of new tasks, previously inconceivable

What can we learn?

Although we were ground breaking in our work back in 1994, very little had occurred in terms of global learning when I started in 2007. Then it took many years to support staff to have the skills and the confidence to use technology daily.

We found:

• That the use of technology every day had to be mandated (every session). Not every child every session, but the use of technology every session in some way.

• That you plan first what you want children to learn ... then after this consider how technology can make things better ...

• Staff need to be challenged and extended (at) every staff meeting ... this technology thing is not going away.

• ‘Expert’ teachers need to be released to support teachers at all levels of abilities. Extend the top end and support all others ...

• The teachers who worry less about how to use technology do better. They might only know the capabilities of a program or app but know roughly what it can do and let the children collaborate to discover and solve.

• Technology should mostly be for creating ... A video editing program, crossed with a music program, crossed with a slide show equivalent and combined with web info – has endless opportunities for creating.

• Flipped learning has huge potential.

• Survey your staff and allow them to share their concerns...then address these.

What have we missed:

• I still believe we are not using our video conferencing tools enough ... limiting global learning.

Challenges:

• Keeping the quality of task high.

• Assessment of tasks.

• Too many schools have put technology into the too hard basket.

• Great models of use ‘exemplars’ need to be identified and be ready to share everything.

Campbell McKay
Principal
Swan Hill North Primary School

iEARN Australia
Student engagement in university decision-making and governance -
towards a more systemically inclusive student voice

This project aims to develop more systemic approaches to the inclusion of student voice in decision-making and governance in Australian universities. This relates not only to the activities at the highest levels of governance, but also at all levels, such as faculty boards, class/subject course representation and input on curriculum reviews.

The project (an OLT Strategic Priority Commissioned Project led by Professor Sally Varnham, Faculty of Law, University of Technology Sydney) builds on the research of Project Leader and her experience in governance roles within higher education - Chair of Academic Board, representative on the University Council and Student Ombud - and her activities in mentoring student representatives on governance bodies.

In the first phase of the project, Professor Varnham has worked with members of her extensive international network to identify good practices in the formal provision for student participation in university governance and decision-making in the UK, New Zealand and Europe.

Phase 2 of the project includes a survey to determine the range of approaches and the mechanisms for active student engagement adopted by Australian tertiary institutions that has been informed by a national survey undertaken by the University of Bath for the UK Quality Assurance Agency.

Our Australian research is supplemented by desk research that examines the documentary evidence for Australian student engagement practices.

The third phase of the project provides opportunity to examine and share good practice through good practice case studies and pilot projects.

There is a project workshop at UTS on October 27; contact Ann Cahill for details.

Project contact details:
Project Leader:
Email: Sally.Varnham@uts.edu.au

Project Officer:
Email: Ann.Cahill@uts.edu.au

The International Journal of Student Voice

The International Journal of Student Voice (IJSV) is a new peer-reviewed, open access e-journal publishing on the ways in which students co-lead their schools and communities by collaborating with teachers, administrators, and community stakeholders to define problems and develop potential solutions and/or take the lead on making change in their schools and communities.

We define students to include a wide range of young people, from early childhood to university studies. Taking as foundational the right of students to develop their voices and leadership capabilities and take an active role in analysing and shaping their educational experiences, the journal publishes research related to pupil/learner voice, youth-adult partnerships, child rights, youth participatory action research, students as activists and change agents, and related fields. Likewise, we acknowledge the importance of adult educational stakeholders who share this belief and work to make the development of student voice, participation, and partnership a reality.

IJSV, established in 2015 by the Pennsylvania State University, welcomes pieces from researchers, practitioners, and students including traditional research-focused articles, practitioner reflections, and multi-media submissions.

Peer review in this journal will include feedback from researchers, practitioners and students. All articles must have a user-friendly abstract that is understood by all audiences. Articles will be expected to end with a set of discussion questions to encourage online dialogue. Each submission will include a discussion forum to encourage conversation about the submissions.

For more detail and submission guidelines and information, see the USV website: https://ijsv.psu.edu/

The International Journal of Student Voice (IJSV) is a peer-reviewed, open access e-journal publishing on the ways in which students co-lead their schools and communities by collaborating with teachers, administrators, and community stakeholders to define problems and develop potential solutions and/or take the lead on making change in their schools and communities. IJSV, established in 2015 by the Pennsylvania State University, seeks submissions from teachers, students, researchers, administrators, and community stakeholders. In addition to traditional research-focused submissions, we welcome and encourage practitioner reflections and multi-media submissions.

You can access IJSV at: https://ijsv.psu.edu/
With a similar approach and feel to speeches given in the *TEDx* style, Jump Start will feature a series of presentations and activities from the Second Strike team who are specialists with SRCs, as well as guest speakers who are experts in the student leadership field. The seminar is designed to engage students and to provide ideas and motivation to assist students to take their SRC to the next level.

**Jump Start 2016**

Friday 4th December 2015  
10 am - 2 pm  
Victoria University, Queens St Campus, Melbourne CBD

Some of the sessions are:

- “Getting The Most Out Of Your SRC Teacher”
- “5 Items To Strike Off Your Agenda”
- “How Your SRC Can Earn and Keep Respect”
- “7 Steps of Effective Advertising”
- “Getting People To Attend Meeting Without Bribery”

Second Strike is proud to present this event at Victoria University, Queen Street Campus, in the Melbourne CBD. The event runs from 10 am to 2 pm and will be presented at an energetic pace, as we have lots to get through. As a result, only your SRC members who have shown some potential, passion, can keep up with a fast-paced program and have the capacity to share the ideas they discover when they return to school. Year 12 students are not really useful at this forum; we want your younger members, to help them step into the leadership roles that will soon be left vacant.

I just finished reading the latest edition. I really wanted to email you to say that, with each edition of *Connect*, I am left feeling really inspired. It is the most encouraging resource promoting student engagement that I have encountered, and one that has really encouraged me to reflect on our practice and engage our students in more engaging and responsive ways. I have shamelessly promoted it through my DP meetings and Wellbeing clusters over the past seven years. I just wanted to thank you for the excellent work you do in promoting student engagement in our schools.

Peter Bartley  
Deputy Principal/Wellbeing Coordinator  
Trinity Primary School, Richmond North, 3121

**Save the Date: Student Voice 2016**

The follow-on international Student Voice conference/seminar has been announced for July 2016 (see the article in this issue about the 5th Seminar that was held in Cambridge UK last June). It is a collaborative effort between Pennsylvania State University, the University of Vermont and UP for Learning. The dates are July 6-8 and the new title is: **International Seminar: Amplifying Student Voice and Partnership**.

This will continue to be a small, basically invitational event. For more information as it becomes available, and for early expressions of interest to attend, contact Helen Beattie, UP for Learning: hnbeattie@gmail.com
When?
9.00 - 3.00 pm;
Friday 13 November 2015

Where?
Studio 4,
Catholic Leadership Centre,
576 Victoria Parade, East Melbourne

Who should register?
Catholic Primary and Secondary teachers and/or Student Wellbeing Leaders with an interest in active student participation and/or engaged in facilitating SRCs.

How to register
Email:
dsandiford@ceomelb.catholic.edu.au
Closing date: 6 November 2015
Contact:
Doug Sandiford, Education Officer,
Wellbeing & Community Partnerships Unit
Phone: 03 9267 0228

Connect on facebook

Connect has a presence on facebook. Find us at:
http://ow.ly/L6UvW

We’ve been posting some news and links there since June 2013, to complement and extend what you see in the online version of Connect. It would be great if you could go there and ‘like’ us, and also watch there for news of each Connect’s availability on-line - for FREE.

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.
Connect Publications: Order Form

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ea-mail: r.holdsworth@unimelb.edu.au

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

Connect has a website at APRINworld. 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 APRINworld 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.

Articles from Connect are also discoverable through EBSCOhost research databases.

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.

‘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

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:
TLN Journal (Teacher Learning Network, Abbotsford, Vic) How Do I Teach? Vol 22 No 2; Winter 2015
Yikes (YACVic, Melbourne, Vic) June, September 2015

International:
Rethinking Schools (Milwaukee, WI, USA) Vol 29 No 4; Summer 2015
The Principles of Student Engagement (The Student Engagement Partnership) 2014: www.tsep.org.uk/TheConversation
All back issues of Connect from 1979 to the present (that’s now almost 36 years!) are freely available on-line! Thanks to the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), all back issues of Connect have been scanned or uploaded into the ACER’s Research Repository: ACEReSearch.

You can find these issues of Connect at:

http://research.acer.edu.au/connect

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

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

Let us know

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

Most importantly, please USE this resource.

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

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