Diversity: Student Voices and Action

- Diversity strengthens Student Voice
- Students guiding our teachers
- ACT’s ‘Ask Us’ Student Forum
- International Student Voice Seminar
- Reflecting on Ontario’s initiatives
- VicSRC: Congress 2016 Wrap Up - the top issues; Congress and Diversity; Executive 2016-17 elected; Student Voice and the Education State; 2016 Recognition Awards

Resources:
- Mt Waverley Secondary College PD Day
- Junior School Council Congresses
- Just Listen: video
- ACT Student Leadership Coordinators’ Network
- Australian Students as Partners Network
- Doing School Differently Conference
- Breaking Out Journal
- Locked Out: Review
- Connect ... available on-line ... on facebook ... archived ... access to other on-line resources
Diversity: the theme emerged for this issue of Connect, partly because it was highly ranked by secondary student delegates at the VicSRC Congress in July, but also because it continues to be essential to think about who gets to be heard, who gets to participate, whose interests are being served, whose outcomes are enhanced.

Nina Laitala and Tyler Kenopic open up a discussion here about why diversity is important, and later Tyler continues this in his reflection on the Diversity Issues Group at the VicSRC Congress. The theme is also present in the review of a recent book: Locked Out, about processes of exclusion from school through expulsion and suspension – and some responses to this in school programs. Some voices are heard ... because they’ve been physically excluded! Why? What do we do?

It is essential that students and others work together to examine and change the structures that limit voice, participation and outcomes to only some students. It has been heartening to take part in discussions with students about the differences between ‘equity’ and ‘equality’ in educational approaches, and to explore with them ways in which we can approach educational transformation in this area.

But at the same time, those inequities remain embedded. For a long time, Connect has raised concerns about who gets to be chosen for Student Councils and hence who gets to have a voice that is heard. If these issues are not challenged, we know that outcomes remain distributed along lines of gender, class, ability, ethnicity, geography, and so on. (For example, at the VicSRC Congress, even with students’ awareness of these issues, while most delegates and those standing for Executive election were female, a substantial majority of those elected was male! Connect initially raised and discussed gender issues in 1986! - check those early copies.)

So we need to talk about this. We may need structural responses (e.g. positive discrimination and quotas) to ensure that diverse voices are heard and that a diversity of students gets to participate. (For example, it was important that the VicSRC gained sponsorship to subsidise a substantial number of places for delegates to Congress. And it has gender and geographical quotas in place.) But more may need to be done.

This issue may also be difficult for activist students to deal with. If we are looking at different ways of educating to ensure that the needs of a diverse student population are met, students who are privileged by and hence successful in the current system (and who generally are the current representatives), may be threatened by changes that erode their privilege. If these representatives (intentionally or unintentionally) seek to exclude students who disrupt their learning, they deny them a voice. The expressions of rejection and disruption (which Adam Fletcher term inconvenient student voice) threaten to undermine the success and privilege of the current representatives. How do we deal with that?

Next Issue ...

We’ve held over some articles to next issue: one that looks back to the early days of students as partners in school governance – an article from, I think, the first secondary school student to ever write for Connect in 1980 ... and this same person’s reflection 36 years later. And some memories from a teacher at that school at the time, about democracy.

Also hopefully a further primary school reflection on their experience with students as researchers, linked with participation in the Teach the Teacher program. More from you is needed however: share!

Roger Holdsworth

Next Issue: #221: October 2016
Deadline for material: end of September, 2016
Diversity strengthens Student Voice

One of the top issues voiced by secondary students through VicSRC events this year is **diversity in schools** (see page 13).

Diversity in student voice does not simply stop at who is representing the student leadership group – this is merely a necessary component of a bigger picture. Diversity should include hearing the voices of students from different cultures or languages, students with different abilities, LGBTQI+ students, students disengaged from school and students who live in different family situations – in other words, ensuring that effective opportunities are available for the wide variety of perspectives in a school environment.

So, whose responsibility is it to ensure that all students are being represented in decision-making?

The answer? It is a collective responsibility of students, teaching staff and support organisations like the VicSRC.

During VicSRC **Teach the Teacher** workshops, I try to emphasise to the **student leaders** the importance of hearing the voices of the widest cross selection of their student body as possible. This could suggest actively seeking out those students who aren’t engaged already. While not all students choose to be involved in student voice activities, all students should be offered the opportunity in a way that is most accessible for them.

**Teachers** need to ensure they are enabling student voices among all students. In some cases, this may mean differentiating information so that all students understand their right to have a say in their education.

**Principals** are responsible for creating and maintaining a school culture that respects and celebrates difference and diversity beyond tokenistic displays.

For those of us who work alongside schools, we have a responsibility also. At the VicSRC, we consistently consider and develop the accessibility of our programs, events and resources for the growing and changing diversity of student needs. In particular, we are investigating how to make our **Teach the Teacher** program more adaptable to meet the needs of the students we are seeing day to day.

For students and schools who embrace student voice, representation and action, **Teach the Teacher** helps to take student voice to the next step. It provides an organised structure for students and teachers to work collaboratively to solve problems with students leading the process.

While this process of development is ongoing at the VicSRC, a number of strategies we are considering may work in other student voice platforms and programs to ensure diverse representation:

1. **Laying the foundations**
   Clear introduction, objectives and expectations for students, teachers and school in general.

2. **Flexible delivery**
   Resources that are accessible for students with disabilities, EAL students and younger students (Early Years, Primary and Secondary level students)
   Creative workshop delivery that includes active movement, opportunities to collaborate, majority student led, space to allow for reflection and consideration.

3. **Follow up and support**
   Connecting with other schools/students to act as mentors, extra visits to schools to support students, providing ongoing advice to teachers to help them support students in their journey, sharing resources, case studies with students, teachers and principals to keep the momentum going.

Therefore, student voice is about more than students having a say in their education; it’s about adopting a culture of inclusiveness where all members of the community are heard, respected and appreciated for who they are.

Anecdotal evidence from VicSRC case studies demonstrates that schools that are committed to student voice experience less documented incidents of bullying and report improved levels of well being among students.

In this global community, where technology allows us to absorb an enormous amount of information each day, it is crucial that young people can filter important information and make informed decisions. If young people are encouraged and supported to start making decisions from an early age about issues important to them, they will develop skills that will assist them in many areas of their lives.

**Students are not the leaders of tomorrow; they are the leaders of today. What kind of leaders can we help them be?**

Nina Laitala
VicSRC Project Officer: Teach the Teacher
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Tyler Kenopic
SDS Teacher
Warringa Park School, Hoppers Crossing
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Teach the Teacher: Students guiding our teachers

Teach the Teacher is a powerful program facilitated by the VicSRC that allows students and teachers to have positive and honest conversations. Teach the Teacher is a two way conversation between teachers and students, working collaboratively to create positive communities through student-led conversation. Teach the Teacher is great for teaching, learning, communication, trust and respect.

As part of the SRC’s mental health action plan, the SRC chose to plan their Professional Development session in line with authentic student-teacher relationships at Roxburgh College. They believe that these relationships can enhance a student’s day-to-day experience at school, enhancing their overall learning experience and wellbeing. A better authentic relationship with your students tends to make the students strive to do better and excel in their learning.

The 16 SRC students attended a workshop earlier this term where they learnt to communicate and facilitate conversations. The following month they spent hours planning their one-hour Professional Development session for 30 lucky teachers. Every minute was planned to ensure that the conversation would focus on improving these relationships between teachers and students.

The PD session was extremely successful for a pilot program, providing insight from both students and teachers. As the SRC Coordinator I am incredibly proud of the SRC members and their efforts this term with the Teach the Teacher program.

The SRC now look forward to planning the next stage of the program and hopefully a second PD!

Ella Price
SRC Coordinator

I think that Teach the Teacher was a positive, insightful experience. It was exciting to allow the teachers to understand our perspective on what truly makes a comfortable, happy atmosphere within the classroom.

It was a pleasant experience that I believe every teacher involved enjoyed! Many teachers were thankful for the experience, some even talking about what we taught them and how they’re going to try and apply it within their classrooms.

I think it’s worth doing again, with an even bigger group of teachers next time :)
Shanae Hooper, 11E

I found the Teach the Teacher experience extremely rewarding as I had the opportunity to see the teachers in a different light.

For once, we weren’t talking about work or exams but instead discussing issues we are regularly faced with at school; and most importantly, how to change that. To see how passionate the teachers were about our initiative was definitely encouraging also. To have them reassure us that our voices as students are being acknowledged and listened to is very important.

Especially when we are all new to this responsibility. This year we are determined to make a lasting impact on our school, and the development of authentic relationships is helping us get one step closer to that goal.

Shayla Dober 9E

This account of the Teach the Teacher program at Roxburgh College is taken from the College newsletter (see illustration).

A youtube video showcasing and explaining the program at Roxburgh College is available at the link below:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HhstjMx-0a8
ACT schools join together at the ‘Ask us’ Forum to strengthen Student Voice

The ACT Minister for Education, Shane Rattenbury, recently joined ACT students from Public, Catholic and Independent schools to hear their views on student and school matters that are important to them at the Ask Us Student Voice Forum.

“I was really pleased to attend the first ‘Ask Us’ Student Voice Forum today, because we recognise that all students have something to say in regards to their school and education,” Mr Rattenbury said.

The Student Voice Forum was facilitated by the Youth Coalition of the ACT. Fifty-five schools attended across the three sectors and the Youth Coalition trained student facilitators to help run a range of idea-sharing workshops. Students were also surveyed over a four week period to collect their views.

The cross-sectoral forum was in response to a recommendation from the Schools For All Report, which stated that each school develop and promote tools to assist all schools to meaningfully and regularly consult with students about their experiences at school, decisions that affect them at school, and the operation of their school.

“Research shows that whenever any change is made in a school, the outcome will be mostly positive when all members of the school community have been consulted and can have their say. Students are our most important stakeholders because they are the group most affected by how schools operate, so it is vital we hear from them about their own education and learning environment.”

The purpose of the ‘Ask Us’ Student Voice Forum was for students from different education sectors to come together and promote ‘student voice’. Students had the opportunity to raise matters they were passionate about, including what schools do well and what they could do to improve.

“The ideas and thoughts that come out of this forum will be combined with national and international research on student voice to produce a resource booklet for Canberra school staff and students to develop more embedded and long lasting support for students to be heard.

“I want students to know that what they have to say is important and valued by their teachers, schools and the ACT Government, and forums such as this are a great avenue for hearing that voice,” Mr Rattenbury said.
... from a Primary School

This week we had student and teacher representatives attend the Student Voice Forum, ‘Ask Us’, with approximately 300 ACT students from primary and secondary schools in Canberra. The Forum aims to find out more about what schools in the ACT are doing with regard to Student Voice. It asked questions such as:

- What do students want to have input into within their school community?
- What do student value the most about their school?
- What ideas do students have to improve their educational experiences?
- How can we support all students to have a voice in decision making about their education?

In the future they will work with the other student leaders at NAPS, teachers and myself to see how we can work with our students to find out more about the things that are important to them at school. We look forward to reporting back to you throughout the rest of the year.

Tania Collis
Principal
from: North Ainslie PS newsletter, ACT

... from a Secondary School facilitator

On the 28th of July, the ACT Youth Coalition ran a conference on Student Voice in the ACT education system, inviting students from primary, secondary and senior secondary schools to participate. I was selected as a facilitator on the day and was lucky enough to hear a range of fantastic ideas and input from students from predominantly a primary age group.

The activities on the day revolved around students and teachers identifying barriers to student voice and participation, looking for strategies to overcome these barriers, and ways that student voice and participation in their school community can be increased.

My group responded really well to the questions I posed and brainstormed fantastic ways to improve student voice in their school communities.

They identified confidence issues as major barrier to students expressing their opinions around how their schools are run, and brainstormed initiatives to overcome the issue. They devised plans to build confidence amongst their peers. An idea they had was to start a program where all students attempted to implement an idea that would improve their school environment.

All who participated valued the opportunity and I believe the conference will have a positive impact on student voice in the ACT.

Jonah Lafferty
Year 12, Canberra College
Congress 2016: The Wrap

Three days, 180 delegates, 15 Executive members, 33 volunteers and staff, 10 RAPs, 300 people at the Open Morning: the VicSRC Congress 2016 was an powerful explosion of student voice.

For three days at Ormond College in Melbourne, Congress 2016 was a mid-winter melting pot of ideas, experiences, creativity and student-led solutions to the educational issues we all share.

No matter where you went at Congress 2016, the energy was literally bouncing off the walls. From unpicking the issues within Issues Groups, to exploring their skills with creative and challenging workshops, the delegates pushed themselves and each other across three incredible and action-packed days.

It was our second year at Ormond College, but there were a number of firsts at the 11th annual VicSRC Congress!

It was the first time we’ve had 180 students in the one room at Congress working together on the issues that matter most to our education. It was the first time we’ve had over 60 schools represented from all corners of the state. The first time to welcome Education Changemakers for an on-fire opening session; the first time we’d seen incredibly talented acrobats from Westside Circus and Anndala the Hooper grace the halls of Ormond College with their serious skills for the Masquerade-themed Gala Dinner. It was the first time we have received a personal message of support from the Premier of Victoria, Daniel Andrews MP, and the first time we’ve streamed Congress on Facebook live.

...And it was the very first time we have opened up Congress, with the inaugural Open Morning! It was the culmination of all their work at Congress 2016 and our chance to share it with the world.

This epic morning at the Grand Buffet Hall at the University of Melbourne saw over 300 students, teachers and education sector stakeholders participate in the Lightning Lobby, where delegates lobbied guests on their issues and why they matter, and share in the official Congress Session, where delegates presented student-devised Resolution Action Pitch proposals (or RAPs) – our big solutions for the very real issues facing our education system.

The passion, the experiences, the drive, the determination and the dignity of each delegate was profound and powerful. Our voices rang out loud and clear. All delegates and visiting students voted on the proposals using a new electronic voting system, and the top five proposals will form the VicSRC advocacy agenda for 2016-2017. The full ten proposals will be distributed to all secondary schools in Victoria as a student-led resource - so watch this space, because there are very exciting things to come.

Congress is about students transforming education. This is our time to ask big questions: to change the way we think about, and do, education. We don’t just deserve a say in the way our schools are governed and run; we need a say. Delegates took up the challenge to work together; create compelling solutions to the issues we share; and go beyond talk, into real action.

When student voices are listened to and encouraged, the change is remarkable. We are so thrilled to have shared Congress 2016 with you, and cannot wait for all the action to come.

Thanks
We would like to extend an enormous and heartfelt thank you to all the people and organisations that made Congress 2016 possible:

VicSRC 2015-2016 Executive team
Liz Chiem, Marine Chu, Spencer Davis, Shania Halliburton, Danai Harawa, William Hornsta, Sam Illlobuchi, Demi Irwin, Kristen Sellings, Dave Serpell, Matty Sievers, Margaret Tran, Victoria Vassallo, Thomas Velican, and Simana Watson-Latu.

VicSRC staff
Pinchy Breheny, Fiona Campbell, Nadia Jude, Nina Laitala, Sophie Moore, and Krista Seddon.

Congress Crew and supporters
Danielle Clarke, Jenesse Cruz, Jessica Cruz, Scott Duncan, Mandy Duong, Tim Eric, Doug Flakemore, Freya Fogliani, Ron Garcia, Roger Holdsworth, Piper Huynh, Justine Jaramillo, Tyler Kenopic, Craig Martin, Desney Millen, Claire Moore, Dave Mould, Dave Chester Ngan, Rose, Owen Smith, Peggy Soo, Michelle Tan, Shivani Thyagarajah, Bridin Walker, and Sophie Williams.

Facilitators and Performers
Anndala the Hooper, Summer Howarth, Mel Jeffrey, Eve Mayes, Westside Circus

Department of Premier and Cabinet
The Hon. Daniel Andrews MP, Premier of Victoria

Department of Education and Training
The Hon. James Merlino MP, Minister for Education
The Resolution Action Pitch presentations (or RAPs) were the drumbeat of Congress 2016: our chance to share student-led solutions that go beyond talk into real action.

Each Issues Group brought their Resolution Action Pitch to the solutions-focused Day 3 Open Morning, which comprised the Lightning Lobby and the Congress session. Issues Groups worked together on creative solutions to their issue that were uniquely student-led and student-driven.

During the Congress session, all students voted on each RAP, with the top five forming the VicSRC advocacy platform for 2016-2017. The full ten proposals will be distributed to all secondary schools in Victoria as a student-led resource.

The voting was so close that there was a three-way tie for 3rd priority! Meaning that VicSRC now has six priority areas.

Here are the top six VicSRC RAP priority areas for 2016. Stay tuned for the Congress Report and the RAP Resource for ideas and solutions in full:

1. **Learning and Assessment**
   - We believe in a future where students are taught to think smart and are prepared for real life.

2. **Diversity**
   - We believe in a community where everyone understands the terms relating to race, disability, or the LGBTQ+ community and consciously choose appropriate language to create a culture of respect and equality.

3. **Peer-Peer Relationships**
   - We believe in a perfect school where everyone would feel like they belong, where grades wouldn’t define intelligence, where social status doesn’t decline your worth and your hobbies don’t define your gender. A child isn’t to be held down by the war in their heads.

4. **Student Wellbeing**
   - We believe in a learning environment where students feel comfortable to seek help.

5. **Student Voice in Decision Making**
   - We believe in a state where schools have the resources and guidelines to promote students having a say in core decisions that affect them, and so that teachers and students may understand the steps toward being heard.

6. **Student-Teacher Relationships**
   - We believe in a school where students and teachers unite to better support and understand each other.

The ideas and solutions coming out of the Open Morning were incredible. The full ten proposals are to be distributed to all secondary schools in Victoria as a student-led resource.

**RAP Resource**

Stay tuned for the RAP Resource in full ... jam packed with all 10 real ideas and student-led solutions, coming soon!

We can’t wait to share all these solutions and plans for action with every school in Victoria.
Congress 2016 proudly sponsored and supported by:

Young Affairs Council Victoria

Victoria State Government | Education and Training

Ormond College, The University of Melbourne

Newsboys Foundation

Catholic Education Melbourne

On the 5th of July, Jess and I travelled down to Melbourne to go to the 2016 VicSRC ( Victorian Student Representative Council) Congress, which started on the 6th.

For three days at Ormond College in Melbourne, we met over a hundred and fifty other students who were eager to share their voice and promote their ideas and experiences with the rest of the Victorian SRCs. Together we formed issues groups where we all looked at the problems in our schools right down to the very last detail, and where we then worked together to create solutions. Working as a team, the delegates pushed themselves beyond their limits to try and make our schools better places for everyone and to try and make our high school education worthwhile.

There were around 180 students in total, from over 60 schools, from every corner of the state, sitting in one room at the start of Congress, and we all worked together to solve the issues that damage our education the most.

Each delegate had their own stories from their schools and their own issues and ideas on how we make our schools a happier place for everyone.

On the first day we all split up into our issues groups – Jess and I both landed in the Classroom Management group! We made friends with everyone in our group, and we hope to stay in touch with them for many years to come, and together we formed a little family working together to solve the issues surrounding how our classrooms are managed. We identified that the main issues are that the negative atmospheres of classrooms led to students and teachers alike not being treated as equals or with respect, and the individual learning styles of the students not being well catered to. So we banded together to create solutions that we hoped would extend to a state level when brought in front of everyone.

The first night we had the annual Gala Dinner; this year the theme was a Masquerade Ball, and everyone took up the challenge to dress to the nines and create the best masks they could. I even won best dressed on the night, and everyone was so wonderful when they voted for me!

Over the three days we all participated in workshops such as Boot Camp where Jess and a lot of other people had lots of fun every morning, Craftism workshops where we all made posters and things that would promote our Issues Groups, and even a Songwriting workshop where I joined a group of talented young musicians who wrote a song that expressed our voices at Congress.

We also worked hard for hours on end working on our Resolution Action Pitch proposals (or RAPs) for the first ever Congress Open Morning! On the third and final day of Congress we all gathered together at the Grand Buffet Hall at the University of Melbourne to share our RAPs at the official Congress Session, which was streamed live on facebook!

For the first time, our voices were heard by over 300 students, teachers and education stakeholders who came to participate in the Lightning Lobby, where every delegate gave presentations on their issues and why they matter, through posters and a brightly-decorated desks that showcased our issues and solutions.

All students who came to the 2016 VicSRC Congress were dedicated individuals fighting for one purpose: to get each and every student voice heard in schools, and for those in higher positions to listen to our voices.

Congress was and is about students transforming education. Not only do we students deserve a say in what happens to our education, we need a say. All the delegates who attended Congress, including Jess and myself, took up the challenge to work together to help change the way our education is governed and run. We went beyond just talk and fantasy; we went into action. And we are so grateful that our voices were listened to this year, and we aim to keep being heard in many years to come.

Going to Congress was the best time of my life and I met so many awesome people; there’s no way I’m not going back next year. I hope to see more students from Casterton Secondary and surrounding high schools attending next year!

Here’s to student voices in many years to come!

Morgaine Delahoy
Casterton Secondary College
Supporting positive diversity

Every year something wonderfully profound happens in Victoria. Young people representing their regions and schools across the state meet together in an effort to share their voice. They call this the annual VicSRC Congress.

But what does this look like?

It looks like a large diverse group of students defining, debating and discussing their unique perspectives over a three-day annual event. It looks like inspired teamwork, self-reflecting and creating presentations during an impressive assortment of workshops, activities and formal elections with state of the art voting. It looks like engaged, imaginative young people who are eager to extend upon their leadership skills and put themselves in positions to encourage meaningful change. And to this practising teacher – it’s a refreshingly teachable experience.

At this point, I’ve been fortunate to not only voluntarily participate in the last three VicSRC Congress events but also to have directly witnessed the beauty of youth voice in action. Last month, at the 11th Annual VicSRC Congress, I observed a small student issues group as they collaborated to construct a platform supporting positive diversity in schools across Victoria. This creative, coordinated and free-thinking group of students performed with a degree of civility that would provide enough material to write an instructional manual for how a professional team would operate.

So do today’s students believe that diversity has a significant place in Victorian schools?

You bet! Diversity is as relevant as ever in this Australian state, home to Melbourne, the current four-straight annual recipient of the ‘World’s Most Liveable City’. The students sure meant business and were receptive to the various ways that a diverse, inclusive education system could look. The team independently tackled this complex topic in detail, outlining the many ways that the school community can be diverse: identifying race, sexual orientation and special needs (among other groups) as areas that should be addressed.

Landing on the use of language that intentionally or unintentionally affects others, the team looked to make a more significant and clear action plan to help promote a positive setting for young people to get through school. Without much effort, a slew of slang and hurtful terms were put forward as the main culprits of misguided use in social settings. How interesting it was to realise that these terms continue to be used beyond school grounds, as it’s not all that uncommon to hear the unnecessary use of ‘retarded’, ‘gay’ and ‘nigga’ used among adults on a regular basis.

The team developed a realistic and specific resolution action pitch that included creating a ‘PC’ urban dictionary, which outlined the way words are being improperly used, how those words developed and provided alternates that deliver a less hurtful (and more accurate) use. Other ideas included explicit Stand Out Groups to help give a voice to those being affected by such speech. Their message was quite clear, concise and ever relevant: shame on us for allowing these terms to stay in fashion as long as they have.

As an educator, it’s consistently inspiring to both see and hear how progressive this millennial generation can be. Even as I write this piece – it’s hard to ignore the nearby squad (the current name for a group of young people) reflecting on their learning with such conviction, while enjoying their coffees. Not only is there so much to applaud, but there’s an equal amount to take away from young people who are often unfairly criticised for being more concerned with social media, themselves or popular Pokémon apps.

I wish to applaud the VicSRC for their dedication and foresight to not only develop but also maintain this inspiring annual experience. Let’s hope more areas rise to the occasion. The VicSRC have certainly paved the way and consistently facilitated an inspiring experience that others could certainly benefit from.

Keep up the great work and I’ll be looking forward to next year!

Tyler Kenopic
SDS Teacher
Warringa Park School, Hoppers Crossing
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Executive 2016-17

A new Student Executive of the VicSRC was elected at the 2016 VicSRC Congress. The following students are charged with managing the organisation, and implementing Congress decisions for the next 12 months:

Feyla Anja (Year 11, Mt Waverley Secondary College)
Jacob Baker (Year 11, Rochester Secondary College)
Phoebe Cody (Year 11, Brauer College, Warrnambool)
Spencer Davis (Year 10, Footscray City Secondary College)
Gerard Felipe (Year 11, Frankston High School)
Chelsea Hard (Year 11, St Joseph’s College, Echuca)
Sam Ilobuchi (Year 10, Frankston High School)
Chloe Laurel (Year 10, Catholic Regional College, Melton)
Campbell McGown (Year 11, Mt Waverley Secondary College)
Toby Naylor (Year 7, Auburn College, Hawthorn)
Bryce Pace (Year 11, Brauer College, Warrnambool)
Roghayeh Sadeghi (Year 9, Northern Bay P-12 College - Goldsworthy 9-12 Campus, Corio)
David Treverrow (Year 11, Braybrook College)
Ryan Wijaya (Year 10, Nossal High School, Berwick)
William Wilson (Year 10, Yarram Secondary College)

Meet Some VicSRC Executive 2016-17 Members

Phoebe Cody

Hey there! I’m Phoebe and am currently a Year 11 Student at Brauer College. I live in a little coastal town called Warrnambool. Despite being from the coast I’m a) a terrible surfer and b) terrified of seaweed. I also love to read and have a major obsession with ladybugs. This is my first year being on my school’s SRC and my first year on the VicSRC Executive which means I’m just about bursting with excitement to see the changes we can make and the amazing things we can achieve over the next 12 months. I’m crazy passionate about students being involved in decisions about their learning and hope that in the future we see students and teachers working side by side to improve education. Well, that’s it from me: time to change the world!

Gerard Felipe

Yes, I believe our voices deserve to be heard. Although I am 17 years of age, many have described me as having an old soul. But rest assured, I am still young at heart. During my spare time, I regularly train in the art of karate, and have been very fortunate enough to compete internationally. Having been elected as an Executive Member to the VicSRC is not only a privilege but also a great honour. I look forward to representing the views and opinions held by various students across the state, along with the other dedicated Executive members, to ensure that our voices are not only heard but also acted upon at a state level. Do not forget: each and every one of us has the power to change the world.

Ryan Wijaya

Hellooo! My name is Ryan Wijaya and I am a Year 10 student at Nossal High School down in Berwick, who is passionate and ready to amplify your voices! This will be my very first year on the Executive Team so I’ll make sure to put in 110% in everything I do. Leadership and public speaking have always been my thing and I’m ready to step up to the next level and represent you: Victoria. A couple of my other passions include basketball and music and I’m sure that all our talents can be used in one way or another. Can’t wait for this year ahead!

Congress Video/Photos

Check out the video of the VicSRC Congress 2016:
http://ow.ly/khKV3026W0m - with thanks to ANGRYchair (http://angrychair.com.au/) for their incredible video production and to each and every delegate, visitor and VicSRC team member who brought Congress to life!

All photos by the very talented Piper Huynh (https://www.facebook.com/PNNHProductions), with contributions by Tiffany McIntyre.
Showcase your student voice story to share in $20,000 worth of prizes and grants across five categories!

The VicSRC Recognition Awards celebrate best practice in student voice and student-led action in Victoria.

To enter, create a 1-2 minute video that captures your story:

- Group Action Award
- Pearson Australia Teacher of the Year Award
- Newsboys Foundation Youth Leadership Award (Year 12s)
- Department of Education and Training SRC of the Year - Primary
- Department of Education and Training SRC of the Year - Secondary

Nominate by 5pm, Wed 31st August! More info: www.vicsrc.org.au

@VicSRC @vicsrc_gram | #VicSRC | #RAAwards2016
The 2016 VicSRC Recognition Awards celebrate best practice in student voice, leadership and student-led action in Victoria.

Every day, students and SRCs across the state are turning ideas into action and student-led solutions for our education system. Showcase your story and nominate now!

Simply choose the categories you want to enter, then create and submit a 1-2 minute video that captures your story to be in with a chance to share in $20,000 worth of grants and prizes.

Nominations are open until Wednesday 31st August.

A total of $20,000 in grants and prizes is available across five categories:

**Group Action Award**

Recognises a group of students or collective that has demonstrated action or advocacy on an issue in school or the local community. This group could have:

- Created a change in your school or local community
- Established a mission or vision that aligns with authentic growth of student voice
- Sought to utilise the positive power of student voice by representing members of their school or community

**Prizes:** 1st place: $1,800 grant; 2nd place: $1,000 grant; 3rd place: $500 grant

**Pearson Australia Teacher of the Year Award**

Recognises a teacher who has supported an SRC or school leadership program to expand its effectiveness and influence. This teacher would have:

- Guided students as a mentor by supporting them to become more independent and self-regulated leaders of their school environment
- Related to students as an equal
- Empowered students with skills and experience for active leadership
- Sought out opportunities to learn from their students

**Prizes:** 1st place: $3,000 grant; 2nd place: $1,000 grant; 3rd place: $1,000 grant

**Newboys Foundation Youth Leadership Award (Year 12s)**

The Newboys Foundation Youth Leadership Awards will be awarded to a Year 12 student. The award winner will receive a $3,000 grant which will be administered by the Newsboys Foundation for extending and developing leadership skills and activities. Two runner ups will each receive $1,000 for the same purpose.

**Prizes:** 1st place: $3,000 grant; 2nd place: $1,000 grant; 3rd place: $1,000 grant

#VicSRC #RAAwards2016

### Department of Education and Training SRC of the Year - Primary Schools Award

Recognises a Junior School Council (JSC) that has created a change identified by students through engaging with decision-making processes at school. The JSC would have:

- Drawn on student voice to affect or change the decision-making processes within the school
- Ensured that students were consulted for their opinions on changes
- Continuously sought ideas and opinions of students through a range of mediums and methods
- Worked in balanced involvement between teachers and students
- Linked with the School Council and its committees

**Prizes:** 1st place: $1,800 grant; 2nd place: $1,000 grant; 3rd place: $500 grant

### Department of Education and Training SRC of the Year - Secondary Schools Award

Recognises a Student Representative Council (SRC) that has created a change identified by students through engaging with decision-making processes at school. The SRC would have:

- Drawn on student voice to affect or change the decision-making processes within the school
- Ensured that students were consulted for their opinions on changes
- Continuously sought ideas and opinions of students through a range of mediums and methods
- Worked in balanced involvement between teachers and students
- Linked with the School Council and its committees
- Aims to efficiently and effectively deliver results for students

**Prizes:** 1st place: $1,800 grant; 2nd place: $1,000 grant; 3rd place: $500 grant

### How to enter

1. Read through the categories and prizes: http://ow.ly/cN69302Uk3B
2. Create a 1-2 minute video (max) that showcases your story and demonstrates best practice in supporting student voice in any of the five award categories
3. Upload your video to YouTube, Vimeo, Google Drive or Dropbox and copy the link
4. Fill out the online form: http://ow.ly/39en302Uk4N, linking us to your video

Entries close at 5pm, Wednesday 31st August 2016. Submissions after this date will not be accepted.

### Key dates

**Nominations open:** Friday 8th July

**Nominations close:** 5pm, Wednesday 31st August

**Shortlisting and judging:** Wednesday 31st August - Friday 9th September

**Interview for the Newsboys Foundation Youth Leadership Award (Year 12s only):**

Friday 9th September, 9.30am-12.30pm

**Finalists notified:**

Monday 12th September

2016 VicSRC Recognition Awards Ceremony:

Tuesday 18th October,

The Arena at NAB
Student Voice & the Education State

With the launch of The Education State, the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET) has developed the new Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO). This includes six initiatives to help schools lift student achievement, wellbeing and engagement. Whatever area you choose to focus on, the VicSRC 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.

The VicSRC Student Voice and the Education State Resource is a guide for Victorian schools to 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.

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:


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
Primary school students - in politicians’ seats

The Junior School Council Congress is a civics and citizenship event that makes parliamentary processes fun for students – by putting them in the politicians’ seats.

Second Strike, a specialist Student Council training company since 1999, developed the JSC Congress in 2008. This popular event invites a range of primary schools’ delegations of student representatives, usually drawn from the schools’ student councils (SRCs or JSCs). After some training and workshops to develop the motions for debate, the students are ready to take to the floor of Congress.

Congress is set up in the fashion of Australian Parliaments, but the only people allowed to speak are students. An essential element of the event is the theatre surrounding the Congress – such as “All Rise For The Speaker” and the formal language that goes into making the debate. For example, students are referred to as ‘Delegates’ or ‘Congress Members’. The evidence has been that students love the formality. The more the trappings of Parliament are followed in this way, the more the students feel their thoughts and votes are being taken seriously. Conversely, when the Congress breaks down into simplistic chatting, students often feel their comments are easy to dismiss.

The students in Congress debate a series of motions that they have researched, in order to come up with a list of recommendations to decision makers in the field of education, such as the Minister for Education, Principals’ Association and even their own Student Councils. All the issues discussed are treated seriously; motions are never only ‘practice’ or sample motions.

The JSC Congress typically runs with one state level event for Victoria and several smaller regional events. In 2016 Second Strike has introduced the in-school Congress, where the Student Council of a school hosts their own event, taking on all the roles of ‘Speaker of Congress’, ‘Clerks’ and ‘Sergeant-At-Arms’ to name a few. The rest of the students participating in the Congress can come from outside the Student Council, (eg senior grades), thus the event can be a great opportunity for the Student Council to consult widely from the student body and, at the same time, more students get to experience a meaningful leadership role.

The one aspect of Parliament the students refuse to emulate, however, is the tone of the debate. Visiting politicians have consistently commented that Parliamentarians have so much to learn about behaviour from watching the JSC Congress.

One weakness of a model with only state or regional Congresses is that students have sometimes graduated from school before any official response to their motions can be received. An in-school Congress is not stuck with that problem, since the issues can be directed to the Principal or School Council for a response.

The learning outcomes
The Australian Curriculum has elements under Civics and Citizenship criteria that the JSC Congress fulfils with ease. Students participating in the JSC Congress can also expect to gain experience in the following skills:

- Public speaking,
- Parliamentary debating,
- Working cooperatively with others,
- Collecting opinions,
- Analysing/Interpreting data,
- Parliamentary process, and
- Representation.

Teachers are frequently surprised at seeing their students, who may rarely participate at school activities, standing up in Congress to deliver a passionate speech with confidence.

These learning outcomes can only be achieved because the Congress process deals with the students as the leaders of the process tackling real issues upon which they can expect to have an impact. Mock scenarios might look good but they do not achieve the same level of engagement and therefore understanding.

The State Congress for Victoria will be held in Melbourne in November. Several regional events will be held around the state from September, including Bendigo, Golden Plains, Geelong and Gippsland.

For more information on these or to organise the hosting of a JSC Congress within your own school please contact us: info@second-strike.com

David Mould
Second Strike
www.second-strike.com
Students leading the way

In the midst of a two-week trip to Melbourne, I had the great fortune to visit two state schools, both Years 9-12. My first visit was to Mt. Waverley Secondary College, a large co-educational school in a middle class suburb. The following day, I spent time at The Mac.Robertson Girls’ High School, somewhat smaller, and just a short tram ride from the Central Business District. Unlike Mt. Waverley, Mac.Rob is a magnet school with an application process.

I went to the schools through the generous invitation of Roger Holdsworth, an educator who truly believes in the democratic agency of all students. I met Roger online in a group dedicated to student voice while researching my dissertation. Sight unseen, he set up the school visits and made the rounds with me. My conversations with him were thought-provoking and have helped me grow my thinking.

Both of the schools I visited participate with the Victorian Student Representative Council - ‘VicSRC’ - a state-funded body representing students. Through support from that agency, both schools engage in their own versions of Teach the Teacher, where students lead professional learning for educators in an atmosphere of open, honest, and nonjudgmental communication. I had the privilege to meet with students from both schools who are working with teachers to improve the learning in their schools.

Like many in education, the students are anxious for change. They recognise that their time at the school is limited, and they desire systems for sustainable change. They recognise the external and internal pressures on teachers stemming from economics and accountability, and they are willing to work shoulder-to-shoulder with them to make positive change. They recognise that not every educator is welcoming student voice with open ears, and they continue to believe in what they are doing. They recognise that in some ways their input is still at the tokenism level, and they persist in advocating for equality.

At Mt. Waverley, the Teach the Teacher program is currently centred around a shared belief among teachers and students that strong relationships are important to creating a healthy learning environment. Students led learning for staff and students around the perception data gathered in the school and worked together to draft a survey for teachers to use to gain feedback from students in individual classrooms. The teachers used the feedback to improve relationships, and thereby improve learning. To read more in-depth on this project, see Connect 216 (December 2015: http://ow.ly/xHW2302yTzC) - page 8.

Another project the students are interested in is re-purposing the first 15-20 minutes of school so that teachers and students become more of a community of learners.

At Mac.Rob, the students and staff are engaged in a four-year strategic plan that includes their version of Teach the Teacher, known as Creating Conversations. Students take part in four different areas of the school: curriculum, building and logistics, e-learning, and wellbeing. On the day I was there, the students were holding an open forum on the Year 10 English curriculum, which had been reconfigured within the last few years. The students are seeking to understand the impact the curriculum change has had on students as they move up into Years 11 and 12, and on the teachers who are implementing the new curriculum.

Like many schools in the U.S., the Mac.Rob students sometimes have a day off while their teachers engage in professional learning. The students also have an interest in measuring the impact that professional learning has on classroom learning.

What might we achieve in our schools if we not only engage student voice, but welcome students as leaders of learning? We talk to students all the time; what might happen if we talk with them? More importantly, what is possible if we listen as well? Why not learn from those most impacted by policies and decisions? Why not let them lead the way?

What might this look like in your school? What would it take for students to lead the learning?

Judy Walton
Forest Hills Public Schools
Chief Innovation Officer
Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA
http://ow.ly/m5G1302yTKH
Amplifying Youth Voice and acting on it

Students and young people have a voice. Much of the time, however, their voices are drowned out by adults at schools, in their families and in the broader community.

These were just some of the ideas actively explored at the International Seminar on Amplifying Student Voice & Partnership in Burlington, Vermont, USA, hosted by UP for Learning. From July 6-8, 2016, nearly 70 practitioners, researchers, policy makers and young people engaged in deep discussion and planning around many critical issues involving youth voice and partnership.

We surveyed many exciting initiatives and models that demonstrate that youth voice and partnership works and why it’s important. Hosting the conference in Vermont allowed us to take a deep dive into Act 77, a statewide initiative that provides student voice and choice unparalleled by any other statewide program in the country. Act 77 encourages flexible pathways to graduation through dual enrolment and early college programs, personalised learning plans and work-based internships. Act 77 also provides for competency-based assessments that allow students to demonstrate academic proficiency through knowledge and skills around tasks that are of interest to that student.

We also had the privilege of learning about the important work spearheaded by UP for Learning across Vermont. They work to increase youth engagement by developing youth adult partnerships in learning to ensure that every young person has the skills, self-confidence and opportunities to assume meaningful roles in shaping their learning and lives. Youth and Adults Transforming Schools Together (YATST) is UP for Learning’s signature program and helps support a network of youth and adult teams committed to building school communities in which learning is engaging for everyone and students are fully empowered. Getting to Y is one of their other key programs, which allows student to lead their schools...
in examining risk data and taking steps to strengthen their schools and communities, based on their findings.

UP for Learning’s programs were highlighted by high school students who led these initiatives in their schools. Their authentic voices reinforced how competent and committed young people are when we give them opportunities and support to play meaningful roles. Everyone was inspired by their stories.

We explored a plethora of exciting international programs that demonstrate that the youth voice movement is a global one. We learned about the Organising Bureau of European School Student Union and the International Students’ Association and the authentic voice they give to students in Europeans schools educational systems. We were inspired by the work in Ontario, Canada and the Student Trustees Association, which supports the placement of student trustees, elected by their peers, to bring student voice to district school board tables. Their mission is to present the student perspective to improve the quality of education in schools across the province.

The group closed on Friday with a number of important open space forum topics that included discussions about how to create Centres for Youth Voice and Partnership to further promote this work, what strategies could be employed to change adult culture and allow for expanded youth voice and strategising about how we could influence the United States to ratify the United Nations Children’s Rights Convention.

There were many practical and applied practices and structures that came out as important lessons or directions for amplifying student voice and partnership. Some of the highlights include:

• Advocating for student representation on local, regional and state boards of education.
• Sharing Vermont’s flexible pathways initiatives with other state and regional educational authorities and encouraging these entities to adopt more student-centred approaches to education that promote voice.
• Expand the work of students/adult school teams and advisory councils that work on school change, reform, improved school climate and inclusion. Models that support such work include UP for Learning, Neutral Zone’s Youth Driven Spaces and SoundOut.

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child simply yet eloquently states the right of youth voice: children have the right to participate and have their voices heard when adults make decisions that affect them. When adults support and amplify this principle they’ll see how amazing and competent young people are, how our school and community challenges can be better addressed and we’ll support young people to be active participants in a democratic society.

John Weiss
Neutral Zone
from: http://ow.ly/qJRd302ylG7

Photos by Dana Mitra
I have attended many conferences in my lifetime, but very few of these conferences have intensified my pursuit of tackling student voice as significantly as UP for Learning’s International Seminar held in Burlington, Vermont.

To say that I’ve attended many conferences in my lifetime as a high school student may be an overstatement, but I will say that my background differs from that of a traditional high school student. I am a senior at Winooski High School in the tiny city of Winooski, Vermont and a student representative in my community and state. I sit as the non-voting student representative on the Vermont State Board of Education and was invited to the International Seminar by Helen Beattie, UP for Learning’s executive director, earlier in the year.
Prior to attending this conference, I had little knowledge about what was to come and I was naïve to assume that this conference would be like the many conferences I’ve attended before. It didn’t take me long to realise that I was completely wrong.

Starting from day one, I had the opportunity to meet many different kinds of people and learn their stories, how they got to where they are now, and their aspirations for the future of student voice. Throughout the rest of the seminar, workshops and activities focused on different ends of student voice, ranging from brainstorming solutions to existing student voice dilemmas, learning about student voice in European countries, and even sharing the work that currently exists locally in Vermont.

The three days I had at this conference with the remarkable educators, advocates, fellow students, and more, opened a gateway of new possibilities, connections, and information that I never knew I needed. Not only was it the place where I established connections, but relationships with people from all over the world who also care about student voice as much as I do.

I was continuously surprised by the amount of passion and care for student voice in every attendee, regardless of the role that each person plays in student voice. Knowing that there were so many people around the world that wished to bring upon change in our education through student voice made me realise that, although it’s still a growing subject in Vermont, it has bloomed in many other places. There are places that have failed many times, and places where success has shown the effects of student voice in education. Student voice has yet to be thoroughly established in education systems around the world, but this International Seminar has helped me strongly believe that student voice can exist in education.

My future plans have definitely changed because of the new connections I’ve built with people all over the world. The resources I have now in comparison to before the conference have multiplied and I plan on building bridges across the gaps in student voice – starting with Vermont. The inspiration to push myself to research and conduct this work was sparked by the power of the International Seminar and I don’t regret a single minute of attending. I look forward to attending future seminars!

Rainbow Chen
Winooski High School Senior; State Board of Education Student Representative

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**Student Voice Practitioners:**
**Blog & Podcast**

*A community for young people and adults*


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.

Launched 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 for more information.

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**Student Voice Research and Practice facebook group**

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

This open facebook 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.
Ontario, Canada: Student Voice Initiative

Minister’s Student Advisory Council

A group of approximately sixty students from grades 7 to 12 chosen to best reflect the vast diversity of Ontario Students. The Council meets throughout the year (virtual and in person) with each other and with the Minister of Education directly to discuss matters and policies that interest and impact students.

* LGBTQ: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Questioning
* FNMI: First Nations, Métis, & Inuit

SpeakUp Projects

Provides grants up to $1,000 to help students lead projects that make a difference in their school.

Developed Skills:

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<tr>
<th>Developed Skills</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>80%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>75%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>70%</td>
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<td>Team Building</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<td>Communication</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurship</td>
<td>40%</td>
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Findings from 2012-13 SpeakUp Project Surveys

- Project Focus:
  - Active Learning
  - Peer to Peer Support
  - Leadership

83% of students said they gained stronger leadership skills

75% of students said they gained a richer educational experience

Student Voice Podcast

A community for youth and adults. Podcast features young people, like Patrick, Lauren, Nico who will talk about issues and how they took action to address them.

Get in touch!
Jean Courtney led the Ontario Student Voice Initiative since its launch in 2008 and retired from the Ontario Public Service in 2015. Her current project, Student Voice Podcast and blog, can be found at studentvoicepractitioners.com

Students as Researchers

Additional Resources

Free, do-it-yourself forum kit that provides everything students need to run a student-led forum for 30 participants.

Contains all necessary supplies as well as step-by-step forum guide and tip sheets for facilitators

SpeakUp In a Box asks:
What does it look like when you are engaged in your learning?
What holds you back from being engaged?
What actions can adults/students take to improve how education looks and feels?
Ontario’s Student Voice Initiative: Looking back

Over the last year (and my first in retirement), I have done some thinking about my work as the provincial lead for the Ontario’s Student Voice Initiative (read more about this is Connect 208: August 2014 and Connect 218: April 2016).

There were three key short-term goals for the initiative including:
1. Re-engaging students and close the achievement gap by learning more about what helps students learn;
2. Ensuring that all students feel a sense of belonging and are able to participate in decisions impacting on their learning; and
3. Involving students meaningfully in articulating what would help to strengthen their belonging both academically and socially.

The longer terms goals were bigger and more about achieving a cultural shift towards making the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child ‘real’ for all Ontarian young people and realising classrooms where young people and teachers worked as partners around learning.

Has the ground shifted? Is there evidence that the term ‘student voice’ is present in Ministry policy and curriculum documents? Do youth/student advisory councils exist at all levels of civic society in Ontario, including provincial and municipal government? Are student/youth-led initiatives, including student collaborative inquiry research, no longer rarities?

An external evaluation of the initiative would help answer these questions but, as someone who was deeply involved, I think there has been an incremental shift. I base this on feedback from alumni from all cohorts of the Minister’s Student Advisory Council, teachers, principals, superintendents, and Directors of Education. I have noted the term ‘student voice’ is appearing in policy documents and in key-note addresses of educational leaders.

I am lucky. I happened to be at the forefront of a trend sparked by inspirational student voice champions, namely, Adam Fletcher (soundout.org), Jean Rudduck (Cambridge, UK) and Ivan Corbett (New Brunswick).

Essential ingredients for building a movement
• Leaders who believed in the importance of student voice at the Ministry of Education who demonstrated it by supporting the initiative;
• Leaders who believed in the importance of student voice across all levels (provincial, regional, district) of the education sector and demonstrated it by ensuring their students were aware of the initiative and involved in it;
• Financial support for youth-led initiatives. The Student Voice Initiative was supported with micro-grants for projects ($1.2M annually) and funds were allocated to support the Minister’s Student Advisory Council meetings, and to train and support youth and adults in student-led research ($200K);
• Everyone’s commitment to achieving positive youth outcomes for all youth;
• Ministry team comprised of youth including post-secondary (internships), high school (co-op) and ministry staff led by an education officer and supported by research and policy advisors;
• Evidence-based approach enabled by a logic model and designed in partnership with youth;
• Meaningful involvement of students (eg MSAC, student-led projects, Students as Researchers);
• Resources developed in response to student input (SpeakUp in a Box, Students as Researchers, priorities for SpeakUp Projects);
• Multiple and diverse barriers to youth involvement addressed through outreach and support (eg designated seats on MSAC)

What hindered?
• Communication: The Ministry communicates to the educational leadership in all regions/districts. It typically does not communicate directly to students in schools except when it has the support of the school board and only through senior management and the school principal. The communication at the provincial and regional levels was effective (as in most people were aware of the initiative), however, the communication about the Student Voice Initiative at the student level needed help.

- Student Voice resources/information sent directly to schools may or may not have been shared as intended. For example, 1000 kits to build capacity for Student Voice were delivered to every high school in Ontario to be shared with student council leaders. There is very little evidence (in my opinion) to support that the bulk of student councils used/received them.
- Feedback from regional student forum participants and presentations to student trustees frequently expressed surprise at the existence of the Student Voice Initiative. They were excited but wondered why they hadn’t heard of it.
- Eight years later, many young people, especially disengaged youth, remain unaware of the
importance of their involvement in the Student Voice Initiative and that their voice matters and is needed to create change.

- **Leadership:** Some districts were early adopters and embraced the idea of ‘students as partners in learning’ yet others remain cynical as to the value. Why?

- **Student Leadership:** The Ontario Student Trustee Association (OSTA) could be more effective in hearing all students’ voices (in their district) by harnessing the resources of the Student Voice Initiative to champion change (eg Students as Researchers). Many former Minister’s Student Advisory Council members have become student trustees so they take advantage of the resources as supports. Why not all of them?

- If the Ontario Public Supervisory Officials Association (OPSOA) supported an orientation/training for student trustees at a provincial level to build their capacity, it would help OSTA strengthen the bridge to schools, student councils and ultimately to students who are not engaged in learning in order to gather the input from them to inform school board policies. Why has this not occurred? What supports are required for this take place?

- **The role of the teacher:** More could and should have been done to build teachers’ capacity to be adult allies for young people in my opinion. Feedback from a case study on the SpeakUp in a Box experience of one high school highlighted some confusion of the teacher’s role. We can do better.

- **The role of the principal:** Resources have been developed for principals by the Ontario Principals Council but there is more that can be done to build their capacity.

After eight years, many students have been engaged/impacted/involved in student-led projects through SpeakUp funding (more than 8000 projects), Students as Researchers findings and as members of every cohort of the Minister’s Student Advisory Council. Feedback from surveys indicates that leadership, communication, and project management skills were developed and that participants felt more connected to each other and to their school.

**What bothers me?**

Every cohort of the Minister’s Student Advisory Council since the first one has identified the same issues as being concerns, including a desire for an inclusive learning environment in which they seek to know and be known by their teachers, the continued problem of bullying, more opportunities for active learning, the sad reality of many ‘doing school just to get through it’, the reality that most student councils are about fund-raising and proms rather than about learning, student voice is limited to extra-curricular activities only; and wondering why there isn’t equal access to resources regardless of where you live in Ontario. On the whole, it seems that the overall student experience remains unchanged at the classroom level, despite a myriad of strategies, policies, and programs designed to strengthen student engagement. Is this true? If yes, why? Why is there uptake in some classrooms and not others? Is it the ‘broken telephone effect’ where messages shared top down become distorted and not understood?

I am no longer in a position to advocate at a provincial level but this blog and the Student Voice Podcasts are intended to serve as a repository of stories, successes and also to inspire young people to take up the challenge to improve learning conditions for their younger peers.

In my next post, I will identify the critical components that I think made a difference, steps to take to address the broken telephone effect and my thoughts on how to build capacity going forward.

Onward!

Jean Courtney

Posted on July 12, 2016 to https://studentvoicepractitioners.com/ jean.courtney413@gmail.com
How do young people really experience their own learning? It’s easy for educators to make assumptions – but often we find more authentic answers by listening closely to what students say.

That is what sparked WKCD’s “Just Listen” series of video clips, in which high school students speak directly to viewers about teaching and learning. Too often, the general public perceives adolescents as apathetic and even anti-school, taking little or no interest in their own education. These videos create a different picture: they reveal that kids care about learning and appreciate adult guidance.

WKCD’s “Just Listen” series currently includes more than 200 video clips (average length one minute). The full playlist can be found at WKCD’s Just Listen Channel on YouTube:

https://www.youtube.com/user/JustListen2011?feature=mhee#p/p
Enhancing Student Voice at MWSC

We invite you to join us at our school to hear how staff and students have worked together at Mount Waverley Secondary College (Melbourne) to enhance student voice through student leadership. Hear from staff and students about how we have used the power of genuine and meaningful student voice to drive school improvement.

Australian Students as Partners Network

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 publishes occasional updates, available at http://eepurl.com/b4Lswb. 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.

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

ACT Student Leadership Coordinators Network

Susan Johnson, Student Leadership Coordinator at Canberra College, is setting up an ACT Student Leadership Coordinators Network. This will create a network based on student leadership, and link teachers in similar roles in other schools in the ACT.

Teachers will support each other’s work; share ideas, experience and best practice in developing student leaders within our school community; and provide information about any events that may take place in the future.

The Network is in the early stages; at the moment it consists of a google network page, which interested colleagues are invited to join.

For details contact Susan at: Susan.Johnson@ed.act.edu.au
Change: why and how

Well done to 4 Corners and 60 minutes for highlighting ‘why’ our approach to education must change. I highly recommend watching if you missed either episode:

4 Corners: http://ow.ly/z6vz302yISW
60 Minutes: http://ow.ly/Fn7L302yIUm

Ray Trotter from Wooranna Park PS suggested I watch a keynote Yong Zhao presented to a select group of Australian Independent Schools Leaders in South Australia in 2016. Yong goes well beyond unpacking the ‘why’ and delivers a very challenging and confronting ‘how’. Very few need convincing of ‘why’; when you have a spare hour, I encourage you to watch a very compelling tale of the ‘how’ we move from the old paradigm of education to a new one!

http://ow.ly/6wvx302yJ37

Luke Kerr
Real Time Learning, Mount Eliza Secondary College
lkerr@mesc.vic.edu.au
http://mtelizarealtime.wordpress.com

Doing School Differently

Doing School Differently is an Australian conference for everyone who is interested in flexible and inclusive education.

The conference will bring together educators, researchers, policy makers and young people who are committed to developing and sustaining successful educational opportunities and pathways for disenfranchised young people. We’re providing a platform for advancing a national conversation on practice and research in flexible and inclusive education. We hope you will join us in Melbourne on September 15th and 16th 2016 and add your voice to the conversation.

Details are at: http://ow.ly/OdXB302yJhr

Children’s Rights, Educational Research and the UNCRC: past, present and future

Eds.: Jenna Gillett-Swan & Vicki Coppock
Symposium Books, 2016


Since the development of the UNCRC over 25 years ago, significant changes have occurred in the way that children’s rights are considered, conceptualised and enacted. Even so, there remains a continued debate surrounding the extent to which the children’s rights agenda is embraced within education, as researchers, teachers and other educational professionals continue to consider the degree to which the UNCRC informs practice. This book provides critical and focused discussion on the challenges of enacting children’s rights in educational research contexts and alerts readers to the ways in which children’s rights provide a provocation to think and practise differently.

Chapter contributions from scholars in Australia, Finland, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom provide diverse contexts from which subsequent educational and research practice can be derived. Each chapter problematises different aspects of children’s rights within the context of educational research with both broad and specific wide-ranging implications and provides examples of different ways that these aspects are considered in practice.

Contents:

John I’Anson: UNCRC at 25: a critical assessment of achievements and trajectories with reference to educational research
Louise Gwenneth Phillips: Educating Children and Young People on the UNCRC: actions, avoidance and awakenings
Reetta Niemi, Kristiina Kumpulainen & Lasse Lipponen: Pupils’ Participation in the Finnish Classroom: turning the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into pedagogical practices
Joana Lúcio & Fernando Ilídio Ferreira: Children’s Rights in Times of Austerity: social awareness of pre-service teachers in Portugal
Gordon Tait & Mallihai Tambyah: Rights without a Remedy? Children’s Privacy, Social Governance and the UNCRC
Jenna Gillett-Swan & Vicki Coppock: The Future of Children’s Rights, Educational Research and the UNCRC in a Digital World: possibilities and prospects
Epilogue: final reflections
The first issue of Breaking Out: A Journal of Schools, Community and Social Justice has been published online from Melbourne.

Breaking Out is intended for everyone who thinks that education is not a market good to be bought, sold and traded, but rather a public good that enables agency, social justice and change. It is a journal for those who want to make a difference, but understand that our individual efforts are only as good as the collective action they are part of.

The journal includes both serious and satirical contributions from teachers, academics, parents and students, as it seeks to foster dialogue and collaboration at the community level.

Access Breaking Out at its website: www.breakingout.net.au

First Issue
The first issue contains articles on:

• Unveiling reality & the emergence of consciousness: Emancipatory possibilities of a grassroots journal
  With an overwhelming number of publications now available in the field of education, one might wonder: Why is another journal necessary?
  Professor Antonia Darder makes the case that “What is often overlooked in such a question is the importance of intentionality.”

• Taking the standpoint of the least advantaged
  Given the assumptions that ‘quality teachers’ are not social workers but ‘knowledge workers’, who should be able to include the diverse range of students in their classes in productive learning, worthwhile questions to ask are:
  - How do teachers express care for young people on or outside the margins of the official curriculum, and;
  - What do we mean by care in education?

• In the zone
  Australians are familiar with the idea of having a school zone. It is a culturally ingrained idea in our education system and legislation enshrines the right of children to have a designated neighbourhood school. However, both the idea and the right are more contested than is often realised.

• ‘Teach the teacher’: spaces for dialogue about learning and teaching
  Designed by students, Teach the Teacher is a student-led professional learning program in which both teachers and students share views and plan school change. It is a practical approach to engaging a school community in discussions about education and life at school, around topics defined and led by students. It provides a space for dialogue between students, teachers and principals where they can explore issues, share ideas and plan change in a constructive and judgment-free environment.

• Three things teachers can learn from the Chilean student movement
  As a teacher I’ve been very influenced by the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, and his argument that any and all collaboration and action in education needs to be aimed at understanding the world in order to change it. In 2014 my family and I spent a year living in Chile, providing an opportunity to engage directly with the student movement there as a living example of Freire’s ideas about the connection between teaching, learning and social change.

• Australian aid for education
  Australian aid specifically for education is used not as an expression of generous solidarity, but as a clearly identified means to a very specific end: the promotion of Australia’s ‘national interests’, and the undermining of the potential to build popular movements that challenge the place and policies of government authorities considered acceptable by Australian governments.

• Why we should continue to oppose NAPLAN
  This is the eighth year of NAPLAN testing. It is no longer a ‘new initiative’, enjoys bipartisan support and appears to have become an entrenched part of our education system. Some might wonder why we should continue to campaign against it...

• Why I withdrew my child from NAPLAN
  I withdrew my daughter from NAPLAN because the idea of making a diverse range of children sit down for a standardised test and
expecting that the result would somehow symbolise something about the school or the students did not sit well with me.

- NAPLAN: True or False?
  There are many myths about NAPLAN, some supported by mis-information and propaganda. In this fact sheet, Breaking Out and Say NO to NAPLAN dispel a few myths about NAPLAN and provide guidance for parents about how it should be used and their rights to opt-out.

Statement of Purpose

Breaking Out seeks to bring teachers, education academics, parents and students in Australia together to critically discuss contemporary issues in teaching and learning. In the present neoliberal context, the gap between academic research and the work and thinking of practising teachers is an increasingly difficult one to bridge; likewise the gap between teachers and parents. In the context of the ongoing marginalisation of much critical and radical practice and research in teaching and learning, Breaking Out seeks to provide a collective space to connect and strengthen currently isolated thinking and activity. Ideally this will contribute to the development of a stronger and better articulated critical, alternative, cross-sectoral voice in education.

Breaking Out is a fully online and entirely open access project. The journal encourages constructive dialogue and engagement with the main ideas of the published articles via social media, and by publishing thoughtful responses as Correspondence in future issues.

Breaking Out is a collaboration between academics in the College of Education at Victoria University, Melbourne, and the Popular Education Network of Australia (PENA). PENA was founded in 2008 by a group of academics, teachers, pre-service teachers, parents and community educators interested in fostering a community-driven and controlled education system that values learning and teaching for the sake of social change, social justice and public good. Based largely in Melbourne, PENA has hosted two successful symposia in the past three years involving around 150 people and has also collaborated with others in a range of grassroots education activities and campaigns. The journal is a new initiative for PENA and one that hopes to draw on and strengthen existing networks and build on an established history of hosting successful academic and community events.

Publication of Breaking Out is overseen by an editorial committee consisting of Dr Jo Williams (Victoria University, PENA), Assoc Prof Tom Griffiths (University of Newcastle), Dr Lea Campbell (Our Children Our Schools, PENA) and James Tonson (Understandascope, PENA). They are supported by an editorial advisory group consisting of teachers, academics and other community members.

The editors invite contributions from anyone who wishes to support the aims of the journal as outlined in the submission guidelines on the website:

www.breakingout.net.au

info@breakingout.net.au

Breaking Out

A joint vision for Secondary and Higher Education for All in Europe

Over the last few months, the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU), the European Students’ Union (ESU), and Education International (EI) have been working together to develop a joint statement in relation to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and its 17 related goals, which the United Nations adopted in September 2015. Now the result of this work is here!

Over the past three years involving around 150 people and has also collaborated with others in a range of grassroots education activities and campaigns. The journal is a new initiative for PENA and one that hopes to draw on and strengthen existing networks and build on an established history of hosting successful academic and community events.

That is why OBESSU, ESU and EI have come together to propose “A joint vision for Secondary and Higher Education for All in Europe”.

You can read the document at: http://ow.ly/JQKE302MVTk

http://ow.ly/L6UvVW

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.
Who is not in school has recently re-emerged as an issue of concern. When we talk about the engagement of students with education, we need to also recognise who is not there: students excluded from schools through suspension, expulsion ... or simply encouraged to ‘go elsewhere’.

For example, in Victoria, the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) recently prepared a policy paper around this issue, and conducted forums across the state to look at alternatives to such exclusion (see http://ow.ly/9PoZ302MAtm).

This book is a welcome addition to those debates, and looks at practices across two countries. The sub-title of the book reflects its two parts: Part One looking at factors shaping exclusion and its impact on young people; then Part Two examining several practical approaches at both school and system level. The book takes a strong ‘rights’ approach, and Megan Mitchell, Australian National Children’s Commissioner, in her Foreword, points to the need to:

... reimagine school practices within the framework of children’s inalienable right to education ... (p vii)

For those of us particularly interested in student participatory practices, the book opens up two essential issues.

The first is about silenced voices. Where do we hear from young people who are excluded? Megan Mitchell correctly points out that:

The first step to ... [ensuring education is culturally appropriate] is listening to the views and experiences of children themselves, who, after all, are the experts in their own lives. In fact, the right of children to be heard and taken seriously is a principle that underpins the Convention in its entirety. (p viii)

and

... privileging the voice of children sends a powerful message about their worth and also acts as a strong safeguarding measure against abuse and exploitation. (p vii-ix)

When Michelle Blanchard and I looked at issues about voice in relation to the school engagement of young people with high support needs in the area of mental health¹, we pointed out that these young people are both often less likely to voice their opinion and concerns to adults, but also that they have their voices discounted as being ‘incompetent’. The same could be said of those being excluded: do we regard them as competent (even as ‘experts’) with important things to say?

Some previous studies have specifically documented the voices of students deemed ‘at risk’² (however problematic that term), and perhaps there were links even then between the choice of study respondents and those being excluded. In this book, there are studies that draw on young people’s responses to surveys and assessment tools (locating young people as data sources) or report their comments from interviews. Chapter 5 reports on interviews with a diverse group of 50 students, including some who had been excluded; Chapter 7 reports on focus groups of students around restorative practices. However there have been few examples that go further to locate these young people as actors in either reflecting on and informing us about reasons for exclusion, or in developing their own action to prevent exclusion.

In summing up their book, the editors note:

It is clear that children want to be included and do things right. We strongly support the view that when things go wrong, children must be given the opportunity to put things right. (pp 258-9)

Therefore it is not surprising that the second part of the book takes a strong focus on restorative practices. Our second reflection is on the differences in practice outlined here, between those that focus on changing young people, and those that focus on changing schools.


In his Foreword, Judge Andrew Becroft, Principal Youth Court Judge for Aotearoa New Zealand: Te Kāiwhakawhā Matua o Te Koiti Taiohi notes a ‘different paradigm [that] constitutes challenging new thinking’, in Chapter 10 by Maggie Callingham about McClelland College: … which flips conventional wisdom on its head and talks about how schools can change to deal with difficult young pupils rather than seeing the solution as a matter of fixing the pupils. In this way, school disengagement is seen as the school’s issue rather than the young person’s problem: what has the school done to alienate the young person? (p xiii)

Other chapters deal with flexible behaviour management approaches within inflexible school structures, with links between compulsion and offending, with mending home-school relations, with narrative therapy, with community and Departmental responses to crises. There are various helpful responses suggested that, in varying degrees, recognise the need for structural change – rather than solely asking that students modify their behaviour.

For example, Alison Sutherland, in Chapter 6, points to the need to improve school climate and teacher-student relationships, and recommends on the transition into school, provision of opportunities for ‘aggrieved’ young people to be heard, recognising the need for economic and practical rewards for engagement, increasing safety and so on. Similarly, Kehoe, Hemphill and Broderick in Chapter 7 identify the need for more effective communication throughout the school community through restorative practices.

These chapters in Part Two emphasise the need for strong school leadership towards inclusion, and for a ‘whole school approach’. The book’s chapter of ‘Conclusions’ notes: Retaining troubled children in the school requires multidisciplinary problem solving. The approaches suggested in this book place the child at the centre of resolution. (p 259)

The book provides a valuable introduction to the issue, both in terms of the impact of exclusion and in scoping possible responses. It recognises that it “has raised more questions than it answered” (p 259) and suggests the urgent need to continue the conversations – between researchers and practitioners … and young people.

I’m reminded of a Student Action Team at Altona High School in about 2000, where four student leaders researched and recommended on truancy. But these were ‘non-traditional’ student leaders … truants themselves and leaders in and of truancy. The Student Action Team recognised them as experts in the issue.

In taking a student participation approach to school exclusion (expulsion and suspension), it would be valuable to explore ways in which young people who are at risk of being excluded, or who have been excluded, can lead initiatives that change schools - to make them more inclusive and engaging for all.

Roger Holdsworth

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:**

- **Breaking Out: A journal of schools, community and social justice**
  (c/o Victoria University, Melbourne, Vic) Vol 1 Issue 1; August 2016
- **VicSRC Congress 2016 Program** (VicSRC, Melbourne, Vic) July, 2016

**International:**

- **Complementing the mainstream: an exploration of partnership work between complementary alternative provisions and mainstream schools**
  (Jodie Pennacchia & Pat Thomson, Nottingham, UK) *Pastoral Care in Education*, 2016
- **ReThinking Schools** (Wisconsin, USA) Vol 30, No 4; Summer, 2016
- **Students as Partners: Integrating student voice in the governing bodies of Kentucky schools**
  (Student Voice Team, Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence; Lexington, Kentucky, USA) Summer, 2016
- **Teach students about civics through schoolwide governance**
- **UP for Learning** (Vermont, USA) Summer, 2016

ASPRINworld: the Connect website!

www.asprinworld.com/connect

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

*Connect* is also archived and available electronically:

www.research.acer.edu.au/connect

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

www.informit.com.au

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

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.
All issues of Connect from 1979 to the present (that's now close to 37 years!) are freely available on-line! Thanks to the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), all 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 remain independent and totally supported by donations!

Let us know

There may be some gaps or improvements necessary (eg if an issue of Connect seems to be missing, check the issues either side, as double issues show up only as one issue number). As you use this resource, tell us what you find. 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!

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