Planning Learning Together

• Radio L6P: Canterbury Primary School
• Empowering Students: Dallas Brooks Community PS
• Teach the Teacher: St Patrick’s Primary School
• Redesigning Study Spaces
• School-based SRC Congresses
• Professional Learning Conference: Mt Waverley
• Autism and Student Voice
• Democratic Education Revisited
• VicSRC: 2016 Recognition Awards: Finalists The Un-Camp

Resources:
• New Pedagogies for Deep Learning: videos
• Youth Week grants
• Maintaining SRC Momentum
• VicSRC Congress Report 2016
• Alfie Kohn at Templestowe College
• Engaging Authentic Voice in Catholic Schools
• WISA Conference
• International:
  - International Journal of Student Voice
  - Student Voice Podcast
  - Student Voice Research & Practice facebook group
• Connect ... available on-line ... on facebook
  ... archived ... access to other on-line resources
I was looking at our shower screen this morning and wondering why the areas that I'd wiped off didn't mist up again. I don't know the answer ... though I guess I could find one out.

But that got me thinking about the need to 'know the answer'... when working with students in class-rooms but also with student groups. I particularly thought about this in relation to a workshop I was facilitating on: 'manage it, don't do it' (see #3 of the '10 Big Ideas for Student Councils' in Connect 169, February 2008). In the workshop I used the term: 'studied incompetence' but I'm not sure that that was what I was looking for; maybe "in defence of 'I don't know'" would be better.

We think we need to come up with the answer - hopefully the correct one, but an answer anyway. That goes for us as teachers: "why does the screen not mist up?" leads us to give the reply: "Well, it's because..." But it also occurs when active students on Student Councils are asked by others: "Can we do/have/change this...?" which leads to "Well, I'll see if I can make it happen..." (Active students and teachers are each asked this – and each reply in this way.)

In both cases, this leads to disempowerment of the ones who ask. The teacher’s response stands in the way of investigation; the Student Council’s response stands in the way of student initiative. Coming up with an ‘answer’ can stop real learning - and can stop students taking responsibility for their own participation.

Rather, if a teacher’s response is ‘I don’t know’ (even if that’s a conscious decision not to provide such an answer: the ‘studied incompetence’), and is followed up by: ‘But how could we find out?’, this encourages us to work together to explore and learn. And the Student Council’s ‘I don’t know’ (again deliberately holding back), if followed up by: ‘But how can I support you to take action on this yourselves?’ encourages the broader group of students to get involved, to take responsibility for a concern, to realise that they can take their own initiatives. “I don’t know ... I don’t have time to do it myself...”

That’s the broader learning intention in such situations. The teacher or Student Council is then ‘planning together’ with others and is consciously building the capacity of all students - rather than their dependence on having the ‘right answer’ supplied, or dependence on some already active students doing it for the passive majority.

So I want to defend ‘I don’t know’! I want to defend ‘studied incompetence’ - but really I want to defend planning and working together on issues, concerns and questions where none of us know ‘the answer’, but we are committed to working together to explore, investigate, research, act and reflect.

**Next Issue ...**

The VicSRC has recently commissioned a piece of research about ‘Students on School Governance Bodies’. As part of that research, carried out by Dr Eve Mayes of Deakin University, secondary school students were Research Interns, and contributed to planning, conducting, analysing and writing up the research.

There are stories there, both about the content of the research - what was found out about students on School Councils and the like - and also about the process of the research.

So next issue will have a particular focus on Students on Committees, School Councils and so on - including the new stories and some old resources. Got something to contribute? We’d love to hear from you!

Roger Holdsworth

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**Why does Connect exist?**

*Connect has been published bi-monthly since 1979!*

It aims to:

- document student participation approaches and initiatives;
- support reflective practices;
- develop and share resources.
Last year, our leadership team asked whether or not students at our school were just compliant, or were they truly engaged. So I thought: ‘What could I change to truly engage them?’ I started questioning: ‘Is my teaching truly student centred?’ That’s where the whole idea of planning with the students came to mind. At this school, teachers would previously sit in the corner, and we’d close the two doors. I started thinking that, symbolically, the message that we were sending to students was that they’re shut off from what we’re planning for them next term – despite saying how it’s student centred. That’s where the idea for Radio L6P came from in 2015. One student described the project: “L6P Radio is a student-based and run radio station, where it’s very interactive, and we get a say in everything.”

The approach reflected our school’s involvement with the New Pedagogies for Deep Learning (NPDL) Project. Our school’s NPDL Lead, Matt Forest, described how “one of the tools that has been really useful from the New Pedagogies for Deep Learning Project is the Collaborative Enquiry Cycle. That’s framed how we’ve worked as a school.”

This is reflected by one student’s comments in describing how the project developed: “Collaboration, communication and creativity were most important for this project. We used them whether we were just writing the scripts or interviewing the celebrities or working as a team to create the questions.

“We also developed a relationship with people outside the classroom. We used social media to ask the celebrities if they’d like to come in and come on our radio show. When we finished out interview with whichever celebrity we were doing, we would upload it to Soundcloud, and then we would come onto Twitter and we would thank them for coming in.”

Another student reflects on the development of their learning: “In our first interview we weren’t as great. We were very shy, so we would reflect on Edmodo, where we would all answer these questions. After that, you can see in some of our later interviews, we have backed each other up and asked follow-up questions.”

Students could see people re-tweeting us on Twitter; they could see people liking us. When they interviewed Robert Doyle, Lord Mayor of Melbourne, he shared the interview and then tagged Hamish and Andy and said: ‘You need to watch out – these are the next stars.’ For students who are 12 years old, that’s everything!

It created such a buzz: the sense of community within my classroom, the high level of trust in each other – respect and encouragement. They were going home every day and telling mum and dad.

The students’ participation extended from planning to assessment. “The best part of our Radio Project was probably our Planning Day,” said one. “We all got to contribute ideas on these sheets of paper, and what we wanted to be assessed on.” Another said: “On the first Planning Day, we organised it all together: if we wanted to be self-assessed, or peer-assessed, or assessed by Miss Pluck. That also really helped us, because we knew what was happening in terms of the outcomes.”
The students told me that they'd like to be assessed on the promotion of their radio show, so that then linked with a whole heap of literacy. Then they wanted to be assessed on their group work and their script for their own radio segments that worked in parallel with their celebrity interviews through the term.

David Wells, the school's Principal, notes: “One of the things we've developed in our teachers is the skill to be able to follow the students' interests, but then to bring the curriculum in to that, but not to drive it from the top.”

We did a Radio Project, but here's another example of the way I embed learning from it. There was one father who knew the senior producer at 3AW, Kate Stephenson. I wanted her to come in, but I knew that the students wouldn't necessarily want to interview her – because she wasn't a 'celebrity' as such. So, the week before she came in, the learning intention on the board was about understanding how to write a job application – and there were going to be two jobs for a radio producer.

When we got Kate Stephenson in, the students were asking questions like: 'What's involved in your job? How early do you get up? How important is teamwork?' These questions were not rehearsed. So my focus the next week was: ‘How do you write a job application?’ From there, they wrote their own job applications. Every child then had an interview with their Principal and Assistant Principal – and that is real life learning.

Lessons for us
Learning partnerships were vital for the success of the L6P Radio project. By reaching out to the community, it highlighted how much knowledge there is out there, and that you can lean on others to help build the success of the project.

Matt Forrest noted: “There's a student who came up to me and said: 'It's great that the teachers are now planning with us, rather than planning what they think we want to do.' That was a real shift. We're also changing the rhetoric around what students are capable of, and challenging that idea that ‘they're in Grade 1; they can't do that’ or ‘they're in Prep; there's no way that they can do that’. It's asking 'why?: why can't they do that?'”

Students have similarly said things like: ‘If we didn’t have such a choice, we wouldn’t have had such an amazing year and term so far, because we share all our ideas, and we’re a lot more critical. We tell Miss Pluck what we think.”

This is just one of many amazing projects happening at Canterbury Primary School. Across the school, teachers now plan alongside their students and we've developed our own set of pedagogical principles that we think are most important for student engagement and achievement – which drives everything at the school. We've been fortunate enough to welcome many educators from across Victoria into our school who are interested in the way we plan, teach and work alongside students.

I won't ever plan something in isolation as a teacher again. I've seen first hand how important it is to put the students' ideas and wants first.

Carly Pluck
Grade 6 teacher
pluck.carly.m@edumail.vic.gov.au

See the video of this initiative at:
http://ow.ly/K49B304B6I9

Images from Canterbury PS

Connect 221:
Dallas Brooks Community Primary School, Dallas, Vic

Empowering Students for Today and Tomorrow

Dallas Brooks Community Primary School has developed a whole school approach to Inquiry learning. Over the years this journey has taken our learning community through a range of inquiry topics that have been co-constructed between students and teachers.

Our aims are to ensure that:

• student voice continues to be an essential component of learning throughout the school;
• the learning process will build social relationships between students, teachers and the community;
• collaborative learning skills are continually fostered within our learning environment.

While working through this journey, we have used Kath Murdoch’s work to support our planning and thinking when developing units of Inquiry across all teams.

In our Inquiry classrooms, students are powerful learners who drive their learning with their curiosity. At the beginning stage, the students gather information about a ‘Big Question’ that is being explored in their classrooms, wider community and globally across the world. The students research to explore this question as a class, in small groups and individually. They develop their own questions by using a range of learning skills required to investigate the topic in depth.

“Having my own question is really inspiring because I want to think deeply about it – it’s mine! My question that I’m researching is about how many species of pond plants are there, around the world. Originally I had like three questions in my book that I wrote down, but once I thought about them, I thought they were kind of... b-o-r-i-n-g! I wanted something interesting and more complex. So I started thinking about what really interests me; I asked myself: ‘what do I really want to learn about?'”

The students work collaboratively across their grade, school and wider community to analyse the information gathered, leading them to make connections between their learning and the outside world. They take ownership of their learning to challenge themselves and others. In this learning model, the students feel empowered in the classroom to share what they have learnt.

The students are able to share their new learning and recognise the differences they can make in the world. When students see what they have achieved by themselves, they are eager to present to others in the class and a wider audience. This inspires and challenges thinking.

“Making my own choice is important to me because I feel like I have my own responsibility.”

Project Initiatives

Dallas Brooks Community Primary School has worked on a number projects encapsulating this learning. One such project was the DeforestACTION Project which tackled the issue of orang-utan habitat destruction through the harvesting of palm oil. This project captured the students’ interest and resulted in research, global collaboration, ICT for research and communication and fund raising through an online store. The students raised over $6000 to assist the regeneration of a forest area in Borneo.

More recently, students have been working in a Global Enterprise Project that encourages students to develop their own businesses by creating a product to sell. These projects require students to collaborate with their immediate group members and other members of their ‘business’ from participating schools around the world. This project also requires students to research, plan, design, make and sell their product.

“When I choose my work, I feel excited because I’m going to find out information that no-one else has found, and it’s going to be interesting.”

The Early Years Program uses ‘learning boxes’ for each student, as a place to investigate their own
‘wonderings’ about the world. These learning boxes are a symbol of individual student interests or passion and provide a mechanism for students to make choices about their learning. With teacher guidance, students develop individual inquiries based on the contents of the learning boxes.

**STEM and New Pedagogies**

In response to the requirements of STEM within the curriculum and our participation in the [New Pedagogies for Deep Learning Global Partnership](#), Dallas Brooks Community Primary School is extending the journey further into the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

We have ensured our model supports the work in the area of STEM by staying true to the inquiry process.

In our **Makers Room**, students are inspired to explore, brainstorm, design, make, share and reflect upon their projects or inventions. Students are very excited about coming to this space as they are in control of their learning. Students regularly spend time working on their projects during lunch and recess. These projects include motorised Lego tractors, electric guitars, flying drone obstacle courses, Donkey Kong arcade games or colour sorting robots. Students collaborate and work with their peers and teachers, research content and required instructions, learn to code, including text and block coding, and apply these discovered understandings to new situations.

Students independently build upon new knowledge, using the teacher, internet and instructions for guidance when needed. Students are self-regulated; they start their session by working through our inquiry model. Students make mistakes in their learning but are encouraged to trial, reflect, change and self-correct to improve their project.

“Our class made a blog and we typed up what we learnt and our research findings. We asked each person about their research - which really challenged them to find out the answer. Someone asked me: ‘Do you know anything about lilypads blooming, or flowers that lilypads have?’ so I said no; so I had to research that and put that part into my presentation. They kept on asking me really tough questions that I’d never thought about. It was really fun - but challenging also.”

Learning is a journey and adapts to new learning needs and situations. **Student voice** and **inquiry** provides opportunities for students to develop critical thinking skills and become comfortable with learning through problem solving and trial and error. Students become risk takers, inventors, problem solvers and, most importantly, lovers of learning.

**Student Makers Conferences**

This journey has led Dallas Brooks Community Primary School to hold **Student Makers Conferences**. Our students would like to invite classes of students and teachers to our upcoming student-led event (see invitation on the next page). Our main focus is to assist other students and teachers how to use a STEM program, as part of a whole school inquiry model.

Justin Lania (Assistant Principal)
Adrian Hanson (Leading Teacher)
Mark Dixon (Inquiry Consultant)
Dallas Brooks Community PS
lania.justin.a@edumail.vic.gov.au
Videos of initiatives Dallas Brooks Community Primary School can be found at:
http://youtu.be/j2HwGcOcpKM
www.youtube.com/watch?v=GOQZ0Q66Naw
www.youtube.com/watch?v=U8VuC1B9WT8
www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKBdKFthkU8

Please click on the link to register:
http://ow.ly/Sbac3050Rg

For more information about the Student Makers Conference, contact:
Adrian Hanson
Leading Teacher
hanson.adrian.j@edumail.vic.gov.au

New Pedagogies for Deep Learning

These Digital Case Studies are a collection of stories from schools participating in the New Pedagogies for Deep Learning Global Project. They provide a valuable teaching and learning resource, with several examples (such as those featured here) of student voice, agency and action in classrooms and schools:
http://fuse.education.vic.gov.au/?7QDB7L

Alfie Kohn in Australia: November 2016

Sydney
Thursday 10th November 2016: 6.30pm - 8.30pm
Public lecture: “Too Much Achievement, Too Little Learning: Parenting (and Teaching) in an Achievement-Crazy Culture”
Domain Theatre, Art Gallery of New South Wales
Book online: https://www.trybooking.com/MBBC

Kariong (Central Coast, NSW)
Friday 11th November 2016
4.45pm: Lecture for Teachers: “The Case Against Competition”
7.00pm: Lecture for Parents: “The Homework Myth”
Mingara Recreation Club, Mingara Drive, Tumby Umbi, NSW - free

Adelaide
Saturday 12th November
1.30pm: A presentation for educators & parents: “Punished By Rewards”
Rydges South Park, Corner West Tce & South Tce, Adelaide

Melbourne
Monday 14th November 2016
4.30pm: Lecture for Teachers: “Choices for Children”
7.00pm: Lecture for Parents & Teachers: “The Progressive Schools our Children Deserve”
Templestowe College, Lower Templestowe

Corio
Tuesday 15th November 2016
9.30am - 4.30pm: Seminar for Educators: “Motivation from the Inside Out”
7.00pm: Lecture for Parents & Teachers: “Unconditional Parenting”
Geelong Grammar School, Corio

More information at:
http://jessandcc.wixsite.com/alfiekohn/events

Date: Thursday, 24th November
Time: 10am-2pm
Location: Dallas Brooks Community Primary School
26-36 King Street, Dallas

keyup (0)
Teach the Teacher: Bullying and Safety

At a teachers’ professional development session that was led by the school’s students, students and teachers at St Patrick’s Primary School in Lilydale discussed what the school could do about bullying.

Following their participation in a ‘students as researchers’ session at the school around safety (see details of this approach in Connect 219, June 2016), 11 students used the Teach the Teacher approach to take this further. They identified bullying as an issue of concern to them, and then led a conversation with 14 of their teachers about this topic. They discussed how to do this in training sessions provided by the VicSRC for them and students from two other nearby schools.

The student team at St Patrick’s asked questions like: “What does bullying mean to you?” “What strategies can students use to have the power to stop bullying?” and “What can we do to prevent or minimise bullying at our school?”

The students felt that, overall, the session with teachers went well. The best parts, they felt, were the organising and the activities – and they liked being able to talk with their teachers about this issue.

But they also said that it went a bit too long and the ending felt rushed. They would have liked to have had more input of their own into the discussions, particularly around the action proposals at the end. Planning should have been given a time limit, and the groups spent too much time writing and not enough talking. Some felt the teachers asked too many questions, rather than these coming from students, and that student input was needed in the commitments being made, so that these would truly reflect the conversations that took place.

Students and teachers all spoke positively about the session that the students ran. One teacher commented how powerful it was to hear what the students were thinking, several teachers stated how great it was that we got to hear what the students thought, and we were all very proud of how mature, articulate and responsible the students were. The students are very keen to use the model again.

Following the student-led professional development, teachers have made commitments to:

• celebrate uniqueness during house afternoons;
• ask students ‘How can we make you feel safe?’;
• stop inappropriate conversations or games when we become aware of them; and
• be involved in developing a protocol to deal with reports of bullying.

This Teach the Teacher approach aims to make students more comfortable to talk to teachers when bullying occurs ie to be trusting and fearless. For teachers, our aim is to listen to students and take action: bullying incidents need to be followed up.

We’re now planning a house afternoon in Term 4 to celebrate uniqueness. We’re also promoting the idea of talking with and trusting teachers – and making the idea of mutual trust into a campaign.

Based on notes from the school’s Teach the Teacher team

For more information, contact Sarah Graves:
sgraves@spililydale.catholic.edu.au
In 2014, Mount Waverley Secondary College embarked on a journey to amplify student voice. Although we faced many challenges and obstacles on our journey, we gained new experiences and reaped the benefits of enhancing student voice and encouraging student-teacher collaboration. Student voice at MWSC has grown immensely over the last couple of years, so we wanted to share our experiences with other schools and help them with their own student voice journey.

We decided to organise a professional learning conference for students and teachers across the state.

Because we believe that professional learning about enhancing student voice should be delivered by students, this event was going to be run by students, in partnership with teachers.

Planning
We named our professional learning conference “Building School Pride through Enhancing Student Voice”.

This conference was going to be big, so we needed all hands on deck as there were many tasks to complete prior to the event, including, but not limited to, organising the outline of the day, sessions, promotion, lanyards, booklets, conference bags, banners, signs, writing materials and food.

We began planning for the conference six weeks before the event. Many of our Year 8-12 Student Leaders were involved and contributed at weekly meetings. We collaborated with the VicSRC and the Halogen Foundation, and got input from other teachers because we believe that student-teacher collaboration is extremely important.

Sessions
Planning the workshops required collaboration to ensure that we didn’t repeat anything. We also needed to have a mixture of activities, such as, speakers, brainstorming, group work and discussions, and took that into account when we were developing each session. Our Student Leaders split into teams and worked outside of our weekly meeting times to plan for each workshop, and then gave a progress update at the weekly meetings.

For the morning session, we invited the City of Monash Mayor, the VicSRC and Samantha Skinner from the Halogen Foundation to speak about leadership and student voice. Our Head of Student Leadership also briefly outlined our College’s student leadership journey.

Throughout the day guests participated in professional learning workshops. Students ran three workshops: Student Leadership Structure, Teach the Teacher and Student-led Initiatives, our Head of Student Leadership ran a session on the admin side of our student leadership program, and we invited the VicSRC to run a workshop on action plans.
Promotion
We aimed to reach one hundred guests for the conference so we went all out with promotion: we made videos, flyers, infographics and posters, we sent emails, we notified our network groups and we spread the word on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, using the hashtag #StudentTeacherCollab and #StudentVoice.

Challenges
There were a few challenges, particularly on the day of the professional learning conference:

- **Timing** was an issue because we started later than anticipated as guests had to travel from afar, which meant that the morning session ran into morning tea and the first workshop.

  **Tip:** Be flexible with time. Consider where guests are coming from and plan your event accordingly.

- **Technology** was another issue, with clickers not working, and videos and sounds not playing.

  **Tip:** Ensure everything is working before the event. But if they don’t work on the day, stay calm and don’t worry! These things happen. Try to quickly rectify the problem but if you can’t fix it you’ll just have to go without it.

- **Sufficient preparation** is vital in order for an event to run smoothly. There was a lot of preparation for the day as a whole but individual sessions could have been given a bit more attention.

  **Tip:** Spare some time a few days before the event to conduct a detailed run through of the sessions and the day as a whole, to ensure that everyone knows what they are doing and that problems are fixed before the event. Also spare some time to provide training for facilitators to give them more experience in engaging with people they don’t know.

The professional learning conference was a fantastic learning experience for all of us. It was a great opportunity for us to share our journey, collaborate with other students and teachers, and hear their ideas and thoughts on student voice and student leadership.

*Chester Ngan*
Mount Waverley Secondary College
School-based SRC Congresses

Several schools have been conducting SRC Congresses, involving larger groups of students and based generally on Parliamentary processes, often along the lines of the annual VicSRC Congress. Here are a couple of examples of recent school-based Congresses:

The Mac.Robertson Girls’ High School

On Tuesday 6th September The Mac. Robertson Girls High School SRC held our first School Congress. It was such an amazing experience for all those who participated, organised or facilitated.

This event was student-run with the aim to bring students together to debate, decide and act on the issues that really matter to our education. We wanted to encourage open-minded and courageous thinking from the girls so they can learn to foster critical thinking as opposed to the content-based and structured thinking we are exposed to everyday.

We had four groups of girls who developed their proposals with a focus on how it could be achieved and why it mattered. These girls were facilitated by our Student Action Team leaders over the Monday before Congress and on the actual day of Congress.

The proposals were:

• We propose that students at Mac.Rob, should sit on teacher interview panels.
• We propose to have equal and centralised access to resources and additional support which will allow for a more open and fair learning space.
• We propose that the select-entry school entrance exams should be based on extracurricular as well.
• We propose that the Macrob SRC should introduce student-teacher progress interviews.

The four groups presented through many entertaining plays and presentations. We had a fiery debate with many of the girls exploring ideas; I quote my teacher who was present: “All the teachers in the school need to learn from what you girls are saying!”

Although it was only our first time, it was an experience that has definitely opened the eyes of many and has shown them that there are no boundaries with student voice. The Mac.Rob SRC could never have achieved this without the inspiration from the VicSRC and Melbourne Girls College. Thank you to those teachers and students who supported us, and to our guests Roger Holdsworth, Dave Mould and Fiona Campbell.

Margaret Tran
Mac.Rob SRC President
“When I say CON, you say -GRESS. CON-GRESS! CON-GRESS! CON-GRESS!"
*various voices start shouting and cheering whilst clapping their hands in anticipation for drumroll please ....... the first ever Mac.Rob Congress!!! Yay!* 

I never thought I’d hear that chant again, but on the 6th of September this year, in our very own Hall, Mac.Rob’s first ever Congress took place; and I shouted that chant louder and stronger and with so much happiness and passion in my voice that I almost couldn’t contain myself. 

You might be thinking, is this girl serious? But when you are lucky enough to experience something like the VicSRC Congress and be able to bring it back to your school, to share that experience with other students and to embrace and empower student voice, it really does bring about this surge of joy and delight ... plus a thousand other words that describe high levels of happiness. 

This year, Margaret Tran, Marine Chu, Shenpaha Ganesan, Karuna Chalapti and myself were selected to attend the 2016 VicSRC Congress. Leaving Congress, we thought, why leave it behind? Why not bring it back with us? Why not start something at Mac.Rob? Why not have a Mac.Rob Congress?! And thus, the idea of holding our very 1st Mac.Rob Congress was born – creds to our Congress Crew, of course ;) 

What started out as an idea in the minutes transformed into a sign-up sheet which then lead to our two-day Congress and finally, our open debate in the Hall. Just as I had worked hard and presented my group’s issue to the rest of the delegates at the VicSRC Congress, our 24 delegates prepped themselves to present their cases at the open debate during lunchtime. 

For those of you who could not make it to this extraordinary event, here are the details. 

Once our 24 delegates were selected, they were spilt into 4 groups with the following topics:
1. Students should be on teacher interview panels
2. Students should be allowed to sit in on other classes (more for VCE students)
3. There should be progress interviews between students and teachers
4. The Mac.Rob Entrance Exam should be based on extracurricular as well

Now, what were the Congress Crew doing during all this? We all acted as facilitators – our role was to bring students together to discuss, debate and decide on the issues that really mattered to their (and our) education. 

The delegates were required to discuss their topics, identify a problem, come up with a solution and then present their case: Why should their resolution be taken into consideration? After presenting their case, the floor was open to the audience – any student or teacher present could ask a question, regardless of whether it was for or against the topic. Oh, and we encouraged devil’s advocates to take the stand!
Melbourne Girls’ College: Year 7 Congress

On Thursday September 15th, over 200 Year 7 students at Melbourne Girls’ College (MGC) held their own Congress. Year 7 issues were focused on and had been raised by their SRC in the weeks leading up to this event.

The Year 7 SRC had received training on Congress procedures but this was limited to only 30 to 50 students, so hopes were high that the other students would catch on quickly. With only 60 minutes available to debate resolutions, a speakers list was established a week beforehand to ensure the debate proceeded in an orderly fashion. When the list was exhausted, if time allowed it, speakers were to be called from the floor.

The Congress debated six resolutions out of the nine prepared. Four were carried, one of which by a single vote. They were:

1. That the Lyceum Representative Council (LRC) will encourage teachers to put which specific books are needed on Compass.
2. That the LRC will enforce a rule that, if it’s over 30 degrees, students can access the Lyceum during lunch time in terms 1 and 4.
3. That the LRC should let students do homework in Wellbeing Classes.
4. That the LRC will ask the teachers to implement a poll that allows students to vote on decisions concerning their subjects like study texts and excursions.

Now that the entire Year 7 cohort understands the Congress process, we are extremely optimistic that they will be able to participate more fully in Congress next year. This will, hopefully, allow us to further embed this practice as a way to support and encourage student voice at MGC.

Zack Pretlove
SRC Adviser, Melbourne Girls’ College
08835084@mgc.vic.edu.au

Students need to realise just how powerful their voices are. Their voices have the capability of changing anything all around them, for the better. All you have to do is stand up and speak out; you never know, you might just start a chain reaction.

Clare Joseph
Year 10, Mac.Rob SRC Family member
Maintaining SRC Momentum

1. **Listen and respond**
Students need to believe that:
- the SRC is important;
- it can achieve desirable and useful results.
This will be tested, both through general cynicism (“it’s never done anything in the past”) and through students making ‘impossible’ or ‘ridiculous’ proposals. How you respond to these is critical to your credibility:
  a) how do you reject and idea without rejecting the idea-giver?
  b) perhaps a collective brainstorm followed by the selection of ‘this month’s student-suggested initiative’. This doesn’t mean that other ideas were ‘stupid’ etc, just that we’ve decided to prioritise this one ... for now;
  c) strategies for getting students involved ‘for real’ in their own suggestions - establish a culture of not doing things for students, but supporting them to do things for themselves (a parallel with the way that good teachers operate).

2. **Choose your initial topics carefully**
They must be exciting: try to do something bold and different. The greatest success in motivation can come from taking on something really hard - but that is significant and exciting. ‘Something to fight for’ doesn’t need to mean a confrontation, but that it should be seen to be worthwhile - something that students really care about.

3. **Organise to get results.**
- Get into a regular time to meet. If there’s nothing to decide on, at least do a reflection: ‘What problems are we meeting so far?; ‘What progress has been made?’; ‘What ideas to overcome barriers?’ Write these down.
- ‘Nothing succeeds like success.” Set yourself practical plans (even if they’re small) that are achievable or have concrete stages in them that you can mark off.
- Develop action plans with clear steps so you can see progress being made. Make up a check sheet or a display for the group so you can all see what’s been achieved so far.

4. **Publicise and celebrate results.**
- Report back to students about what they wanted - both individually and collectively. In particular, make a small success a big success - or say it is (but don’t go overboard).
- Signage: acknowledge support from other people; put signs on things that SRC action has achieved.
- Report back to external groups eg student networks - get reports published in newsletters, local newspapers etc - especially, get the cynics to report and represent the success - but make sure that it’s a successful experience for them.

Roger Holdsworth (I think)
Students Redesigning Study Space

Working with the Facilities & Environment Committee

Everyone has a different experience when dealing with the pressures of school work. Who knows better than students about what these are – and what is needed?

We’re making sure assessments are in on time, cramming for that SAC we’ve been stressing over, and preparing for exams – these are only a few examples of what students are going through. And one of the hardest things students are dealing with is finding a suitable place to study all year round. This is starting to cause controversy in many schools.

The biggest struggle comes from Year 11 and 12 students who can’t find a satisfactory place to study at school. In summer it’s too hot outside, the library is overcrowded and noisy, and you’re not allowed upstairs in spare classrooms during a free or at recess and lunch. Winter is no different: the wind causes many problems including flying papers, the library is again overcrowded (it’s warmer there) and you’re still not allowed in spare classrooms. This leaves very little or no spaces for students to study during school times.

Time for action

At my school, the current controversy from VCE students, aimed at the Principal and teachers, was starting to get out of hand. As a developer of my SRC – a group that is also still being set up – I decided it was time to take action.

Before I was to go to see my Principal about the issue, I needed to liaise with my peers and get an idea of how important this issue was to those it concerned. However, having a school with 1000 students, and around 20% of them being in VCE, it became difficult to get a realistic idea about everyone who this issue affected. I didn’t want these difficulties in consultation to stop me from making a change in my school. I decided that I needed to team up with a group of staff who focus on the facilities within the school.

Facilities & Environment Committee

Luckily enough for me, there was such a team: my schools’ Facilities and Environment Committee. I asked if I could join it as a student representative and I was accepted. The committee also consisted of one teacher, two representatives from the school’s leadership, one maintenance worker, a parent and a local council member.

Being on this committee meant I have been able to express my ideas to a select group. I started by devising a form that was sent out to all students, asking how they think the school could be improved. All students received this email, and we were able to gather information about study spaces; we realised that this was an issue that many people were being affected by. From here, I was able to approach my Principal about the issue and work together with him and the committee to develop a plan to enable VCE students to access a space where they are able to study during school without teachers’ assistance, allowing them to be independent and flexible with their studies.

It’s early in the planning stages, as the committee only meets every two months at the moment, so there hasn’t been that much progress yet with the production stages. However, because I was able to consult with numerous students within my school and get some background information on the issue, I am now working with a group of passionate people to redesign what a study space has to look like within schools.

Chelsea Hard
St Joseph’s College, Echuca
VicSRC Executive 2016-17

Image from NSW TAFE: Bachelor of Design: http://ow.ly/cXxU304UcQh

October 2016
Democratic Education revisited

Now that I have retired, I think I can commit to writing some of my experiences with Democratic Education (capitals are necessary), its principles and its characters.

Chief of the characters is Art Pearl, now in his 90s (as is the queen), whose mind is still as sharp as any proverbial (Art’s not the queen’s).

I first met Art in the early 1980s on one of his trips to the faithful at Sunshine High School. I wasn’t among the original La Trobe University Task Force who set up a school within a school at Sunshine, but I quickly joined what was then called the 3/4/5 scheme. This was a vertically organised group of some 90 students from Forms 3, 4 and 5, taught by a dedicated group of teachers who put to the test Art’s principles of Democratic Education. Four of these teachers were members of the task force under the guidance of another seminal character, Tony Knight.

Together Pearl and Knight wrote the handbook on Democratic Education, The democratic classroom: Theory to inform practice (Cresswell, NJ: Hampton Press), where they recognised six distinguishing principles of a democratic classroom:

“The test of a democratic education is the difference it makes in the lives of students and the community to which they belong... if it doesn’t make a difference, it doesn’t make a difference.” (p40)

Subsequent chapters of the text elaborate on the six principles.

“Democratic skills are developed through school-created opportunities to practise. Skills of persuasion, reaching a sensible understanding through cooperation, compromise and consensus, how to disagree without being disagreeable.” (p99)

Preparation for democratic citizenship can be achieved through cooperative learning.

“Student learning teams in the existing schools would make the classroom less deadly.” (p115)

The four basic rights – rights of expression, privacy, due process, and the right not to be a captive audience – can be taught by both analysing them and practising them. Rights are seen as curriculum issues and govern relationships between teachers and students.

Democratic Education is not about teaching content in traditional subject areas but should be directed at assisting students to make responsible decisions in their careers, social connections, culture-carrying activities, and the constructive use of leisure, safe sexual practices and careful use of psychoactive substances.

Later Pearl expanded these principles to seven. In an address to Diploma of Education students at Victoria University in 2012, he restated these as:

Knowledge: the gaining of information needed to make meaningful decisions; encouragement to work collaboratively and to actively participate in the community; creating democratic authority where teachers and students negotiate what is learned and how it is learned; inclusion: welcoming everybody equally and ensuring all have the same rights and privileges; ensuring the inalienable rights of expression, assembly, privacy, movement and due process; the creation of an environment where everyone can reach their potential and equality.

(http://ow.ly/BO2u301y02k)

At Sunshine High School these principles were set into daily practice and were reported on by Jones, D., Metcalfe, M., Williams, T. and Williamson, J. (1982) A School Curriculum and Self-Evaluation Project: Task Force Report Seven. (Bundoora, Vic: La Trobe University School of Education). This document is still the only school-based review of Democratic Education in the world. It reveals the relative success of implementing Pearl and Knight’s principles of Democratic Education.

In light of Art’s principles, the school within a school introduced some of Victoria’s first innovative ideas such as Cross-Age Tutoring at local primary schools, work experience and community service programs. Also students were engaged in curriculum planning for the 3/4/5 scheme, negotiated curriculum in the classrooms and producing a weekly newsletter.

In an interview with David Jones in 2014, he revealed what he thought the essentials of Democratic Education were:

“Well, it’s about inclusiveness. It’s about making sure that all students, regardless of their circumstances, have an opportunity
to learn and hopefully there are circumstances that mean they need some sort of what I suppose Art later called the optimum learning environment is created. But it’s definitely based around the idea that all students, regardless of their circumstances and their particular backgrounds, are treated with equal opportunity to learn.

“So if you can, that inclusive education is creating an optimum learning environment for all students.

“That’s number one. I think that number two is definitely empowering students to make decisions: that students are involved with the staff on making decisions about the curriculum and that’s not to say that staff gave over their responsibilities, but back then there was less accountability, so putting it into a context for now, I would still see that principle is very important. You can still empower students to take as much responsibility as they can take about implementing elements of what they learn and how they learn it. So the student decision-making is really important but it’s not to say that they have equal responsibility; they don’t, but it’s built in in a systematic way into the different stages of their schooling. Art and Tony have talked a lot about that. So I still see those two as really important.

“I think also equally important is that staff are democratic. You know, about how they work together to organise education. Art and Tony have talked a lot about that. So I still see those two as really important. But this is only a small section of the participants in the learning environment collaborating.”

That was then, this is now. I’m sure a vestige of what was done in the late 1970s-early 1980s lives on in some classrooms around the state, but as a whole school movement, it’s hard to replicate in a climate of competition for student numbers and results-driven accountability.

Michael Metcalfe
metcalfe.michael.md@bigpond.com

Sunshine High School, Vic: 1977-1980

Way back in 1980, in Connect 3, John Martino, then a student at Sunshine High School in Melbourne’s western suburbs, wrote about a vertical ‘alternative’ unit within the school called 3/4/5. As Michael Metcalfe, who was a teacher within that unit, now reflects about schooling and democracy, it is useful to look back at a student’s perception of our ‘radical educational history’.

This is an excerpt from John’s 1980 article. The full article can be found in Connect 3, which can be downloaded from our website.

This is an inadequate and inefficient method.

The democratic way of life cannot be taught merely through the introduction of various theories about democracy in the curriculum. It is, of course, important to inform children and youth regarding democracy’s origins and ideals, but this provides no assurance that students thus informed will automatically acquire democratic habits and loyalties.

These democratic habits and loyalties will be of vital importance to the people of this nation in the future. Towards the end of...
this century, the democratic way of life will face a grave dilemma. At this present time, trends towards a powerful bureaucracy are clearly evident. This trend poses the problem of erosion of our civil liberties. The maturing student must possess a certain degree of experience in the area of decision-making in order to combat this problem.

The Education System argues that it is instilling the necessary democratic beliefs in its students, though curricular activities. But what they do not seem to understand is that

the democratic way of life ... does not consist of a system of beliefs but rather a cluster of habits which in combination define one’s character. In short, mere democratic indoctrination will not produce democratic citizens. 1

How can students become more involved in decision-making?

At the present, there is only one opportunity. This is the School Council. In theory, it provides students with first-hand experience in decision-making. The constitution of the School Councils (which was written by the Education Department) guarantees equality to student representatives. They have the same voting rights as adult representatives on the Council. But in actual fact students are not equal.

Because of their lack of experience in the running of meetings, students are at a distinct disadvantage. Moreover, the presence of parents, teachers and the principal of the school is intimidating to the student representatives. They are frightened of the prospect of having to stand up in front of all those adults and ask questions. This inhibition prevents students from arguing about an issue under discussion which might interest them.

I have had first-hand experience in the running of a School Council. In 1975 I was one of the first students elected to a local School Council. It seemed to em that this method of involving students in decision-making was ineffectual. This experience convinced me that there had to be a better and simpler way to involve students in decision-making.

Before I explain my theory, it is necessary to describe the school system within which it was used. In 1977 at Sunshine High School, a revolutionary school structure was set up, it was known as the 3/4/5-vertical scheme. 2

The most revolutionary aspect of this new scheme was the fact that Forms 3, 4 and 5 were to be integrated into the one form level. The number of students who enrolled in the 3/4/5 Scheme was 90, since not all eligible students wanted to be in the new scheme. The curriculum of 3/4/5 was different to that of the ‘normal’ schools. New subjects such as Spoken English (which involved students learning to speak confidently before large groups of people) were pioneered by the 3/4/5 Scheme.

Students in forms 3, 4 and 5 were integrated into the one form level in all subjects except mathematics. This scheme increased work-loads of teachers who taught it, because in certain subjects they would have to provide different standards of work for their pupils. The 3/4/5-vertical scheme has been highly successful. 1979 marks the third year of its existence.

In 1978, following a great deal of urging by my social science teacher, Mr James Oakes, I developed a plan for a student/teacher system of government. The staff-student government was known as the Congress of 3/4/5. The Congress would not have been possible without the liberal support of the staff of 3/4/5.

My initial plan called for two representatives from each of the home groups which 3/4/5 had been divided into. These representatives would attend a Congress meeting once a week. This system proved unsuccessful: students did not like having to stay back after school on a regular basis. A roster system was then tried, but this also proved unsuccessful.

What then happened was that a group of between five and ten students, plus the staff of 3/4/5, regularly attended the meeting of the Congress. When an important issue was listed on the agenda for the next Congress, a large group of students would attend and vote on the issue. On one occasion, when an important issue was being debated, I recall between 30 and 50 students attending the Congress.

Thus the Congress was extremely democratic. No-one is forced to attend a meeting, but if they do they can vote on the issue under discussion. Students and teachers have an equal vote and an equal say on the issues being discussed. Students are not inhibited by the number or presence of their teachers.

Congress is a success; students can participate in the decision-making process. They can behave in an intelligent and rational way.

All that students need is a chance, and if this democracy is to survive they must be given this chance.

References

1 The Democratic Way of Life: An American Interpretation. (A Mentor book published by the New American Library)
3 The 3/4/5-vertical scheme is now known as the Year 9/10/11-vertical scheme...

John Martino
from Connect 3, April 1980
Autism and Student Voice

Autism... What comes to your mind when you see this word? Difference, a disability – or someone who doesn’t have a voice?

When I was in primary school, I was diagnosed with having autism spectrum disorder – which is a lifelong developmental disability that affects, among other things, the way an individual relates to his or her environment ... or at least that’s what the doctors say.

Before I was diagnosed, I thought I was what most people would describe as normal. I was a happy kid who didn’t care what people thought of me. After I was diagnosed with autism, my life changed: I was bullied even more than before and my school never seemed to understand what they should teach me, as to them I was just the kid with autism. Instead of being with my peers, I was often separated and taught ‘life skills’, some of which I will never use or which were outdated, such as reading a phone book.

In Year 7, I made my mother promise not to tell anyone about my diagnoses, as I wanted to be treated normally until I felt comfortable enough to tell people. I hid in plain sight for four whole years before I eventually got sick of hiding and sick of the constant perception that people on the autism spectrum are stupid and don’t have a future.

In April this year, I started to tell everyone I was on the spectrum. You can probably imagine their reactions when I tell them!

I CAN Network
You may be asking why I changed my mind about telling people of my diagnoses. The reason is that, at the start of this year, I heard about a network whose vision is similar to mine. The ‘I CAN’ Network is trying to change people’s perception of what people on the autism spectrum can do. They also provide a mentoring program in schools where mentees learn to embrace their autism traits and learn important skills that come naturally to neurotypical people, such as having conversations with others. When I heard about this network I was instantly interested, as I knew how this could benefit students on the spectrum. However I had no idea of the impact this network would have on me. After I told everyone on Facebook I was on the autism spectrum, I signed up for the pilot mentoring program in Warrnambool. Before the program I was hiding my true self so I could be seen as ‘normal’, however now I advocate for students on the spectrum by openly telling my story in hopes people will see that there is no visual profile that says: I have autism.

That is my story and it is the same for many others who are diagnosed with autism – as we are not treated as being equal and are treated as though we are people with some sort of disease.

In July I made a big leap and stood up in front of 180 students from all over Victoria to present a fifty second nomination speech in hopes to be elected onto the Victorian Student Representative Council Executive. In my speech I said the reasons I was nominating: I wanted equal representation for those students who were not seen as being mainstream and, in particular, I wanted to represent students on the spectrum. I was elected.

While I was traveling home from the first Victorian SRC Executive camp I overheard some women talking on the train about how students on the spectrum are treated badly in mainstream schools and that it was the teachers’ fault. But the reason we are treated badly is not because of the quality of the teachers but is due to what the media tells people. These women got their information from a morning TV show.

That is why people like me are here, as we speak the truth by telling our stories in hopes of changing people’s perceptions of autism.

Student Voice
A lot of people assume ‘student voice’ is about being loud and confident and doesn’t need diversity. I personally don’t believe this, as the only way we can improve education is to hear from everyone’s perspective and not just from those who are loud and confident. I believe I fill a very important spot on the Victorian SRC Executive as I represent all those students who have been treated badly in school. I have been through similar experiences, some I still haven’t told many people about.
On the 12th of September I skipped school for a day to speak at the Victorian Parliament in Melbourne. I was speaking at a hearing about providing services to people on the autism spectrum. I was there representing Brauer College (my school), the ‘I CAN’ Network and of course the Victorian Student Representative Council. If you want to read more about that, you can check out my Facebook page linked at the bottom of this article.

A great man once said: “try and leave this world a little better than you found it”; that man was Lord Robert Baden Powell, the founder of the largest youth organisation in the world, Scouts. I think that quote sums up what I am doing, as I know anything I do now won’t help the ‘past’ me in primary school, however it will help the next generation who won’t have to go through similar experiences. I tell my story so others feel inspired to do the same, as I believe the only way we can change this world for the better is to share our stories and educate people on what school is actually like for students like me.

I am autistic and I am proud to be, as it gives me ‘super powers’. I can smell watermelon chewing gum at 50 paces. And if you haven’t showered today I will know! Autism is not a disease, nor is it contagious, and it doesn’t mean I can’t go to school and do the same work everybody else does.

I may not speak much at school, however my way of being heard is through writing articles such as this online, so the world can see the truth of what happens behind closed doors.

**Student voice is for everyone.** You don’t need to be loud, nor do you need to fit in to the ideal of mainstream education. All you need is to believe that your voice is just as important in helping shape the world as anyone else’s.

**Bryce Pace**  
Brauer College, Warrnambool  
VicSRC Executive 2016-2017

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**Resources:**

For more details, see my Facebook page:  
http://ow.ly/DBZY304yyzT

For information about I CAN, see:  

“The I CAN Network is driving a rethink of Autism, from ‘I Can’t’ to ‘I CAN’. We mentor young people on the Autism Spectrum to live life with an ‘I CAN’ attitude. We bring out the ‘awe’ in AWEtism through education, advocacy and providing opportunities. We build networks across schools, universities, TAFEs, communities, businesses and governments. “Together, we are Australia’s first social enterprise founded by people with Autism.”

(And, by the way, Chris Varney, Founder of the I CAN Network, was once a member of the VicSRC Executive.)
2016 VicSRC Recognition Awards: The Finalists

Group Action Award
- Emerald Secondary College: TADAA (Teens Against Drugs And Alcohol)
- Nossal High School: Formation
- Rural Youth Ambassadors

Pearson Australia Teacher of the Year Award
- Sonya Gregorio, Barwon Valley Special Development School
- Zack Pretlove, Melbourne Girls College
- Kristie Satilmis, Auburn High School

Newsboys Foundation Youth Leadership Award
- Kelly Phan, Bendigo Senior Secondary College
- Kristen Sellings, Yarram Secondary College
- Thomas Velican, Nossal High School

Department of Education and Training SRC of the Year - Primary
- Coatesville Primary School SRC
- Rosanna Primary School JSC
- Swan Hill Primary School JSC

Department of Education and Training SRC of the Year - Secondary
- Bendigo Senior Secondary College
- Braybrook College
- Mount Alexander College
- Mount Waverley Secondary College

We are counting down to the VicSRC Recognition Awards ceremony, where we celebrate best practice student voice and award $20,000 in grants to schools all across Victoria.

In the following pages you will 'Meet the finalists,' and get to know the ins-and-outs of these incredible student voice stories that are transforming education.

2016 VicSRC Recognition Awards
Tuesday 18th October 2016, 6.30pm-8.30pm
The Arena at NAB Village
700 Bourke St, Docklands, Melbourne VIC 3008
Tickets: 2016-raawards.eventbrite.com.au
Department of Education and Training: Group Action Award

- **Emerald Secondary College: TADAA (Teens Against Drugs And Alcohol)**

  TADAA have found that young teenagers are making poor decisions with drugs and alcohol resulting in an increase in the rate of disengagement and expulsions from schools. As a team of students, TADAA have researched this phenomenon and are working with students, parents and the wider community as well as local drug and alcohol support groups to develop a new curriculum, resources, education program and opportunities to enable young teenagers to make better choices.

- **Nossal High School: Formation**

  Formation is a phenomenal, empowering female leadership program, established by eleven passionate Nossal High School students. Frustrated with the burden of inequality, Formation built a support network for girls, equipping them with tools of overcoming. Through small groups, workshops, an online group and an inter-school summit, Formation empowers, supports and inspires.

- **Rural Youth Ambassadors**

  Annually, young people from across rural and remote Victoria are nominated by their schools to be considered to participate in the Rural Youth Ambassador program for that year. From these nominations, up to 20 are invited to participate within the Rural Youth Ambassador program for a period of 12 months. These young people are from a range of schools, including both government and nongovernment schools. "The Rural Youth Ambassadors program has changed the way I think about the environments and myself and communities I am involved in."
Newsboys Foundation
Youth Leadership Award

• Kelly Phan, Bendigo Senior Secondary College
  *Kelly Phan* is a Year 12 student at Bendigo Senior Secondary College who is hoping to study Law/Global Studies at Monash University next year. Currently, *Kelly* is a passionate student leader in her Student Council, and outside of school, hosts a radio show that raises awareness about LGBTIQ+ issues called *The Gay Agenda*. She also enjoys writing on her personal blog, making videos, photography, and dreaming about changing the world.

• Kristen Sellings, Yarram Secondary College
  *Kristen Sellings* says: “Having the confidence needed to represent myself and others never came easy for me. It’s been something which I’ve worked really hard to achieve. Coming from a small, remote school, changing the stereotypes surrounding students and what we’re capable of achieving in education has been a challenge. However, through perseverance, I’ve been able to create an exciting student voice culture within our community.”

• Thomas Velican, Nossal High School
  *Thomas Velican* is a Year 12 student at Nossal High School. He is passionate about student voice and student engagement in decision making and is involved with several community groups including his school’s SRC, the Victorian Technical School Initiative and the Casey Youth Action Committee. He is also a passionate musician and hopes to pursue an Arts degree at university.

Pearson Australia
Teacher of the Year Award

• Sonya Gregorio, Barwon Valley Special Development School
  Having supported many students with disabilities and affected by trauma, *Sonya Gregorio* has always looked for strengths and designed supports to provide a platform that enhances abilities and develops student voice. *Sonya* believes everyone has potential and can shine with appropriate interventions and this is the underpinning belief in her work in Wellbeing.

• Zack Pretlove, Melbourne Girls’ College
  *Zack Pretlove* has participated in SRC activities since he was a student at Warrnambool College. For the last five years, as SRC advisor at Melbourne Girls’ College he has helped the SRC develop their own constitution, run *Teach the Teacher* programs and encourage the student voice through a VicSRC-style Congress system.

• Kristie Satilmis, Auburn High School
  *Kristie Satilmis* is Leading Teacher for Staff and Student Development at Auburn High School. She loves sharing her enthusiasm for her subject areas, English and Humanities, and supporting students to take the initiative in their own learning and leadership development. When she’s not at school, she is busy being the proud mum of two sons, eating out, reading and planning her next travel adventure.
Department of Education and Training
SRC of the Year - Primary

• Coatesville Primary School SRC
  Coatesville Primary School is committed to promoting student voice and choice in the school and wider community. Providing students with a multitude of ways to express their ideas and opinions and giving them the opportunity to deliver change through authentic student-led action, promotes a strong sense of belonging among the student body. This in turn, builds school pride and a positive community of learners.

• Rosanna Primary School JSC
  The Junior School Council is a body within Rosanna Primary School made up of students from Years 2 to 6 who represent their class and promote student voice, engagement and empowerment. In addition, they contribute their views and participate in school decision-making. The group has a strong focus on the development of leadership skills. JSC representatives work as a team to achieve their goals as well as overseeing the raising of funds for the improvement of school facilities and donations to charities within the community.

• Swan Hill Primary School JSC
  Swan Hill Primary School’s Junior School Council team is made up of 13 students from Grades 5 and 6. Their job as Junior School Councillors is to help make decisions and changes throughout the school community. They enjoy having this leadership opportunity at our school and think that it’s great that everybody’s ideas are included. The teachers and students love what the JSC produces. Having a Junior School Council is great and the projects that they have completed make our school a much better place.

Department of Education and Training
SRC of the Year - Secondary

• Bendigo Senior Secondary College
  The Bendigo Senior Secondary College Student Council is made up of 25 highly motivated students in Years 11 and 12. Throughout 2016 the Student Council group focused on providing activities and opportunities for students in the broader College to express their opinions, fundraise, participate in student activities and promote the environment.

• Braybrook College
  Braybrook College’s SRC is special in many ways. Loud as they may be, the SRC is a diligent team of almost 150 students who work to promote Braybrook College as more than just another educational institution, but a lively, inclusive western suburbs community that listens! It has been an enormous year for Braybrook, full of successes and hard work.
• Mount Alexander College
The dynamic and dedicated Student Leadership Team for 2016 at Mount Alexander College aim to enhance the opportunities for Student Voice and Empowerment. Students are at the centre of everything that happens, including supporting each other as student leaders and mentors, facilitating Whole School Assemblies, reporting to School Council on Student Leadership Team activities, participating in Teacher Interview Panels and organising school wide special events including Refugee Week. Student Voice and Empowerment allow students to take control of their learning.

• Mount Waverley Secondary College
The Mount Waverley College Student Leadership Team, known as ‘Leaders at Mount’, consists of over 120 students from Years 8 to 12 who are driven to inspire positive change within the College and the wider community. Led by the College Captains, the Leaders at Mount collaborate with students and teachers, and work tirelessly to ensure that student voice is at the forefront of their education.

Are you a VicSRC Member School? .... Membership discounts
Did you know that you can receive discounted event prices if you have a VicSRC Membership?
If you are not a member school and would like to take advantage of discounted ticket prices to VicSRC events, simply select ‘VicSRC Membership (Annual School Membership)’ at the start of your online registration. Or check about membership on-line at: www.vicsrc.org.au/get-involved/school-membership

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

Teacher and student relationships affect my school experience. I have some teachers who I really connect with in terms of learning style, and then others that I just don’t understand from. Who I’m working with – friends or other people – affects how I work within a team.

There are a lot of people who are too shy to speak up in our school, or are nervous about speaking up if they don’t have a leadership role. We want to change this. We want everyone to feel like they have a voice that matters, and they can talk to us to share what they need.

We want to take a survey of students to give them a chance to provide real feedback on student-teacher relationships in our school, set up a Google doc on what works and doesn’t work in teaching and learning.

If you really feel like giving out that voice, just do it. Most likely if you are thinking and feeling it, others are too. You’re not alone. We’re in it together.

Prineeka, 15, Glen Waverley Secondary College | #StudentsOfVic
What do you think of when you picture a school camp (including an SRC training camp) or meeting? I guess I picture a closely defined itinerary – to achieve set results - and a mindlessly followed program.

Sure I expect that there will also be late nights and lots of fun, but what I don’t expect is a blank timetable and an open book. When the VicSRC Executive got to the Rubicon Outdoor Centre for our recent and first training camp, the floor was ours.

How scary? But how empowering!

Here are three takeaways for students and teachers to do the same in your school!

Takeaway #1: Run an ‘un-camp’.

This is student voice in the truest sense: we got to set the agenda, changed it as it suited us and made the camp ours. For anyone planning a camp, it’s worth seeing what your campers are capable of coming up with themselves.

Being an active part of deciding how the camp runs is both educational and adds to the experience. It could be a matter of slotting predefined activities into set blocks in an order that works for the participants, or completely running our own activities. Let the kids take charge and learn!

Takeaway #2: Walk and talk!

For any of you out there trying to make your meetings more productive, simply try a walk and talk!

The best (although muddiest) bit of the camp was slogging through the Cathedral Ranges State Forest after a night of thunderous rain. It was quite a hike, but all through it we never stopped chatting and planning. The fresh mountain air and somewhat strenuous exercise kept the ideas flowing.

Out of our discussions emerged some key themes centred around the ideas of diversity in schools, how we can support SRCs in their student voice, and collaboration between schools. For students interested in having a more active role in the VicSRC, it would have been an exciting conversation to listen in to.

Through the mud and brush we emerged an hour later and a spontaneous picnic ensued, rug and all! Try it!

Takeaway #3: Be flexible!

This one applies anywhere but especially on a camp where things may take longer to do and where teachers and students all get tired. We decided on a packed agenda for the three days and we simply couldn't do it all. Being willing to adapt and drop things from the timetable that we had made, was key to our camp's success. We didn't get everything done but we were happier, more energy filled and had a lot more fun – and came up with better ideas. Adaptability is absolutely essential in any plan, camp or event.

The camp was a chance for all students not only to move into different roles – facilitator, explorer, listener – but also to open our eyes and ears and minds to the stunning range of perspectives our Executive brings and to everything we need to consider when making decisions.

After three days in the bush (or rather the wonderful comfort of Rubicon Outdoor Centre), full of delicious food and amazing ideas, we are a VicSRC Executive with a clear purpose and a bundle of big ideas that we can’t wait for you to see.

• Projects, strategic plans and exciting new partnerships were discussed and written.
• Workshops, training and our wonderful staff and supporters filled us with new skills and ideas.
• We even managed to find time for a fireside singalong and toasting marshmallows.

While we get down to business, try and see how these tips can make your next camp even better!

David Trevorrow
Braybrook College
VicSRC Executive 2016-17
Beyond your boundaries

It's that time of year when people are applying for school captainship, SRC, house leadership positions and more. So how do you go beyond your boundaries into sea of opportunities? Liang Xue from Suzanne Cory High School offers some gentle encouragement when you need it most.

Applications are being lodged, speeches being written and nerves buzzing around.

People have taken some time to ask me about what a certain leadership role may entail, and have opened a path for me to share some personal experiences. Often, we do feel as if it is daunting to put our name out there, face an uncertain outcome, and potentially deal with rejection. This is completely understandable, as nobody really does want to experience negative emotions, when they can be simply just avoided all together by not trying. It is a personal conflict of: ‘yes just do it!’,’is it really worth it?’ and ‘do I really want to go through the whole process?’.

At the end of the day, it is ultimately your decision; it boils down to what you want and what you are comfortable with. If you want to go for a new leadership position, do not hold yourself back and deny yourself that chance. If you believe that you have not been as involved in the school environment compared to others, but wish to start now - absolutely go for it. We must not let the past and what we did not do impair what we can start doing.

Many of us also go through the process of self-doubt, and believe that there are better people out there to fill particular roles. You question your abilities and wonder if you can really do a good job at that leadership role.

In all honesty:

• You are more than capable,
• You have a good heart and
• You want to make your school a better place for everyone.

Take out the application, and know that you have something to write in all the different criteria – that you are not short on anything. The title of “school captain” or “student exec” is nothing without people like you, who bring your own qualities, enthusiasm in your voices and twinkles in your eyes to the table. It is each and every single one of you who put their time, energy and effort into bringing the roar of student voices to life.

Keep on sharing your unique ideas and sharing your vision of a better tomorrow.

Liang Xue
Suzanne Cory High School

#VicSRCvoices is a rolling series driven by the stories and experiences of student representatives. It's about who we are, what we value, what drives us to act, and what fuels our passions to advocate for what we believe in.

Meet Some VicSRC Executive

2016-17 Members

Roghayeh Sadeghi

Hello generation of today and tomorrow! Roghayeh is my name, aka Rocky. I am a Year 9 student at Northern Bay College in Geelong. I am a Muslim Afghani girl who loves football (ps: I’m one of the worst players to have ever existed?!). I am obsessed with celebrities, music and technology! My biggest celebrity idol is Dwayne The Rock Johnson!

I see my future as a passionate human rights lawyer who is still a crazy fan girl! My goal is to create a safe and inclusive environment where everyone is respected, heard and included, regardless of any differences!

I’m honoured to be able to work with VicSRC as an Executive for the first time ever and am very excited to work alongside other inspirational leaders around the state!

Spencer Davis

Hi, I’m Spencer and I have a passion to change the world. Well, obviously not the whole world; I can’t do all that!

I want to inspire other people to create change too. A person can’t change much, but people change the world.

I am a Year 10 student at Footscray City College who loves science, drama and language. I one day hope to work in foreign affairs and see the world.

Jacob Baker

Howdy! I’m Jacob and I am currently in Year 11, attending Rochester Secondary College, a school in the central part of regional Victoria. I live and grew up on a farm and am a country boy through and through, but I also love adventuring into new cultures. I love supporting my local community and school in a variety of activities from football, tennis, debating and much more. In my spare time I also enjoy listening to all types of music and working at the local supermarket.

This is my first year on the VicSRC Executive and I’m thrilled to be able to represent the regional students and the general student body of Victoria, and to be able to learn from other inspirational leaders. That’s all for now; catch you on the flip side!
Introducing the VicSRC Congress 2016 Report

The VicSRC Congress is a melting pot of ideas and student-led solutions. We are thrilled to share the 11th Annual Congress 2016 Report!

The VicSRC Congress 2016 Report can be viewed online at https://vicsrc.qwilr.com/Cmwo8v0eQLa6 or downloaded as a PDF from http://ow.ly/Pu8F304RwWi.

At the 2016 Congress, 180 students from 68 schools were brought together from all across the state to debate, decide and act on the issues that matter most to their education in 2016. With over a decade of student-led advocacy and action behind us, 2016 presented an opportunity to say ‘Yes, and...’ then work out how.

It was the first time we’ve done electronic voting.

The first time we reached 84,000 people on social media.

The first time we received a personal message of support from the Premier of Victoria, Daniel Andrews MP.

And the very first time VicSRC delivered student-led solutions at an Open Morning with 300 participants.

This report provides an overview of Congress 2016 and ten solutions to issues affecting education that matter most to Victorian students.

We urge all students, teachers, principals and education sector stakeholders across Australia to consider how they can adopt and implement the student-led initiatives within their settings.

Student voices rang out, and the message is clear.

We have the power to turn ideas into action!

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
**Student Voice Practitioners: Blog & Podcast**

This Canadian-based blog and podcast site provides a community for young people and adults to share stories. It’s at:

http://studentvoicepractitioners.com/

The **Student Voice Practitioners** blog is for 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.

For information: email: FeedbackSVP@gmail.com

**Student Voice Research and Practice facebook group**

www.facebook.com/groups/studentvoicepage/

This open facebook group was initially established by Professor Dana Mitra, and is now supported by the work of academics, practitioners and students throughout the world. It provides a valuable community of people working and interested in the area of ‘Student Voice’ - in Australia, USA, UK, Italy and elsewhere – as well as access to useful resources and examples, and up-to-date information about initiatives. You can easily log on and join the group at the above address.
National Youth Week is an annual, week-long celebration of young people (aged 12–25) throughout Australia. National Youth Week will be held from 31 March to 9 April 2017.

National Youth Week enables young people to use their knowledge, skills and experiences to develop and deliver projects, activities or events. It is a great chance for young people to branch out, try new things and make new friends while engaging with community. In partnership with the Australian Government, the Victorian Government will provide grants up to $2,000 for local governments, community organisations and schools to support events and activities during National Youth Week, which are planned and delivered by young people, for young people.

Applications close on Friday 11 November 2016.

To find out more: http://ow.ly/7hVw304W2L4

For further information on National Youth Week 2017 in Victoria, please contact Casie McDougall at Economic and Community Participation on (03) 9096 1244 or email youthweek@dhhs.vic.gov.au

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

www.asprinworld.com/student_action_teams

‘Student Councils and Beyond’

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

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

www.asprinworld.com/connect

Connect on facebook

Connect has a presence on facebook. Find us at:

http://ow.ly/L6UvW

We’ve been posting some news and links there since June 2013, to complement and extend what you see in the on-line version of Connect. It would be great if you could go there and ‘like’ us, and also watch there for news of each Connect’s availability on-line - for FREE.
ADVANCE NOTICE: EDUCATORS AND PARENTS - A RARE AUSTRALIAN OPPORTUNITY TO HEAR...

ALFIE KOHN

ONE OF THE WORLD'S TRUE THOUGHT LEADERS ON EDUCATION!

Monday 14 NOV 16
@ TC
Bookings essential
Alfie Kohn writes and speaks widely on human behavior, education, and parenting. The most recent of his 14 books are:
- SCHOOLING BEYOND MEASURE (2015)
Of his earlier titles, the best known are:
- PUNISHED BY REWARDS (1993),
- NO CONTEST: The Case Against Competition (1986),
- UNCONDITIONAL PARENTING (2005), and

CHOICES FOR CHILDREN: From Coercion to Community, 4.30pm

If we want students to take responsibility for their behavior and learning, it is up to us to give them responsibilities. Children learn to make good decisions by having the chance to decide about what happens to them every day — not by following someone else’s directions. Research shows unequivocally that students learn more effectively and care more about what they are learning when they have some say about what is going on. (By contrast, students, like adults, suffer from burnout when they feel powerless.) Alfie Kohn describes the whys and the hows of bringing students into the process of making decisions about everything from how their classroom will be decorated to how their learning will be assessed. Also included is a discussion of limits on children’s right to choose and teachers’ use of “pseudochoice” to perpetuate their own control.  https://www.trybooking.com/228057

THE SCHOOLS OUR CHILDREN DESERVE, 7pm

Our knowledge of how children learn — and how schools can help — has come a long way in the last few decades. Unfortunately, most schools have not: They’re still more about memorising facts and practicing isolated skills than understanding ideas from the inside out; they still exclude students from any meaningful decision-making role; and they still rely on grades, tests, homework, lectures, worksheets, competition, punishments, and rewards. Alfie Kohn explores the alternatives to each of these conventional practices, explaining why progressive education isn’t just a realistic alternative but one that’s far more likely to help kids become critical thinkers and lifelong learners.  https://www.trybooking.com/230128

Venue: Performing Arts Centre, Templestowe Lower
Booking Essential: Session 1 4.30pm https://www.trybooking.com/228057
          Session 2 7pm https://www.trybooking.com/230128
Cost: $50 per session
Engaging Authentic Student Voice in Catholic Schools

A Professional Learning Workshop

Catholic Education Melbourne has partnered with Victorian Student Representative Council (VicSRC) to help increase opportunities for student voice and, as an investment in our young people as leaders and contributors for learning through roles of real value in the classroom and school community.

This workshop will provide opportunities to learn about programs and initiatives offered by VICSRC to enhance student engagement and a greater sense of connectedness and belonging within their school community.

Catholic school students and members of the VicSRC Executive will facilitate the sessions and share their experiences as leaders and the actions they have taken on issues that matter to them. Topics will also include the impact of faith on student identity, students as researchers and building the capacity of Student Representative Councils (SRCs).

The interactive workshops will also feature school case studies featuring current modes of practice that enable student voice in the classroom and consider the role of teachers in providing democratic leadership opportunities.

Participants will benefit from the knowledge, resources and critical questions posed by Roger Holdsworth, Senior Research Associate Youth Research Centre, University of Melbourne and Nina Laitala, Project Officer Victorian Student Representative Council (VicSRC)

By recognizing students as valuable co-contributors for learning and designing two-way communication channels, schools can better meet student needs and help build social connectedness and partnerships between students, teachers, families and their community.
ONE DAY CONFERENCE

Improving academic and educational outcomes in schools – school wellbeing essentials.

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS

Turning the School Wellbeing ship into calmer waters
Jac Van Velsen, WISA CEO

What WISA offers
Ros Pretlove, WISA National Manager/Director

KEYNOTE ADDRESSES

The determinants that enable students to thrive educationally and maintain good health or disengage, have poorer health and life outcomes
Dr Bret Hart, Public Health Physician, Chair Social Determinants of Health Alliance

Building educational capacity in schools through staff and leadership wellbeing
Carolyn May, Psychologist MAPS

SKILL WORKSHOPS

1 Leadership Wellbeing
Paul Cahalan and Carolyn May, WISA National Leadership Trainers
This workshop will address the critical importance of a school leadership team that has good wellbeing and a step by step process to lead and resource wellbeing effectively in their school.

2 Putting the ‘School Wellbeing Essentials’ in place
Jac Van Velsen, WISA CEO
Work smarter not harder. A checklist and a step by step process to guide and ensure your school has the school wellbeing essentials in place to see improvements in academic, social and educational outcomes.

3 Student empowerment for improved educational outcomes
Roger Holdsworth, The University of Melbourne & Vic Student Representative Council Executive Member rep’s
This workshop provides concrete examples of how empowering students and giving them a voice in schools impacts directly on their self esteem, confidence, sense of belonging and educational productivity.

4 Responding to students experiencing poverty and trauma
Mick Turner, Doxa School & WISA Wellbeing in Schools Australia
Turn around absenteeism, poor behaviour and disengagement of students. Practical strategies to support disadvantaged and vulnerable students to remain engaged at school.

5. Assessing and supporting vulnerable families
Vanessa McCormick, Principal St Arnaud Sec. College and Maurice Billi, School Focused Youth Service, Grampians Community Health
A simple tool and framework to help schools and community organisations identify and support their most vulnerable students and families.

6. Building resilience in schools and developing your evidence
Katie Scott, School Focused Youth Service, City of Knox
The City of Knox has strengthened the resilience of young people in schools through using a survey tool by Resilient Youth Australia which provides a baseline measure on student wellbeing and resilience. This data with support offered by the School Focused Youth Service helped schools to target their Wellbeing initiatives.
ONE DAY CONFERENCE

Improving academic and educational outcomes in schools – school wellbeing essentials.

SKILL WORKSHOPS (CONTINUED)

7. ‘The critical importance of sleep for positive student educational outcomes.’
   Brad Felstead, Felstead Education
   The workshop will look at the relationship between sleep and cognitive performance and how sleep deprivation impacts on memory consolidation and higher order thinking skills; between sleep and mental health issues such as anxiety and depression; and international trials involving later start and finishing times for schools and the impact on academic outcomes and behavioural standards; and the negative impact of devices such as smartphones, laptops, and iPads on student sleep patterns; concluding with strategies to improve sleep patterns in students.

8. ‘School plus Connectedness: A key equation in young people’s wellbeing and academic outcomes’
   Annie Gowan, The University of Melbourne
   The relational climate in schools is the engine room of school connectedness and this workshop will explore the ways in which teachers can contribute to building this key protective factor in young people’s lives to thrive in and out of school.

WHO
School Leaders, School Counsellors and Wellbeing Coordinators, Teachers, Educational Support Staff, Parents/Carers

WHEN
Friday 14th October 2016
8.45am - 3.15pm

WHERE
Darebin Arts Centre, Corner Bell and St Georges Roads, Preston

COST
$295 Single Registration - Excluding GST
$990 School Team of 4 - Excluding GST

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ASPRINworld: the Connect website!

www.asprinworld.com/connect

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

Connect is also archived and available electronically:

research.acer.edu.au/connect

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

www.informit.com.au

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

Articles from Connect are also discoverable through EBSCOhost research databases.

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:

Are Children at the Forefront of our Considerations? (Valuing Children Initiative: Centrecare Inc, Youth Care (Inc) and the Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People, WA) Synopsis of the Valuing Children Initiative Benchmark Survey: 2016; Part A, October 2016


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

International:


How to Amplify Student Voice: Listen (Suzie Boss) Edutopia, August 5, 2016

No grades, no timetable: Berlin school turns teaching upside down (Philip Oltermann) The Guardian, 1 July 2016

ReThinking Schools (Wisconsin, USA) Vol 31, No 1; Fall 2016

The role of leaders in enabling student voice (Dana Mitra, Stephanie Serriere, Donnan Stoicovy, Penn State University, PA, USA) Management in Education, 26(3): 104-112, 2012

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 almost 37 years!) are freely available on-line! Thanks to the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), all the issues of Connect have been scanned or up-loaded into the ACER’s Research Repository: ACEReSearch.

You can find these issues of Connect at:

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

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

Connect has a commitment to the sharing of ideas, stories, approaches and resources about active student participation. We are totally supported by donations - see page 37!

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Most importantly, please USE this resource.

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