A Primary School Student Council
School-based Congress
Improving morale & connectedness through listening to student voice
Teachers are learners too: Comment
Students shining a light on mental health
VicSRC: Student Voice and the Education State; Regional Conferences 2016: Top 10 issues; Congress 2016 Open Morning; Teach the Teacher: new project officer

Resources:
- Real NSW photography competition
- Innovation Nation grants
- Teach the Teacher: MWSC report
- ‘You’re the Voice!’: Wagga Wagga SRC camp
- Australian Students as Partners Network
- International:
  - International Journal of Student Voice
  - Student Voice Podcast
  - Student Voice Research & Practice facebook group
- Connect ... available on-line ... on facebook
  ... archived ... access to other on-line resources

Child Safety: A Students As Researchers Approach
I’ve been watching Revolution School on the ABC – and frankly, it’s left me rather disappointed.

But it has also left me thinking about what it might mean to really be part of a ‘revolution school’. Here are some immediate thoughts:

First: there would be changed relationships between people. Students and teachers would talk and work together; teachers talking with students, rather than talking (or shouting) at them; students actively driving their education, rather than being passive (or resistant) recipients of instruction. (I’m amazed and distressed at what the video shows us about how much space and time is taken by teachers telling students things – or what to do; with students mute, monosyllabic – or defiant.) People (both students and teachers) would work in cooperative teams, taking shared responsibility for the learning and wellbeing of all members.

Second: there would be changed relationships with knowledge and purpose. Learning would occur as students identified and followed their passions, tackling real issues, and contributing real value to their school and community. They would teach others; they would carry out research; they would produce resources; they would care for the environment and so on. Where students needed skills and knowledge to do this, they would identify their needs collaboratively with teachers, and schedule specific instruction that met those needs. Teachers would clearly define and present their teaching intentions, and support students to define their own learning intentions ... and together negotiate how that learning would be demonstrated through success criteria.

Third: there would be changed structures and decision-making. Larger schools would be broken into smaller units, in which students and teachers could build supportive relationships. Students would be taught by smaller teams of teachers, who could know them and their families better. Students would be directly involved in decision-making of the school – including on such matters as teacher employment. Such participation in management would itself be seen as learning, and the skills, knowledge and attitudes involved would be appropriately recognised as part of the school’s curriculum.

These things are actually all happening in schools in Australia! However, I suspect that the nature of such ‘revolutionary’ changes would be too subtle to make good television. It is more dramatic to show frustration and anger than to show students and teachers working together collaboratively. It is easier to capture a student tearing up pages than to show a group working together. As Gil Scott-Heron said in 1970: The Revolution Will Not Be Televised.

Next Issue ...

We’re right in the middle of the year, moving towards the end of what has been (in some areas) a long Term 2. I’m looking forward to attending the VicSRC Congress during the term break in early July. The next issue of Connect will present information from this, including decisions made, and details of the newly elected Executive.

We’ve also promised a story about the link between schools and local government through a Shire Youth Council. What else? Well, that’s up to you. We’d love your reflections, your resources, your stories.

What’s your own ‘revolution school’ like?

Roger Holdsworth
Students: a voice on Child Safety

How can students have an active role in building their own safety and that of their peers while at school? Will organisational responses to ‘child safety’ be characterised simply by further measures done to students – or are there models of approaches that recognise the voice and action of students in this difficult but vital area?

Catholic Education Melbourne (CEM) is currently trialing a project for child safety awareness to help schools establish a benchmark for student knowledge about their safety. This engages students as knowledgeable investigators within their classrooms and schools using a ‘Students as Researchers’ methodology developed and delivered by Sue O’Connell and Doug Sandiford (CEM Education Officers).

The introduction of child safe standards forms part of the Victorian Government’s response to the recommendations of the Betrayal of Trust report, which found that more must be done to prevent and respond to child abuse in our community. All schools will need to meet child safe standards from 1 August 2016.

Details of these standards are set out in Ministerial Order No. 870. (see: www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/Pages/childsafe.aspx)

The seven standards a school must apply are:

1. Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements;
2. A child safety policy or statement of commitment to child safety;
3. A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children;
4. Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel;
5. Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse;
6. Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse;
7. Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

The latter point forms the basis for this CEM initiative. Sue and Doug invited students at St Charles Borromeo Primary School in Templestowe to participate in a classroom project that would help inform teachers’ ideas about children’s feeling of safety while at school.

Sue O’Connell has developed a ‘Students as Researchers’ approach, based on similar international and local initiatives. It aims to “provide schools with suitable tools for capturing and acting upon student voice around issues about learning; ensuring that students feel engaged and empowered with voice, choice and agency.”

The ‘Designing for Learning’ process is outlined in the boxed section of this article. This CEM student voice initiative is in its initial stages, with participating schools in the process of responding to student feedback. A project report and resources will be made available.

At St Charles Borromeo Primary School, two one-hour sessions were held with a class of students from grade 5/6. Students were asked to share “what it feels like to be safe at school,” “when they may feel safe or unsafe” at school and “what they have learnt and know about safety.”
In the first workshop, Sue and Doug tuned the students into how important it was for them to have a voice about their safety. In groups, the students brainstormed what areas were pertinent to them when they thought about what it feels like to be safe at school. They then worked together to classify their ideas into six themes.

These were:
1. **Rules and Expectations**
2. **Strangers**
3. **Physical Boundaries**
4. **Cybersafety**
5. **Friends/Peers**
6. **Classroom/Teachers**

In the second workshop, the students again formed into groups around these six themes. They were asked to make recommendations about what they believed teachers could do to support them in feeling safe.

Their recommendations for teachers were:

1. **Rules and Expectations**
   - Be more aware of things happening outside and in the playground;
   - Be more aware of how people (students) are feeling;
   - More teachers on playground duty to be more alert;
   - Have a program for every one in the school about the importance of safety.
2. **Strangers**
   - Children should not talk to strangers;
   - Tell the teacher or adult if there is someone making them feel unsafe;

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**Designing for Learning - Student Voice**

**Purpose**
To provide schools with suitable tools for capturing and acting upon student voice around issues about learning; ensuring that students feel engaged and empowered with voice, choice and agency.

**Organisation**
The process is designed for two sessions of 40-50 minutes, with a break between steps 2 and 3 (recommendation: two separate days)

**Roles**
The facilitator provides the prompts for student responses, sets up groups when appropriate and ensures the process stays on track in terms of time. The participants lead and control the dialogue. They actively listen to each other and offer their critical analysis, recommendations and reflections to the dialogue.

**Materials**
Post it notes, stimulus sheets (A3 size), large paper for posting, sorting sheets, recording sheets.

**Steps:**

**Introduction – Students-as-Researchers**
Explain to the students they will be acting as **Researchers** – collecting, sorting and analysing data, then making recommendations based on their findings.

**Stage 1: Generating data**
1. Students generate data on post-its. This is facilitated by an A3 stimulus sheet (sample below), which can be used as a place-mat shared by three or four students. (The stimulus questions can be adapted to the circumstances.)
2. Students should be encouraged to respond with as many ideas as possible – each on a separate post-it note. This facilitates the next part of the process which involves sorting them into common ‘themes’. (Students are told that this is the first process that researchers engage in: capturing data.)
3. Post-its from each prompt are collected together on one large sheet for sorting in step two.

**Timing:**
5 mins per prompt

What I have learnt about safety at our school is...

I feel safe when...

Adults keep us safe when...

I feel unsafe when...
Stage 2: Sorting data
1. Using the large sheets of post-it notes, students work together in groups looking for common or similar ideas.
2. The facilitator should move around, ensuring each group is communicating well and could also offer advice about which ideas belong together. This might include a whole group conversation to ensure that themes are common between the four groups – which helps with step 3. (Students are advised that this is the next thing that researchers do: sort and organise their data, looking for common ideas and themes.)

Timing: 20 – 30 minutes

Sorting ideas: put similar ideas together ...

These ideas on our post-its belong together.

Let’s give each theme a name ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme Name:</th>
<th>Theme Name:</th>
<th>Theme Name:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At this point it might be prudent to take a break, in order for the facilitator to analyse the data collected and the themes uncovered. The facilitator might take this ‘raw data’ to other staff members or school leaders and ask them what they are noticing and which themes they would like to explore further. Staff might wish to ask questions of the students or reflect on what this means for them and their practice.

“We could be honest and say what we like and .... what we think we would like to happen.”

“I liked how we wrote it on sticky notes and didn’t have to actually say it – sometimes we have discussions about things but we didn’t have to actually say things to other people; it was just on the sticky note.”

“The actual process of collecting the research was broken down into steps so we got a really good idea of what to do.... I felt included in our learning – sometimes we feel like we don’t have a voice; we’re just here ...”

- Use *Circle Time* to teach, teach, teach;
- Address at assembly.

3. Physical Boundaries
- Make boundaries clear with signs;
- Always reminding at assembly; use student school leaders here;
- Teachers at boundaries;
- All new children learn about boundaries by taking them around the school; Year 6 buddies for Preps and student school leaders for other children.

4. Cybersafety
- A bully’s consequence is to lose their digital licence or use of computer for a certain period of time eg three weeks;
- Cybersafety signs around the school;
- Assembly about cybersafety;
- ICT lessons with ICT monitors and Mr C (teacher) for supervision.

5. Friends/Peers
- Talk about bullying in circle time;
- During buddy time talk about bullying to inform Preps;
- Posters around the school.

6. Classroom/Teachers
- Have the same rules and boundaries known by all teachers;
- Teachers have a discussion about rules and boundaries;
- Make sure all students are supervised;
- Always know where a teacher is.
To provide the students with a process for their voice to be put into action, a further workshop was held on **Student Action Teams**, facilitated by Roger Holdsworth. The students learnt that **Student Action Teams** involve groups of students who work on a real, identified issue of community interest. The students carry out research on the topic and develop solutions – either proposals for others or action they then take.

A group of grade 5/6 students have subsequently come together to form the **Student Safety Student Action Team (SSSAT)**. Their goal is to continue to research what it means for all students to feel safe at school and to present their findings to the school leadership team, staff group and parent advisory board. They will then put this research into action and work with students, staff and the parent community to provide a safe and supported environment for all students at St Charles Borromeo PS.

Students said that the process:

- “Made us aware how to be safe and hope to be safe”;
- “Our opinions were recognised”;
- “Evidence [is important] – we know what others are thinking”;
- “Not all recommendations can be actioned – but some [can]”;
- “We enjoyed collating and analysing”; and
- “We get to have a say and this helps prepare us for high school.”

Teachers also commented that:

- “Students took responsibility”;

and that the

- “Whole process [was] very powerful.”

‘Child Safety’ is too important to ignore the voices of and initiatives that can be taken by those most affected – the students themselves.

**Stage 3: Analysing data**

1. Groups of students choose (or are assigned) an important theme from the previous scaffold.
2. Students are asked to consider the significance of this theme for their learning: why it is important; what it might mean if it was not present; and to offer recommendations (advice) for each other, for their teachers or for the school leadership.
3. It is important that students are encouraged to analyse the data impartially (to see from another’s point of view) as this is what researchers do in order to provide findings and recommendations that are balanced and equitable. Many find this difficult, so the facilitator may want to ask questions in order to remind the students that what they write should reflect what they have read rather than their own opinion.

**Timing:** 20-30 minutes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our student group:</th>
<th>Analysing one theme .................Our findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of theme:</td>
<td>What does our research tell us?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Step four - Whole group debrief**

1. Students come together and each group takes a turn sharing findings, discussing insights and surprises.
2. The facilitator might then ask the students their aspirations for ‘where to next’.

**Timing:** 10-15 minutes

This session may be recorded so that it can be shared with other teachers, leaders or the whole staff group, or students might be invited to attend a meeting of teachers to share their findings and recommendations.

**A video about the process is available at:**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DAPjbpDjpdo

For more information: soconnell@ceomelb.catholic.edu.au or: dsandiford@ceomelb.catholic.edu.au

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**Sue Cahill**  
Student Wellbeing Leader  
& Student Services Leader  
St Charles Borromeo Primary School  
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Giving young students a voice through a Student Council

Our school is rather large for a primary school. We have around 1100 students, who come from a very diverse range of backgrounds. Promoting student voice has always been a priority at our school, beginning with the Year 6 students electing the School Captains and Vice Captains each year. This involves every student having the opportunity to present a short speech to their peers and then preferential voting follows. This process is never interfered with by the staff, as we trust our students to elect the best students for these important positions.

Providing the opportunity for many students to have a voice is a challenge in a big school. We have 46 classes with an average class size of 22 students. To enable as many students as possible to have an opportunity to make a difference, we have followed a model that we admired and that is operating very successfully in our sister school, Meadowbank Primary School in New Zealand. We have modified their program to suit our school community.

Our Student Council consists of three separate groups, the Values Committee, the Enviro Squad and the Social Action Committee (which was previously called the Fundraising Committee). The students on these committees are elected by their classmates for one semester. Elections are then held again at the beginning of Semester 2 and three new students have the opportunity to represent their class on the Student Councils. At this time of the year, Foundation students are also elected and join the committees.

Here are the thoughts of three Year 4 students who represent their class 4JT on the committees this semester:

Values Committee

Hi my name is Wilson C and I am a student at Serpell Primary School. I am very proud to be our class representative on the Values Committee. We organise Walk to School days. One of the days we organized this term was the ‘Anzac Spirit’ walk which helped us all to remember Anzac Day.

We also have a blog at: http://spsvalues.global2.vic.edu.au/

The blog has all sorts of things like the school norms: we listen to each other and we build on each other’s ideas. It also has safety rules like when crossing the road, hold your ball still in your hand or put it into your bag. We list the dates of the Walk to School days during the year. The blog also has lots of safety games on it.

We have lots of meetings, mostly on Mondays, and there are three teachers who help our committee. Miss Sleeth does most of the work though. The safety rules were thought up by the Values Committee members. The representatives are from Years 1–6 from all sorts of classes.

Every time you want to be a representative, you need to give a speech and let your classmates vote and whoever gets the most votes will go onto the school student council committee. I enjoy speaking at assembly and reminding everyone about the special events that are happening.

We need the Values Committee to help stop bullying and to help teachers organise things. It makes the teachers’ lives much easier and makes everything more fun for the kids. Our committee comes up with brilliant ideas about having fun and keeping healthy. I am very proud of myself for getting onto the Values Committee.
Hi my name is Anita B and I am our class (4JT) representative for the Enviro Committee/Squad. I was elected by the kids in my class after I gave a speech about why I wanted to be on the Enviro Squad. After we had all given our speeches everybody closes their eyes and votes by putting their hand up. At the next school assembly, all the representatives are awarded a badge.

In the Enviro Committee/Squad, we have a veggie patch which we look after. The vegetable seedlings are donated to us by Bunnings and one of the Dads (David) at our school. Then each class takes turns (one class per week) looking after the plants. When the veggies are ready to be harvested, we harvest them and then donate them to Doncare for the food bank.

We also have meetings and our own Enviro blog. [http://spsenvirosquad.global2.vic.edu.au/2016/01/31/hello-world/](http://spsenvirosquad.global2.vic.edu.au/2016/01/31/hello-world/) (or: [http://ow.ly/hjWD300PgKz](http://ow.ly/hjWD300PgKz))

Most Mondays we have an Enviro meeting. We meet Mr Tottenham at his classroom most lunch times and we discuss what is currently happening, things that are coming up and things to improve on. On the Enviro blog we have things that are coming up and things to do to help the environment.

As a member of the Enviro Committee/Squad we also have responsibilities. For example:

- Each Wednesday it is Waste Wise Wednesday and it is the Enviro member’s job to tally the amount of wrappers the whole class brought to school. On Tuesday it is the representative’s job to remind everyone not to bring wrappers. If your class brings the lowest amount of wrappers in our year level then your class wins a certificate at assembly.

- You also have to keep your garden area clean, as on Friday some people in the Enviro committee come around and pick the cleanest area in each of the year levels and the winner is awarded a certificate!

I feel very proud and excited to be the class representative for the Enviro Squad. It is a great responsibility to be representative, but at the same time also fun!

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Social Action Committee

Hi my name is Alexia P and I represent the Social Action Committee for my class. I am in Year 4. Our school donates food, money and much more to the community. We also make posters to remind us about what we need to bring, like a two dollar coin to support the children we sponsor.

We speak at assembly to remind everyone about our donation days. We donate to Doncare and the Smith Family and we also donate to the Royal Children’s Hospital and other people who need help.

I feel proud about myself because I am helping our school to donate to people who don’t have what we have. I am proud to be our class representative and I think that I have done very well in my role.

We also have Social Action Committee meetings at lunch time and sometimes we talk about what we are going to do and how we are going to decide who we donate to. We all wear a badge that says Student School Council and it has the Serpell logo on it.

We went to BUPA Aged Care facility and we saw grandparents and asked them questions like: ‘why did you come here?’, ‘is it better here than where you lived before?’ and we gave heaps of company to those grandparents when we went to visit. There was someone that was turning 104 and we sang ‘Happy Birthday’ to her because it was her birthday. Wow! I can’t believe that she has lived that long!
Teacher and School Support
As you can tell through these snapshots, the students really love the opportunity to be involved in their school. The committees however would not be as productive or as inspiring without the dedication and enthusiasm of the teachers who support these groups. Every Student Council Committee has three teachers – one from the F-2 area, one from 3-4 and one from 5-6. This ensures that the activities in each committee are appropriate for all of the students.

Each year the committees evolve according to the passions of the students, the staff and opportunities that are offered to us through our local community. Our students in the Values Committee have previously been asked by Manningham Neighbourhood Watch to assist with the planning of material for young people to engage them with safety in the community. The students helped to design a computer program called Be Safe Online. This can be viewed at: www.nhw.com.au/eastern-region/manningham

We also hosted the launch of the program in our school library and were very fortunate to meet Dennis Walter the patron of Neighbourhood Watch.

Our Student School Council Committees provide a wonderful way in which to develop Student Voice in our school and to encourage our young people to make a difference in their community.

Sue Young
Assistant Principal
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Have an Idea. Get $$.
Start a Movement.

Who
Young people aged 16-24 who are passionate about improving health and wellbeing in their community.

What
Innovation Nation will accelerate 20 young people’s ideas for social change in health and wellbeing through a $1,000 microgrant, online resources and three mentoring sessions with experienced business leaders.

Why
Australia is facing major challenges in health and wellbeing. Mental health issues, high levels of inequality and unhealthy lifestyles are major issues affecting Australia’s population.

When
Applications close 30 June. Innovation Nation will take place over 3 months from August to October 2016.

Where
From the comfort of your computer. You don’t even have to change out of your pyjamas.

Sounds pretty good right? Apply on-line at: http://ow.ly/Tsi5300ZE7d

Your idea should fit into one of these four themes:
1: Health and wellness of our Indigenous/Cultural communities: Inequality is at the highest it’s been for the last 100 years.
2: How STEM and innovation can be used to solve health problems: 75% of future jobs will require STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) skills.
3: Proactive approach to health and wellness through sport: Between school and dinner, children are three to four times more likely to be in front of a screen than playing sport.
4: Healthy lifestyles: Unhealthy lifestyles were the major cause of death for men and women in 2013.

Need more info? Head to the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) at: http://ow.ly/7vAu300ZEbn

Check out the links on the FYA website (above) to see some great projects to get you inspired, or big issues you could address.

Foundation for Young Australians
On Tuesday March 8th this year, the first official Melbourne Girls’ College Student Representative Council (SRC) Congress was held. Over 60 student delegates attended and debated issues such as the Uniform, the Wellbeing Curriculum and Facilities.

These issues had been identified by student representatives throughout the school, and formed into proposals to be discussed and debated through a formal process. The Congress concept was brought back to the College by the MGC delegates to the VicSRC State Congress in 2015 (the VicSRC is the peak body representing school-aged students in Victoria). We thought this would be a useful approach to gain student views and decisions on the issues that face us.

The Congress was held during school time, over a period of two hours. Student delegates were invited for all classes in the College.

The following resolutions were carried by a majority vote during our Congress.

Resolutions Carried:

- That the SRC prepare a guide that clearly defines natural vs unnatural hair colours for students to use as a reference.
- That the SRC:
  a) holds the belief that the school should have working clocks in every classroom and study area;
  b) conduct a clock audit of the school to provide the facilities manager with a list of rooms without working clocks.
- That the SRC check the PA system around the school and make a report detailing areas that require more volume and possible bell alternatives.
- That the SRC recommend to the school that socks that are logo-free, white, breathable, and calf length should be acceptable under the uniform guidelines.
- That the SRC will request that the 3.10 bell be reinstated.
- That the SRC holds the belief that our education is the main goal of all changes and that other changes do not affect our education in a negative way.
- That the SRC holds the belief that positive reinforcement is a better alternative than detentions when it comes to the uniform.
- That the SRC prepare a proposal to change the uniform policy so that blazers are optional.
- That the SRC organise another Congress before the end of 2016 and invite all students from Year 7 to 12 to participate as delegates.

The Congress Crew is currently preparing a formal report with summaries for each resolution of all points for and against. This report will be used to set the agenda for action and policy development by the SRC in 2016.

And Next ...

There’s enthusiasm to organise another Congress at the start of next term, as more issues have since come up, but the SRC will need to attempt to address the above resolutions first in order to report back to students at the next Congress.

We would like to thank all of the hard work of the Congress Crew, Delegates and Workshop Participants for their contributions to the event. Also a special mention to Fiona Campbell of the VicSRC, David Mould of Second Strike Productions and Roger Holdsworth of Connect magazine who helped support the event.

Kathy Lu, Nell Crossett, Georgia Wolfe, Emma Naismith and Zack Pretlove on behalf of the SRC

More information: Zack Pretlove
08835084@mgc.vic.edu.au
We have seen a significant change at our College since 2014 in the area of student morale, connectedness to school, and this has been strongly linked to the ways we now hear student voices.

Mount Waverley Secondary College, approximately 20 km southeast of Melbourne’s centre, is a culturally and socio-economically diverse school. Among the almost 1900 students are many Education as an Additional Language (EAL) students, as well as almost 40 international students. Generally speaking, our students come from families where education is highly valued and where students and parents have high expectations. We are an ‘academic’ school, where most of our students move on to tertiary institutions upon completing their VCE.

I began teaching at Mount Waverley Secondary College in 2009 as a graduate teacher. I felt so grateful to be teaching at one of the state’s leading coeducational government schools. Mount Waverley had very impressive academic results and an excellent reputation; however, I did notice that, compared to my own high school experience (one I fondly remembered as being filled with student-led activities and events), there did not seem to be much of a focus on student leadership or student voice.

In 2012 I took on a position as a Year Level Coordinator. In such a large school and, I guess, like many graduate teachers, up until that point I had had a very inward focused view of what was going on at the College. I was concentrating on my students and my content and what was happening in my classroom. When I began coordinating middle school students, I loved working with them and their families, and with staff across the College, in a capacity other than Maths teacher. Unfortunately, I found that the vast majority of my work as a coordinator was punitive and reactive. It was during these two years as a Year Level Coordinator that I began to believe that the lack of student leadership opportunities, and lack of student voice, was contributing to a lack of connectedness to school and low morale among the students (this was also evident in the Student Attitudes to School data).

Change at Year 10
This brings us to mid-2014. Enter Chester Ngan and Liz Chiem (now our 2016 College Captains, and who have played a significant role in the huge changes that have occurred) and around 300 other students in their cohort. There were no leadership positions other than at Year 12; teachers ran the assemblies; decisions were made without consultation with the student body.

In June of that year, after some begging and pleading with my then Assistant Principal, I was given the green light to develop the Year 10 Student Leadership Team, or Year 10 SLT. Yes – this was in June, mid-way through the year and with a number of people telling us we were mad. But we did it, and what unfolded over the next few months was simply incredible.

The SLT was made up of students who were interested in getting involved. Selection was not a popularity contest; instead students were asked to complete a written application and explain how they thought the school could be improved and how they would work with other students to achieve this. This resulted in a team of 19 students who began to meet weekly to discuss how they could work together to improve the school. It was important to me that the students had a great deal of creative freedom. I was at their meetings in a supervisory capacity, and my goal was to say ‘yes’ or ‘why not?’ to as many of their ideas as I could. I wanted to ensure that they felt listened to; I was there to point them in the right direction if they needed it. Within weeks we had started to see a shift. It started with small changes, like the students organising bubbles and chalk in the yard, and then larger events like the students organising fundraisers and attending leadership conferences.

As momentum increased, so too did their impact. Student leaders were learning to run formal meetings with a chairperson, agendas and minutes and,
as these skills developed, so did their confidence and teamwork skills.

We ensured that the work the students were doing was very visible to the rest of the student body and to the staff. Student leaders ran assemblies where they celebrated student achievement and played motivational videos. They organised and promoted events, regularly visited homegroups and surveyed students, and all of a sudden, the rest of the cohort could see that there was a group of students whose voices were being heard, and a forum in which students could express their concerns.

**Head of Student Leadership**

The change in the last half of 2014 was so significant that, in 2015, a new Leading Teacher position of Head of Student Leadership was created. I was appointed to this position, and this also coincided with the arrival of a new Assistant Principal of our Senior Campus, Julie Cain, and Karen Wade becoming the new Principal of our College. Just as I had been determined to support the students’ passion and enthusiasm to create positive change, Julie and Karen, my wonderful leaders and mentors, did the same for me. With their support I rolled out a new student leadership structure across Years 9 to 11.

We got involved in anything and everything: **UNICEF** student forums, **Rotary** programs, the **Salvation Army Red Shield Appeal**, the **Red Cross Door Knock**, **World Vision**, visits to Parliament House, National Constitutional Conventions, **UN Youth Victoria** programs, the **Cystic Fibrosis** leadership camp and various conferences. Basically anything that came past my desk or inbox was seen as an opportunity and offered to students. The students got out of their comfort zones and into the community, where they could mix with students from other schools and share their experiences with students back at our College. At our school, **Student Leadership Teams (SLTs)** were introduced at Years 9 and 11, and the teams worked together to foster a sense of pride in our college.

Students became involved in decision-making. They presented at staff meetings, they participated in focus groups and took a leading role in school tours, information nights and open nights.
The VicSRC and Teach the Teacher

Enter the Victorian Student Representative Council, or VicSRC, the peak body representing school aged students in Victoria. We first got involved with the VicSRC when our students attended its 2014 annual Congress. This was another opportunity that came across my desk and to which we said yes. At the camp, students from throughout Victoria come together and run a student-led decision-making state Congress. The wonderful people who run VicSRC are just amazing, and the students who attended the camp returned full of energy and enthusiasm.

At the camp they had heard about a program run by the VicSRC called Teach the Teacher. We all loved the sound of it: a program where students lead professional learning sessions for staff; however at the time I don’t think any of us knew how significant this venture was going to be.

Our Teach the Teacher team started as a group of student leaders from various year levels who wanted to work together to improve student-teacher relationships. They began by surveying hundreds of students from Years 9 to 12, and over 100 teachers.

The results from their surveys showed that both teachers and students felt that strong positive student-teacher relationship were crucial to learning. The students could articulate what they thought made a good teacher: someone passionate about teaching, caring, enthusiastic and knowledgeable. The survey also highlighted that many students felt there should be an avenue through which they could give their teachers feedback. At the time, last year, I was completing the Bastow Institute’s Impact course and had been looking closely at John Hattie’s research on Effect Size. It seemed to link in with the students’ project and so I shared a summary of Hattie’s research with them.

Madu, a Year 11 member of the team, was particularly interested in this research and asked where she could find out more about it. I lent her a copy of John Hattie’s Visible Learning book, and the next week she returned it. “I read it,” she said. She had read the entire book over the weekend.

The students then ran professional learning sessions for staff. The students asked teachers to think about their own experiences as students and what they remember about their favourite teachers. Madu and the team presented a summary of Hattie’s research on effect size and encouraged the teachers to
think about how they give feedback, and then, how they receive it. The atmosphere in the room was remarkable. The students’ aim was to work with teachers to develop a teacher-feedback proforma that could be used across all subjects and year levels. They asked: “What would you want to ask your students about your teaching?”

At the ACEL conference in Sydney last year I was talking to a colleague about Teach the Teacher when they suggested that I contact John Hattie and tell him about these students using his research to run teacher Professional Learning sessions. Instead, I asked Year 11 student Madu if she would like to contact him.

When Professor John Hattie replied to Madu’s email you would have thought she had just been contacted by Justin Bieber. It meant so much to them that he acknowledged their work, encouraged them to write about their findings, and treated their research seriously. The encouragement they received from Hattie motivated them to write a report on their project, which they shared with Hattie and is now available as a resource on the Visible Learning Website.

Another avenue for sharing their success has been through having articles published in Connect. Our students have become regular contributors to the magazine, which has allowed them to share their experiences with students, researchers, parents, administrators, and teachers throughout Australia.

Challenges
Of course this entire journey has not been all rainbows and lollipops; there were a few challenges along the way. Time is always a huge challenge, and a considerable amount of time, effort and energy was required to organise the events and programs that we initiated. It was important, from my perspective, to find the time to run training days, and last year we ran full-day leadership reflection days with our leadership teams mid-year, which allowed the students to reflect on their progress halfway through the year and plan for the semester ahead.

Our school is considered an ‘academic’ school, where there is a great deal of emphasis on academic achievement (which, as a senior Mathematics teacher, I appreciate). However this led to some reluctance from staff to allow students to miss classes, which of course happens when students are off attending leadership conferences and events.

There were some challenges with Teach the Teacher. The name “Teach the Teacher” put some staff off, before the team had done anything at all. There was some resistance from staff to the mere notion of student voice, let alone the idea that students would be running a Professional Learning session. This was probably one of the greatest hurdles that we had to overcome. Thankfully I was surrounded by many enthusiastic and encouraging colleagues, with some very supportive mentors in my Principal and Assistant Principal, who wholeheartedly supported the program and saw its value. With some amazingly motivated and driven students, together we ensured that we stayed true to our vision. Our focus was on how we could create positive change, and take action to ensure the best possible education experience for students at the college.

Recognition and Further Change
In addition to the success of Teach the Teacher, we have had students receive VCAA Leadership Awards in 2014 and 2015, and in 2015 we received two VicSRC Recognition Awards. More recently, one of our Year 11 student leaders was awarded a Sir John Monash Leadership Award, in recognition of her contributions in the Monash Community.
It was very important that we ensured that this change was sustainable. There were some people who thought that it was just one amazing cohort of students and that the change wouldn’t last. So this became a mission of mine: to prove that the change in student leadership structure was sustainable and that it had the potential to create lasting change at the College.

I started a working party with students in Years 10 and 11 to look at restructuring student leadership from Years 9 to 12. The students had complete freedom with this too, and the working party decided to introduce Music, Arts, Sustainability and Sports Captains as well as introducing portfolios for our Year 12 Prefects. Prefect portfolios included Wellbeing Prefect, Community Prefects, Environment and Communication Prefects, among others. They also wanted to continue to have teams at Years 8 through to 12, as well as Library Leaders and Teach the Teacher leaders. We now have over 100 students actively involved in student leadership at the College.

Students will review this structure again towards the end of this year. Not only do they have ownership of the structure, but they also decide when and how their meetings run, and how the various teams communicate. They have created social media platforms on which they can collaborate and share information with students across the College.

Key to this journey is the idea that we continue to grow and improve our leadership program - that we are flexible and adaptive. This year our College Captains have collaborated with Amaroo Neighbourhood Centre who have been granted some government funding as part of the Engage program and they have established a Leadership Network, the Amaroo Leadership Network or ALN, with school captains from eight local high schools. The group plans to hold community events that are accessible to all, later this year.

After attending the Cystic Fibrosis Victoria leadership camp last year, our Year 10s set out to raise almost $3000 for the Foundation, and we sent students to the camp again this year. Our year 9s, who had raised money for the Cathy Freeman Foundation last year, were invited to speak at the inaugural Cathy Freeman Foundation Leadership Summit earlier this year, and are now working towards fundraising for the Foundation by encouraging students to join Team Freeman at the Melbourne Marathon.

Another community partnership we have established is a relationship with the Pinewood Community Bank, who now sponsor Pinewood Community Leadership Awards each term, and present these at year level assemblies. We have also established a partnership with Mount Waverley North Primary School, and recently our leaders have been invited to run training sessions with their Grade 6 student leaders. We also have ten students attending the School for Student Leadership Snowy River Campus for all of term 2.

Teach the Teacher Impact
After the success of our Teach the Teacher team last year, the teacher feedback proforma that was created in collaboration between students and staff has now been made into an electronic survey and is currently being rolled out across both campuses. All teaching staff are required to survey at least one class using the proforma, as part of their Performance and Development Review process.

Executive Student Leadership Team
We have a bigger Teach the Teacher team this year, who have already surveyed students in Years 9 to 11 and have begun to look at the results. At this stage it looks like they might focus on pastoral care, positive education or mindfulness for their project this year.

John Hattie has included our report on the Teach the Teacher program at the College on his website: http://ow.ly/5o1P300RT2E

How have we measured our success? Well, there has been just one round of official Attitudes to School surveys since the implementation of the program - that was the survey conducted early in 2015. We did see some improvements in connectedness to school and morale, but we are eagerly awaiting the results from this year’s surveys. We have collected data from student and teacher surveys, which have shown improved connectedness to school, improved student morale and improved relationships between students within year levels and between year levels. In addition to this we have seen improved relationships between students across our two campuses. Anecdotally we have evidence of a significant improvement in morale and belonging.

What the new leadership program did was give students a stepping stone to have their voices heard - it established that channel of communication between students and staff that had been missing. Ms Dureau really provided the connection between the staff and the student leadership team that was needed by listening to their ideas and helping to offer practical methods of achieving their goals. Once we knew someone was actually willing to help, we were inspired to work towards our goals, and when the wider student body saw that we could make positive changes, they were in turn inspired to speak openly about their own concerns and suggestions. (Student, 2014 Captain)

By letting students have their voices heard through student leadership, students like myself really do notice the difference, not in ourselves and our year level, but across the school as a whole. I feel more connected to my peers in my year level since I am actively working with them and for them to improve our school environment. If we feel like we are wanted and that we belong, we are significantly more likely to enjoy coming to school and actively trying to help improve the school. I feel more connected to other year levels because it allows for teams to learn and teach each other about teamwork, understanding and co-operation. This means that students are being taught from experience but not just their experience but by the experiences of others too. All of this collectively enriches the lives of all involved. (Student, Year 12)

Student leadership and student engagement have developed tremendously since mid-2014. Students have been given more opportunities to participate in the leadership programs. With this responsibility given to the students, they have shown their capabilities and developed their organisational, collaborative, public speaking and presentation skills. These co-curricular activities in conjunction with fundamental core curriculum (Maths, English, Science; etc.) are essential to students of today who will be leaders of tomorrow. (Parent, 2016)

The student leadership program at Mount Waverley SC has undergone some significant change in recent times. This has included an increase in the number of leadership roles available to our students as well as the introduction of new leadership focus areas. Taking the views of our young people seriously leads to greater engagement with students and an increase in the connection they have with their school. This, in turn, supports better learning outcomes for students, a stronger connection with their school community and improved student wellbeing. (School Council President, 2016)

We are very fortunate that the direction of the student leadership program is in line with the school’s Strategic Plan and Annual Implementation Plan, and subsequently the Victorian State Education Framework. Our structure has the full support of our College leadership team, and our students are determined to initiate and drive change.

We continue to work together towards common goals: we want to use student voice to improve student outcomes for all students; we want our College to be distinguished by its positive school culture, and its dedication to student wellbeing and morale; and we want students to know that they can make a difference.

Hayley Dureau
Head of Student Leadership
dur@mwsc.vic.edu.au

Prior to the leadership program, I do not remember student voice being a thing at MWSC. Student voice was only a vague idea and it was only after the introduction of the leadership program that student voice became existent, and more than just existing, very active at our school. I think the biggest thing for me is that I feel I matter and what I have to say is heard by my peers and teachers.

Having groups of students meeting weekly with the sole purpose of ‘for students’ - our peers and friends - is really encouraging and heart warming. The number of opportunities that we are offered at this school is incredible and anyone who grasps those opportunities is inspired and their creativity is initiated. Student voice gave us the opportunity to speak up, to express ourselves and also to explore who we are and who we can become. (Current student, Year 12)
Teachers are learners too
... and their students can be their teachers

The Teach the Teacher program has recognised that there is some resistance from a few teachers to the idea that students can (and should) run a Professional Learning session for them. “After all,” they say, “we have many years of training and experience; how can students teach us anything?” Their objection seems to be, in part, to the program’s name, before any experience of the process or event. In response, and in order to avoid potential conflict, some schools have re-named the event: ‘Creating Conversations’ etc.

Yet at the same time it is widely recognised that teachers are – and must be – learners too. We continue learning right throughout our careers, both about what we teach and, more importantly, about how we teach. As the social situation of education, and the position and roles of young people in society change, it is vital that our teaching and learning is matched and updated. We welcome opportunities for our own Professional Learning.

I suspect that there is little argument with that.

Recently, I was involved with an initiative to improve teacher practice, in which many schools chose to look at classroom observation. Here, teachers welcomed and encouraged their peers to come into their classrooms, to observe what they were doing, and how students were learning. Such observation was specific and targeted, with agreed areas of interest and focus. There seemed to be little argument about the value of such observation. A few schools even suggested that students might be part of the observation team, sitting in on other classes to see how lessons were presented, and how learning progressed.

This possible participation of students acknowledged that they can be particularly aware of the conditions of learning: they spend hours within classes; they know from their own and their peers’ experiences what aids their learning – and what diminishes it. They have important knowledge and perspectives often not available to teachers.

Perhaps it is this further step of recognising that students can provide us with learning about our teaching and our classrooms that deters some teachers?

However, in every lesson we rely upon students for information about the effectiveness of our approaches. Are they understanding this? Are they able to do that?

In these cases, as Michael Fielding’s Patterns of Partnership framework shows (see, for example, Connect 197: October 2012), students are at least passive ‘data sources’.

On a school-wide basis, we look at national test scores and examine Student Attitude Survey data to try to get a sense of what is happening. In a more active sense, we also take initiatives to collect further data from ‘students as active respondents,’ where we invite responses from and discussions with students about learning and teaching. We do this individually (eg surveying students, or chatting with them) and also collectively (eg formal reflective class discussions). We recognise ourselves as continually learning, and seek ways to do this.

We recognise (and research endorses this) that regular and constructive feedback to students is an important component of their learning. We also acknowledge that we too benefit from constructive feedback about our teaching. (The research indicates that we need to be aware that there’s a distinction to be drawn – for both students and teachers – between the giving of feedback, and the ways in which that feedback is received.)

A Further Step

The Teach the Teacher (and other) approaches take a further step, and this might be what discomforts some teachers. Here, students themselves design and lead the discussions, defining the topics of interest or concern, and collecting their own data on practices. This leads to the larger and deeper conversations that seek understanding and practical changes.

There is a subtle but important shift in initiative and power here. As teachers, we may be very happy to hear from students – but on our own terms: about issues we define as important; in ways that we choose. To relinquish that power and to accept that the topics, issues and approaches are defined by others – by students – is uncomfortable. We might actually hear things that surprise and
challenge us! It is then that the response: “But what would they know?” emerges most strongly.

But we also know that effective Professional Learning should shake us up. It should allow for the unexpected; it should take us beyond our comfort zones. It also should be based in a mutual willingness to be constructive and to seek shared positive outcomes.

Is what we really fear that students will attack us? Some traditional examples of student feedback have focused around private or public criticism. There’s the infamous youtube clip of a student denouncing his teacher’s approaches as he leaves the classroom; there are the ‘rank your teacher’ websites that encourage anonymous criticism of and by individuals. Each of these maintains existing power relationships, in which the only role for students is to complain or attack – because no constructive alternative exists.

We may have a stark choice here: between approaches that encourage negative and unproductive criticism, and student-led approaches that foster joint enquiry and dialogue and possibly lead to improved learning for all. I know what I’d choose … as a teacher, or as a student.

The Teach the Teacher approach (along with similar initiatives eg in Vermont, USA) seeks outcomes that are student-led, practical, improvement-oriented and collaborative.

Within these, students have also had to learn to deal at times with anger and frustration in forming approaches that aren’t confrontational. For example, I remember a student wanting to ask teachers: “Why don’t you respect us?” and other students then discussing why that was not a good way to enter into the discussion – and how it could be framed better. (And later, when the teachers wanted to ask students: “Is it really necessary for you to have your phone on in class?” … students [and teachers] came to realise that this language was an equally unproductive input to collaborative discussions.)

Student-led Professional Learning opportunities have moved the discussion from the traditional: “Can I …?” “Why can’t I …?” or “You must …” – to the shared language of “How can we …?” This has been an enormous, deep and lasting learning for all. It has also led to changed practices: students and teachers working together to take and evaluate initiatives that improve the learning of all.

In encouraging and supporting students to be teachers … of teachers as well as of their peers … we enable and enrich our own learning.

Roger Holdsworth

Some web-based resources about student feedback to teachers

A quick web search provides some examples of strategies and tools for students providing teachers with feedback about learning and teaching (though most sites that appear still focus on feedback from teachers to students). Some of this work has been done within Higher Education and these strategies may be adaptable within primary and secondary schools. However, many of the strategies are relatively limited, relying on teacher-generated surveys and questionnaires. We would be very interested to hear of (and list) other on-line sites that you find useful:

Teach the Teacher Program | VicSRC
www.teachtheteacher.org.au

Student Feedback Helps Teachers Grow | Edutopia: Ben Johnson
www.edutopia.org/student-feedback-accountability-teachers

3 Ways of Getting Student Feedback to Improve Your Teaching | Edutopia: Vicki Davis
www.edutopia.org/blog/student-feedback-improves-your-teaching-vicki-davis

Students giving feedback about teaching: A mutually beneficial endeavor | Colorado Education Initiative

A Report Card for the Teacher: 5 Tips for Getting Feedback From Students | We Are Teachers: Chase Mielke
www.weareteachers.com/blogs/post/2015/02/12/a-report-card-for-the-teacher-5-tips-for-getting-feedback-from-students

How do you respectfully give a teacher feedback about their teaching? | Academia Stack Exchange
www.academia.stackexchange.com/questions/28955/how-do-you-respectfully-give-a-teacher-feedback-about-their-teaching

Measures of Effective Teaching: Student Feedback | Teaching Channel
www.teachingchannel.org/videos/improve-teaching-with-student-feedback

Gathering and acting on feedback | The University of Sydney
www.sydney.edu.au/education-portfolio/el/feedback/gatheringfeedback.htm

Getting Feedback from Students | Center for Teaching & Learning, Boston University
www.bu.edu/ctl/teaching-resources/start-stop-continue/

Collecting and using student feedback | Higher Education Academy: John Brennan and Ruth Williams
www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/id352_collecting_and_using_student_feedback_a_guide_to_good_practice.pdf

Short feedback questionnaires for evaluating teaching | University of WA
www.planning.uwa.edu.au/research/student-teaching/alternative/questionnaires

Improving Your Teaching: Obtaining Feedback | University of Michigan: Center for Research on Learning and Teaching
www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/p9_1
One of the biggest challenges we face as adolescents in our society today is the issue of Mental Health. At Kincumber High School on the NSW Central Coast, we acknowledge this, and strive to better take care of wellbeing of our student body, through aiming to create and maintain a positive environment in which to learn. Our school believes that every student deserves to receive an education in a positive and nurturing environment. The student leadership team was established as a way to develop a strong sense of student voice, and to nurture positive student teacher relationships.

At Kincumber High School, our leadership team consists of 44 students from Years 8 to 12. This includes our School Captains and members of the Student Support Unit. Every member of the student leadership team plays a vital role in driving our school community in a progressive direction, to ensure we enact our school motto: “To Tomorrow.”

As a student leadership team, we aim to make Kincumber High School a mentally aware environment by providing information and resources focused on student wellbeing, to create a sense of communication and connectedness. We aim to make the school aesthetically pleasing, through fundraising to improve facilities and the overall appearance of our school, and to improve student teacher relations through representing the needs of our student body. We are consistently working towards achieving many of our goals through the implementation of our various initiatives, to improve both our school environment, and our connection to the wider community.

Student Initiatives

One of our initiatives was the Kincumber High School Study Guide. This was developed by our student leadership team after discussions with the wider student body. The guide was developed to reduce obvious stress in students, due to a lack of understanding when it came to effective study techniques and preparation skills. The Study Guide aims to ensure that all students have the appropriate knowledge, skills and support to study effectively.

Another initiative developed by our team was the development of Mental Health Posters. These were developed to ensure students’ safety and wellbeing, and to provide avenues for support. The Mental Health Posters contain vital information regarding resources to enable students to access help for mental health issues, and are located in bathroom stalls. Our student leadership team aims to transform the negative stigma associated with seeking guidance.
from school counsellors, through the strategic placement of posters, giving students a private setting to access crucial information.

In conjunction with our team’s mental health focus a **Wellbeing Corner** was recently established in the school library and can be used as an escape from the stress of school life. The corner features a variety of magazines and pamphlets surrounding the topic of mental health; this safe haven is open to all students and the brochures were funded by the student leadership team.

**Student Forums**
Additionally, our student leadership team has conducted forums within each year group, using an open-ended questionnaire. All students were provided with the opportunity to feel heard by the team, creating a connection between the student leadership team members and the greater student body. The information and feedback was collated and presented to teachers and students who now use this knowledge to address student needs and wellbeing. The response from our student body has been positive so far.

**Community Partnerships**
We are involved in many community partnerships that aim to bring a greater awareness to mental health across the Central Coast. As part of helping our school to become more aware of mental health and capable of helping those overcoming mental health issues, we partnered with **Headspace** and **Lifeline** to raise awareness. Representatives from our team have attended several mental health forums to share ideas and our own thoughts on mental health, and present them to our peers. These forums have helped better equip our team for dealing with the perception of mental health in our school. Additionally, our student leadership team has raised money through cake stalls and our **Express Yourself in Colour Day**, which was supported by **Headspace** and **Lifeline**. The funds were then donated to our local **Headspace** and **Lifeline**, along with sponsoring the information pamphlets available in our wellbeing corner.

In recent months our dedicated student leadership team has been working in conjunction with **Gosford City Council**. Eight of our members attended a forum on improving the Central Coast over a 20 year period. A town planner from the state government, distinguished members of our community and spokespeople from the Council were in attendance as well. It was an excellent opportunity for young people to express their opinions and views concerning the future of our community.

**The Future**
Our Kincumber High School leadership team plans to continue developing our mental health initiatives, to further improve the wellbeing of our peers. Alongside developing a greater relationship between our team and the student body, in order to better represent them through more forums and questionnaires and to ensure we are effectively representing our student body, our next step is to initiate **environmental projects**, continue community involvement through **volunteering** and begin to work in partnership with the local retirement homes to bridge the **generational gap** present in today’s society.

**Ellie Gundry and Isabella Russell**
both Year 11

*Editing support: Mrs Jaclyn Brownhill*  
Jaclyn.Brownhill@det.nsw.edu.au
With the launch of The Education State, the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET) has developed the new Framework for Improving Student Outcomes. This includes six initiatives to help schools lift student achievement, wellbeing and engagement. Whatever area you choose to focus on, the VicSRC’s Student Voice and the Education State resource will help you ensure student voice can be amplified in all initiatives.

VicSRC welcomes the strong commitment to student voice within the Framework for Improving Student Outcomes and particularly in the ‘Empowering Students and Building School Pride’ initiative.

However, practices that encourage student voice and the active participation of students are essential to all six framework areas. Whatever your school’s priority area, we encourage you to develop practices that put students at the front and centre of any school improvement strategy.

Please use the VicSRC Student Voice and the Education State Resource (available at http://ow.ly/igWJ300PJb7) as a guide and consider ways in which student voice can be amplified in all initiatives within the Framework for Improving Student Outcomes.

When used alongside support from the VicSRC, this resource is a powerful tool to strengthen student voice at your school.
Twelve VicSRC Regional Conferences brought together over 800 students and 150 teachers from about 120 schools, in Terms 1 and 2 this year. Students came from all corners of Victoria to drive positive change in our schools, communities and education system. The conference program emphasised real-world examples and ideas for strengthening student voice, action planning and working with students and teachers as partners in decision making.

The purpose of the Regional Conferences in 2016 was specifically to build the capacity of SRCs and student leaders to take action on issues that they identify as important within their schools. This focus was developed in response to feedback from SRC members and supporting school staff that many SRCs struggle to follow through or achieve meaningful outcomes on issues identified earlier in the year. It proved to be highly effective in focusing activities, timelines and participants.

The numbers of students participating in the conferences increased by about 7.5% over 2015. Conference sizes varied from 37 students in Greater Geelong and in the Grampians, to over 140 at the Inner Melbourne conference. These students came from Years 5/6 through to Year 12.

Students identified the main issues facing them and their student organisations. Across the 12 conferences, there was reasonable consistency of issues and the ‘top 10’ are summarised on the opposite page in this issue of Connect. They will be taken to the VicSRC Congress in July to inform and underpin the discussions and debates there.

In evaluating the Regional Conferences, over 95% of students responded that they found them to be ‘useful’ or ‘very useful’. Their comments appreciated aspects such as:

- I enjoyed the conference overall – very uplifting, light-hearted and enjoyable
- The school group planning model for action (and) the way ideas were laid out step by step – it helped us understand the way to go when we have an idea/planning our project to get it off the ground - which is very exciting
- Meeting new people from different cultures (and) meeting like-minded passionate people; getting to know other students from other SRCs
- Got the SRC at school motivated to make changes; it brought our SRC group closer together
- I enjoyed having the teachers listen to our suggestions because it made me feel like our voices were being heard
- Success stories of SRCs making change and gaining recognition
- The empathy activity because it gets us to experience the lives of students with different attributes and characteristics
- The flashcards of potential school issues as it helped to flesh out the scope of SRC influence and how we can help; it got me thinking about problems I learnt to tolerate instead of finding a solution
- I enjoyed the types of action the most because I can apply them to real life
- We were shown we really could make a difference in our school and education system. We were shown we really had a voice
- We were treated like adults, not children

The inclusion of video clips from the 2015 Congress and previous winners of VicSRC Recognition Awards was a great way to engage participants with information; as were presentations from VicSRC Executive members and other students.

The majority of the teachers attending were SRC co-ordinators who had entered into the role recently, with less than two years’ experience. There were also non-SRC teachers, Principals and Assistant Principals, Directors of Teaching and Learning, and support staff in most sessions.

The teachers praised the organisation and communication of the conference. The strongest message that came across was that the teachers recognised how engaged students were and the clarity and vision they got from the event. They liked how the students were making concrete goals with action plans, and were glad that students got time to think about their ideas, independent from teacher involvement. Teachers also appreciated the opportunity for students to learn from other schools and interact with other students. Similarly, they enjoyed their own opportunity to network with fellow teachers, and the shared sense of fellowship in what is often an under-appreciated and challenging role.

Kate Wilde
VicSRC Regional Conferences Facilitator
From March to May this year, the VicSRC consulted with 800+ students from every corner of the state, at 12 Regional Conferences, to determine the issues that matter most to students in 2016.

The hot topics underpin all the action at Congress 2016. Our challenge is to go beyond the issues into real solutions.

What is your vision for education? And what action can you take to make real and lasting change? We have the power to turn ideas into action. Bring on #Congress2016. Tickets for Congress 2016 are now sold out!

Congress 2016 Day 3 - Open Morning

For the first time, we are excited to welcome students, teachers and stakeholders to the first ever Congress Open Morning. Even if you haven’t been able to snap up a delegate ticket in 2016, your voices matter and we want to hear them!

Open Morning ticket-holders will meet the Congress delegates, participate in a Lightning Lobby session, take part in the solutions-focussed Congress debate and presentation, and witness the announcement of the 2016-2017 Executive team.

You can book Open Morning tickets online from Monday 6th June for $30pp; tickets are strictly limited, so be sure to get in early! (www.vicsrc.org.au/congress/congress-2016/open-morning)

The ticket price includes light morning tea and refreshments, participation in the Lightning Lobby, showbag for students, resources and entry to the Congress Session.

Date: Friday 8th July 2016
Time: 9.30am-12.30pm
Venue: Grand Buffet Hall, Union House, The University of Melbourne. (Union House is located within The University of Melbourne Parkville campus on the corner of Tin Alley and Union Road. The Grand Buffet Hall is located straight up the stairs from the ground floor.)

For more information about the Day 3 - Open Morning, contact info@vicsrc.org.au or 03 9267 3744.
Teach the Teacher – welcome to the new Project Officer!

Nina Laitala took over as the new VicSRC Project Officer in May 2016. Nina holds a Bachelor of Music (Jazz Performance), a Master of Education (Music) and has over a decade of teaching and facilitation experience within Australia and overseas.

Using music education as a tool to increase inclusiveness in education, she has developed and implemented programs for pre-school, primary and secondary schools that focus on encouraging self-expression through song-writing.

With a strong belief in arts-based programs as a tool for empowerment and increased community connection, she has worked with a diverse range of people. She is also currently facilitating the creation of a series of children’s picture books with young families from recently arrived migrant communities for the City of Melbourne’s ArtPlay Picture Book Project.

Nina spends her spare time making music and mess with her young family and reading Scandinavian crime novels.

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 VicSRC events, simply select ‘VicSRC Membership (Annual School Membership)’ at the start of your online registration. Or check about membership on-line at: www.vicsrc.org.au/get-involved/school-membership

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 (YACVic). It can be reached there on 03 9267 3744 or, for the cost of a local call from outside Melbourne, on 1300 727 176; or by email: manager@vicsrc.org.au
The second annual Wagga Wagga Operational Directorate SRC Conference was held from May 16th-20th this year. The Directorate covers 83% of the land mass of NSW and 125 students from areas as widely separated as Broken Hill, Cobar and Coomealla in the west to Wollongong in the north east travelled up to 19 hours to attend.

The conference theme for 2016 – *You’re the Voice!* – came as a result of the NSW Department of Education implementing the Wellbeing Framework in 2015, which requires schools to “provide opportunities for meaningful student participation and leadership, including student voice and decision making.” Schools in NSW will “value and engage student voice within teaching and learning, school planning, operations and governance.” The conference brings this to the attention of students, as many don’t know how important their ‘voice’ has become.

Students who attend the conference are exposed to skills and knowledge that will assist them to make changes when they return to their schools. They attend breakout flexi shops on various topics that are researched and designed by the Student Conference Organising Team, as well as invited experts, based on feedback from last year’s conference. In 2016, as it has been for the last few years, the topic of Youth Mental Health has been the go to shop. However the new session on the Effects of Domestic Violence on students attending school and how students can provide support for those affected, proved very popular.

Providing a skill set for SRC members to be able to achieve effective student voice in schools is of paramount importance for the Conference. Students were introduced to two tools, both associated with the Positive Behaviour for Learning process being rolled out to schools in NSW schools at the moment, to help them achieve what has been highlighted in the Wellbeing Framework. The Problem Solving Process (pictured) used Data to determine if problems are either System or Practice based and allows for the appropriate Outcome to be found. Students used the tools to solve an issue at their schools so they would go back to their schools with not only a solution but the skills to solve more problems.

Aside from the more serious aspects of the conference, the students had an evening around the fire pit roasting marshmallows, ran a night orienteering course, took part in an amazing race as well as the staple trivia contests and priest of the parish. Most importantly all students went away with friendships and contacts from across NSW! Feedback from students attending the conference included:

- “I cannot possibly thank (the organisers) enough for all you have done for myself and all the other students at the conference. We all appreciate the chance to learn, grow and better ourselves.”
- “Ever since the first day I have been jotting down ideas to take back to my school and improve the SRC.”
- “I have been inspired to dive head first into commitment to my SRC… to see that changes and improvements that are needed will be carried out.”

Murray Walpole
SRC Conference Coordinator, WWOD
Murray.Walpole@det.nsw.edu.au
Teach the Teacher: MWSC Report

In 2015, Mt Waverley Secondary College ran the VicSRC’s Teach the Teacher program around the topic of ‘feedback to teachers’ (see Hayley Dureau’s article in this issue of Connect).

The students involved have written an extensive report that “details every step of our journey, such as, the formation of our goals, the research behind our focus, the preparation of our Professional Learning sessions” and more.

In summing up about ‘making a lasting impact’, they say: “We hope to build on what we have achieved this year, with a new team of Year 11 and 12 students, continuing every year into the future as an executive team, working together with all the students, not just student leaders, to represent student voice... We envision Teach the Teacher continuing as a forum for engaging the school community and amplifying student voice to improve teaching and learning outcomes.”

This report has been made available through Professor John Hattie’s Visible Learning website:

http://visiblelearningplus.com/resources
or: http://ow.ly/5o1P300RT2E
The Australian Students as Partners Network is based at the University of Queensland and links researchers and practitioners interested in ideas about student voice and students as partners in the higher education sector.

The Network has just published its third update, which is available at http://eepurl.com/b4Lswb

Amongst other items, it features news about:

- 'Australian Stories of Partnership' is the theme for an upcoming special edition of Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education (TLTHE). Essays are invited from Australian staff (professional, academic or hybrid) and students who are engaged in partnership practices. Submissions are due by 1 September 2016; more details in the news update

- Members of this network are facilitating a 'Points for Debate' session titled: Students as Partners: An insurmountable challenge or an opportunity for transformation? at the 2016 Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) Conference on 5 July. It will follow a presentation from Amani Bell and Tia Peseta on: Students as partners - a way to re-shape higher education or neoliberal seduction?

- A 2016 Students as Partners Event will be hosted at The University of Queensland on Wednesday 5 October. Featuring two international luminaries - Mick Healey and Alison Cook-Sather - this day will bring together Australians who are passionate about students as partners.

- The Active Student Participation in Education Network (ASPEN) is a University of Glasgow community led by Catherine Bovill. Created in 2015, ASPEN aims to bring together those who are interested in trying to establish more meaningful interactions between students and staff in learning, teaching and assessment. ASPEN meets every two months to share research and practice, as well as offering space for discussion and collegial support. According to Catherine: "ASPEN meetings are an opportunity for us to identify students and staff in the University of Glasgow who are working in partnership and to bring them together. I have tried to ensure that events offer the opportunity for showcasing excellent partnership work from around the University."

If you are interested in starting a university community, group or network like ASPEN, contact the Network (see contact below).

- The inaugural International Summer Institute on Students as Partners was hosted by McMaster University in Canada in early May. Some Australian network members attended and an Australian team was invited to facilitate workshops. With almost 50-50 ratio of students and staff, the Summer Institute exemplified partnership in practice.

- Mollie Dollinger, a PhD candidate at The University of Melbourne is currently looking for examples of student-institutional co-creation in higher education within Australia. Projects or activities where students are active leaders or exhibit new and creative ways to integrate student voice are of interest. Activities can include a wide range of university activities including curriculum design, teaching, research, university services, university governance or student unions, and university engagement and service.

- Congratulations to Wendy Green and Sally Varnham for recent success with National Fellowships in the area of partnership and student representation.

Sally’s Senior National Teaching Fellowship is titled: Creating a national framework for student partnership in university decision-making and governance. Wendy’s National Teaching Fellowship is about Engaging students as partners in global learning.

For more details about the Network, contact Kelly Matthews on k.matthews1@uq.edu.au

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 on-line 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.
Student Voice Practitioners:  
Blog & Podcast  
A community for young people and adults  
http://studentvoicepractitioners.com/  

The Student Voice Practitioners blog is a Canadian-based community of young people and adults who believe in the power of the student’s voice and who have first-hand experience in initiating and implementing student voice projects or programs or in advising policy makers.  
Launch in September 2015, posts have included:  
- Who represents student voice?  
- Empowering Students to be the Change;  
- Student Voice=Student Choice;  
- Students as Researchers  
as well as a challenge to readers to prioritise the disengaged.  

Student Voice Podcasts are a new option. Episodes will be available bi-weekly. Subscribe to the Student Voice Podcast series and, bi-weekly, young people will talk about their issues, share their advice on policy, programs, curriculum and much more.  

Have a Student Voice Practitioner story to share? Would you like to be interviewed for a podcast? Please join our growing community of contributing authors. Email: FeedbackSVP@gmail.com

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.

‘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

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

www.asprinworld.com/student_action_teams
Children and young people have told us that they are tired of being stereotyped, in particular, through the photos and images used to represent them. ACYP together with children and young people want to shift the way children and young people are portrayed in our newspapers, on our televisions, and on our screens.

If you’re under 25, we invite you to participate in the Real NSW photo competition which gives you the opportunity to show NSW the real you!

Get involved by taking a photo that’s a glimpse into your world, such as your creative hobbies, engaging with your local community, volunteering, playing sports, exploring your favourite places, or hanging with your friends at school.

Enter the competition to win prizes and have your photo publicly displayed.

Learn more or enter the competition here: www.acyp.nsw.gov.au/real-nsw

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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 and we’ll work something out.

Australian:

Engaging student input on student engagement in learning
(Maggie Callingham, Victoria Institute for Education, Diversity and Lifelong Learning, Victoria University, Vic) International Journal on School Disaffection; Vol 12 No 1; 2016

Improving student well-being: having a say at school (Donnah L Anderson & Anne P Graham, Centre for Children and Young People, Southern Cross University, Lismore, NSW) School Effectiveness and School Improvement; October 2015

Learning with and from: positioning school students as advisors in pre-service teacher education (Helen Cahill, Julia Coffey, Larissa McLean Davies, Jeana Kriewaldt; Elizabeth Freeman, Daniela Accquard, Annie Gowing, Shane Duggan & Vivienne Archdall; Melbourne Graduate School of Education, The University of Melbourne; Vic & The University of Newcastle, NSW) Teacher Development; Vol 20 No 3: 296-312; May 2016


Research Developments (ACER, Camberwell, Vic) May, June 2016

Student Voice & the Education State: A resource for Victorian schools (VicSRC, Melbourne, Vic) 2016

Teach the Teacher: Improving student-teacher relationships (Mount Waverley Secondary College, Vic) 2015

TLN Journal - The Sustainability Issue (Teacher Learning Network, Abbotsford, Vic) Vol 23 Issue 1, 2016

Yikes (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic) May, 2016

International:

Humanising research through research: The inclusion of student voice in curriculum renewal (Kathiya Adam, Denise Zinn, Hermione Kemp, Carl Pieterse; Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, South Africa) Education as Change; Vol 18 No 51: 563-586; 2014

Motivation, Engagement, and Student Voice (Eric Toshalis and Michael J Nakkula) Students at the Center Series; Jobs for the Future & Nellie Mae Education Foundation, MA, USA; April 2012

Vt. High School Takes Student Voice to Heart (Catherine Gewertz) Education Week; June 2, 2016

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All back issues of Connect from 1979 to the present (that’s now over 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.

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Most importantly, please USE this resource.

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

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