Students as (Co)Researchers

- Researching Students on School Councils
- Year 8 ‘Student Voice’ Research Initiative
- Year 6 Students Researching & Training
- Students on Committees: Connect Archive
- Mount Alexander College: The Default is ‘Yes’!
- Empowering Students in Primary Schools
- Primary School SRC: The Voice of the Future
- VicSRC: Recognition Awards - winners; Teach the Teacher - 3 new models

Resources:
- Inclusive Committee Procedures
- International:
  - International Journal of Student Voice
  - International Journal for Students as Partners
  - Democracy & Education
  - Student Voice Podcast
  - YEA: It’s a Film!
  - Student Voice Research & Practice facebook group
- Connect ... available on-line ... on facebook
  ... archived ... access to other on-line resources
Allow me to proudly reflect that, with this issue, Connect completes its 37th year of publication. Now, 37 might not be too momentous a number (apart from being a prime), but issue ‘222’ has a neater symmetry to it! And it allows us to present a mammoth issue to you to end the year.

In this issue we look both backwards and forwards. Over the last few months, I’ve been involved with a team of researchers - both secondary school students and adults - who have been investigating the role of students on school governing bodies. A report of the process and outcomes of this research forms the first article in this issue. The full report has just been presented to the Victorian Minister for Education. This article is then complemented by two further accounts of students as researchers and co-researchers in primary and secondary schools - work that, in both cases, continues.

And from the Connect archives of 1984, we re-present some documents about Students on Committees. These provide practical information – that is still relevant and important – to guide practices in which students authentically share school decision-making.

The work of students as researchers – as genuine researchers of the unknown – has great possibility within schools. It fits well with curriculum Inquiry methods and subjects, but extends and transforms these. It can underlie classroom negotiation, the operation of Student Action Teams, and inter-school and community-based collaborative initiatives. While such approaches have always been very possible within primary and junior secondary school classrooms, they have sometimes been restricted by external demands of curricula at senior levels. But here in Victoria, new possibilities are now emerging with the Victorian Ministerial Working Party on Student Participation and outcomes of this research forms the first article in this issue. The full report has just been presented to the Victorian Minister for Education.

Next Issue ...

Best seasonal wishes to all readers. As the Australian school year comes to an end, I hope this issue provides a fascinating, useful and inspiring read for your holidays.

We’ll return in 2017 with Connect’s 38th year. There are already some stories promised from primary and secondary schools - and we’d like to broaden the geographical spread of these. But that’s up to you. Holidays may provide you with some time to relax and reinvigorate, but also to reflect on your own practices. We’d welcome you to share these reflections and your learnings with readers in the new year.
Students on School Councils: A collaborative study of student representation in Victorian school governance

We are a group of researchers in Victoria. Some of us are in secondary school, and some of us are adults. We all have been associated with the VicSRC: the peak body representing students in Victoria.

This year, we came together to work with other students and principals with two aims:

• To find out what students and principals across a range of Victorian schools think about students being part of School Councils.
• To collect and create resources to help schools to start or do more to involve students meaningfully in School Councils.

In this article, we hope to share with you some of our findings, as well as the challenges and possibilities experienced during this research.

What we did: Research methods

Eve: This research was sparked by the key concern identified by students at the 2015 VicSRC Congress: for greater student representation and influence in school governance processes. Since this research started from students’ concerns, it was important to ensure that students’ views and insights were being listened to and acted on throughout the research. I wanted this research to be participatory and creative.

Research Interns

Eve: Secondary school students involved with the VicSRC were invited to be Research Interns on this study, and to be part of designing, generating, and analysing the data. This started with an elective at the 2016 VicSRC Congress on ‘Students as Researchers’. Six Research Interns, from different year levels, regions and school types, volunteered to join this research team, and have been a central part. I hoped that we could work together to share our skills, ideas and creativity, from our different experiences.

Emma: I wanted to be part of this research mainly because student voice is such an important part of my life. It’s something that I really hold dearly and so I really want to make sure that students are represented at every level that they can be and I just think it’s really, really important to find out if having students on school governance councils is actually going to assist student voice or help in any way.

Laura: As soon as I found out about what School Councils were and stuff like that I thought it was really important to start making it happen and getting people aware about it.

Sarah: I think that I wanted to be part of this research initially because I was really interested in seeing how there was really concrete working on making change. I’m really interested in improving things for the better of students everywhere and I liked how this had a sense of importance to it and it wasn’t trivial and I wanted to be able to really get involved in a way where I could really feel that I was contributing. […] I like how we have a goal and we know what our objectives are and that we also are not just taking our opinions but we’re hearing lots of others and have it all kind of united because we’re so involved in making positive change.

Student workshops

Eve: Two student workshops were held (one in metropolitan Melbourne and one in regional Victoria), designed and facilitated by Research Interns. Schools were encouraged to send students with a majority who were not currently involved in leadership activities and positions to ensure a broad range of experiences and voices were represented beyond those typically involved in leadership.

Twenty-one students from Years 7 to 12 participated in these workshops. During these workshops, we explored the potential benefits and challenges of student representation in School Councils through a range of activities, including:

• A ‘True and False’ activity, where students moved across the room in response to factual and attitudinal statements. This activity was designed to gauge students’ awareness about the difference between School Councils and Student Representative Councils, and the history of student representation on School Councils. It also aimed to enable students to begin considering their stance on issues related to students on School Councils.

Sarah: A strong memory was being able to lead the discussion and provide in-depth thinking about the role of students on School Council, through the True-False game, where I asked students to explore their opinions on different statements and set the tone for the workshop – where people could form their opinions and where they would matter and be heard.

• Focus groups which explored students’ perceptions of the possible benefits and challenges of student
representation on School Councils, through interactive activities that included the use of visual postcards (for metaphorical thinking) and the use of M&Ms and Skittles (to take turns sharing ideas about potential benefits and challenges of student representation on School Councils). Students also wrote responses on post-it notes at the end of the focus groups, writing down an important point that was raised, or something else that they wanted to say but didn’t get to say during the focus group discussion.

**Sarah:** I really like running discussions and focus groups. I find them as a super great collaborative environment where it’s more like a conversation than an interview and I find conversations allow people to not just be like: “Yes, this is my opinion,” [but] to be like: “Hey, this is my opinion. Your opinion’s actually really interesting. I might think about my opinion a bit more deeply now that I’ve heard your opinion.”

- Current and previous student School Council representatives from both the regional and metropolitan host schools attended part of both student workshops. In both these workshops, participating students informally asked questions of these current and previous student School Council representatives about their experiences as a student member of the School Council.
- In a **stepping up** activity, students were given a role card (eg principal, community member, student), and were to respond to scenarios as if they were in this role. Students stepped forward if they thought that they would feel positive in the scenario situation, stepped backwards if they thought they would feel negative in the scenario situation, or sat down if they did not think that they would be involved. **Research interns** encouraged student participants to explain their responses. This activity was intended to foster appreciation for different stakeholder interests represented in school communities.
- In a **fish bowl role play of a School Council meeting**. Half of the student participants participated in a role play of a School Council meeting (with particular roles), and the other half of the student participants observed. In this activity, students considered the perspectives of other members of School Councils (parents, teachers, community members), and deliberated further on the potential benefits and challenges of active participation for student representatives in School Council meetings.
- Students, in pairs or groups, created a **Visual Creation** of their ‘ideal’ School Council using visual fruit erasers to represent stakeholder groups (eg parents, principal, teachers, students, community members), and to compose a written explanation of the reasons for their visual representation. This activity promoted discussion of the composition of School Councils and how to organise and facilitate School Council meetings to support the active participation of student representatives, particularly through spatial representation of meetings.
- Towards the end of the workshops, groups brainstormed the **Recommendations** that they would like to see this study’s report include. These recommendations were shared and discussed with the broader group at the end of each workshop. Students also wrote **written reflections** about what they felt were the key points raised during the day.


**Anonymous student surveys**

*Eve:* During this study, 218 students filled out an *anonymous online survey* designed by, shared with and analysed by the research team. The survey consisted of 15 questions and included questions about the respondent’s school’s processes of decision-making, understanding of the composition of their school’s Council, their perception of possible benefits and challenges of student representation on School Councils, and other stories or ideas relating to student involvement in school decision-making. These questions included both closed (with boxes to tick) and open-ended questions.

**Principal phone interviews**

*Pinchy:* Ten principals were also *interviewed*, to find out existing governance practices in Victorian schools including if and how students are represented on School Councils, and principals’ perceptions of the benefits and challenges of student representation. The interviews began with general questions about their schools and their positive and challenging experiences in their role, before questions about their school’s governance practices. Interviewees were then asked about their perceptions of the benefits and challenges of student representation on school governance councils, and their awareness of any examples or resources available to support student representation on School Councils.

**Analysis and writing:**

*Moments that ‘glowed’ and our findings*

*Eve:* As we came together to think about how to analyse all that was said, done and felt, we began by thinking about a moment that ‘glowed’ for us from the research – a lingering impression, intense sensation, where we felt a flash of feeling and insight (see MacLure, 2013). We (Sarah, Roghayeh, Vansh, Emma, Eve and Roger) discussed these as a group, before writing an account in our own individual notebooks.

During the afternoon of analysis, we each took turns interviewing ourselves with an audio recorder (which were later transcribed). We each responded to questions that we came up with together:

*What do you find most interesting about this research?*

*What did you gain as part of this research?*

*What will you take away?*

*What have you learned?*

*How have you changed?*

*How do you feel about being on the research team?*

*Have there been challenges about this research? What?*

*What is it like doing focus groups with other students?*

*How did you gain insight into the research?*

*What do you think of the research as a whole?*

*What is it like to be a part of this research?*

*Is there anything else you would like to add?*

*Was there anything that surprised you about the research?*

*What do you think the research will achieve?*

*Who are you thankful to for making it happen?*

*What are your thoughts about the future of student representation on School Councils?*

These glowing moments and our own conversations with the audio recorder sparked our further analysis of the data from the student workshops, the online surveys and the principal interviews.

Here are some of these moments that glowed, and the thoughts that they sparked:

**The limited awareness of the work of School Councils**

*Laura:* I previously just thought student voice was about being on a student council and making fundraisers and doing events and stuff like that. But now it seems more real and that you can actually have a proper say and I feel like if people knew that students were allowed to go straight to teachers and principals and talk about what we actually want to change, they’d be more willing to say ideas rather than mentioning something and it just being forgotten about. The idea could go straight through the leadership hierarchy and actually the issue could be dealt with. I never really knew anything about School Councils ... but now I feel so much more knowledgeable about it and that now that I’m telling other people about it as well, then they’re all having the same sort of ideas.
Roghayeh: Something that I found interesting was that not many people knew about the school governance council, even those that were leaders around school. Something interesting about these workshops for me was to know how many students actually want a student voice in this school governance council and many students didn’t know anything about School Council so it was a good way to share knowledge and gain new knowledge from others as well. This student research ... has changed my idea about student voice because I used to think that student voice was just about SRC but I didn’t know that the school governance existed and that students can be involved in that.

Eve: Notwithstanding students’ limited awareness, the overwhelming majority of students attending the Student Workshops and responding to the online survey articulated support for student representation on School Councils. Vansh remembered the enthusiasm of students as a moment that ‘glowed’:

The desire for greater student representation

Eve: Indeed, a significant finding from the student online survey and the Student Workshops was that students generally had limited awareness of the work of School Councils, and whether or not their schools include students as representatives on the School Council. When asked, in the online survey, how much they knew about what happens on their school’s Council, 85% of respondents indicated that they knew ‘nothing’ or ‘very little’ about what happens on their school’s governance council.

Vansh: I have talked to my school SRC coordinator about this stuff and some of my friends and the most responses I’ve got is no-one actually knowing about this stuff except my school SRC coordinator.
Sarah: I think it’s also really interesting to see that students are very aware of what’s happening to them. I think this awareness is sometimes forgotten in different contexts. I think that a lot of students sometimes feel they’re very passive in their education. “Yes, I’m a recipient of my education. I am not learning. I am being taught” and I think that mentality sometimes carries over even into student voice like yeah: “I’m a leader but I don’t do anything as a leader.” I think it’s super important for more of these projects to involve just regular students like in the workshops because it makes everyone feel more involved on a larger scale.

Eve: Indeed, 80% of respondents to the online survey indicated that they thought students should be members of their school’s Council.

Emma: We have to remember that we always have to question what we’re thinking. We have to always remember that we need to remain sceptical and we can’t just ignore data that comes from people who say: “Oh no, sorry, we shouldn’t have students on school governance councils.”

The glow of listening

Eve: In listening to others, there were also surprises – differences of ideas, ruptures to thought that challenged pre-conceived ideas.

Online survey: Students’ opinions about student representation on School Council.
The glow of space and furniture

Eve: In our research activities, and in speaking with others about the arrangement of School Council spaces, the researchers and student participants felt, thought and spoke about the importance of space and matter. We talked about what changes are needed with the placement of furniture and objects, and where people sit. These places and things are also vitally part of what happens in any school or research meeting, activity or event.

One student’s visual creation of his experience as a Student Council representative. His positioning at the table is represented by the blue dot in the top right hand corner.
The opportunity to facilitate other ways of thinking

**Eve:** Being part of this research has affected us, as we have attempted to affect others.

**Emma:** I also find it really interesting that there are so many students that don’t even know what a school governance council is. This was just really interesting for them to be able to learn and to be able to watch them learn and you kind of watch a light in their eyes, like something just changes and they’re like: “Oh okay, I see, that’s what makes all the decisions. It’s not just my principal. That’s why when I say something it doesn’t always go through the principal straight away. Even if the principal says it’s okay for some reason, it never happens.” It’s just kind of interesting to see.

**Vansh:** The thing that I find most interesting about this research is that, how you listen to students and what students actually think and I am personally going to persist and hear what other students think about School Council and stuff. Everyone has a different perspective for School Councils and it was really fun to listen to students about School Councils.

**Roghayeh:** Something I’ll take away from this experience is that we really need student voice in School Council because many students want this to happen but it’s not just the students but the principal wants students as well.

**Sarah:** I think it’s super important for more of these projects to involve just regular students like in the workshops because it makes everyone feel more involved on a larger scale.

**Emma:** I’m going to take away a whole lot of new research skills and stuff that I’d never thought of before or never really – like I said earlier never been exposed to before and I’m going to take away a whole lot of knowledge about processes and how it all works but I’m also going to take away the way students can work together to create something like this. It’s just such an empowering feeling that it’s almost too hard for me to describe.

The full Report of this research is available at: [http://ow.ly/shpY306hQCL](http://ow.ly/shpY306hQCL)

Eve Mayes, Pinchy Breheny, Laura Cantwell, Emma Gilbert, Sarah Goh, Vansh Grover, Roghayeh Sadeghi, William Wilson, Roger Holdsworth

Deakin University and the VicSRC

Reference list

Student representation on School Councils:
Our research findings and recommendations

Eve Mayes, Pinchy Breheny, Laura Cantwell, Emma Gilbert, Sarah Goh, Vansh Grover, Roghayeh Sadeghi, William Wilson, Roger Holdsworth: Deakin University and the VicSRC

Benefits

From the Student Workshops, principal phone interviews, student online surveys, and the participatory analysis session, six key benefits of student representation on School Councils have been formed:

- **Benefit 1:** Students have experiential knowledge that other adults may not have.
- **Benefit 2:** Young people and adults learn and connect through dialogue.
- **Benefit 3:** Students have a right to have influence on decisions that affect them.
- **Benefit 4:** Student representation can improve communication between the School Council and the broader student body.
- **Benefit 5:** Student representatives benefit individually.
- **Benefit 6:** Students feel heard and valued when changes happen.

Challenges

Alongside discussing potential benefits of student representation on School Councils, students and principals also raised concerns about the challenges of student representation.

- **Challenge 1:** Students’ experiential knowledge may not be recognised, trusted or valued.
- **Challenge 2:** There are relational, structural and spatial barriers to learning from and connecting with each other.
- **Challenge 3:** Choosing/electing student representatives who will represent all students and take the role seriously.
- **Challenge 4:** Student representatives can feel caught in the middle.
- **Challenge 5:** The time costs for student representatives on School Council.
- **Challenge 6:** Student representation without action is tokenistic and potentially damaging.

Our recommendations

- **Recommendation #1:** Student representation on School Councils should be mandatory.
- **Recommendation #2:** Students should be represented on School Councils - as ‘students’, not ‘community members’.
- **Recommendation #3:** Students representatives on School Councils should be equally valued members, with schools moving towards students having full voting rights and membership responsibilities.
- **Recommendation #4:** Students should be consulted in decisions about how to appoint/elect student representatives, who should be the student representatives, and how many student representatives there should be.
- **Recommendation #5:** Students and adults should both undertake training and receive support in School Council work, to strengthen mutual respect and trust.
- **Recommendation #6:** The structure of School Council meetings should support student representatives’ meaningful contribution through, for example, the early distribution of meeting agendas, invitations to offer their feedback on other reports, and student involvement in sub-committees.
- **Recommendation #7:** Student representatives should give a student report that represents students’ concerns, and should report back to the student body about other School Council discussions and decisions.
- **Recommendation #8:** Student representatives should be ‘equally seated’ with other members of the School Council.
- **Recommendation #9:** Schools should be accountable to report how students are represented on their School Council.
- **Recommendation #10:** Student representation on School Council should be one aspect of a whole school vision that meaningfully involves students in all aspects of their education.
Students on Committees: For Committees

Preamble

In a variety of educational programs and school structures, representation in decision making is being accorded to students and student groups. Government policies, as reflected in the Ministerial Papers, call for such representation. This poses challenges for school structures, for committee procedures and for teaching and learning approaches.

This paper, prepared as a response to these Government initiatives, attempts to outline some of the principles under which such representation should operate, and some action steps to be taken by the various programs and committees.

Introduction

Why are students being approached for representation within programs and school structures?

A summary of various papers and other writings on this subject must point to the changing nature of youth, their position in society, their diminishing life options, and the role of education in this regard. James Coleman has written that:

"The student role of young persons has become enlarged to the point where that role constitutes the major portion of their youth. But the student role is not a role of taking action and experiencing consequences ... It is a relatively passive role, always in preparation for action, but never acting."

In recognition of the need for a response to these dilemmas, that alters the educational experience for young people, various programs have insisted that young people be brought into a more active role in decision-making about the implementation of program activities. This occurs within specific projects, within school-based decision-making structures and on area, regional and state committees.

Such representation is seen to have important educational value for the students (both generally and in specific skill areas). It recognizes the value of the contribution that students make to the development of the program and provides a model of access to decision-making skills for all students. Tony Knight points to a rationale for programs which allows students to develop and demonstrate competencies to:

1. function as participants with adults in the planning and the resolution of problems in school and community settings;
2. learn the processes of debate, discussion and decision-making in group structures;
3. develop and plan human service activities;
4. link academic content and learning in order to deal with important social issues.

While some specific references have changed over time (e.g., names and references to investigations into legal liability), the issues, principles and action in these documents remain intensely relevant to today's considerations.

The following discussion paper on student representation on committees is being circulated for your information and comment. It has been produced by a working party convened by the Policy Coordination and Program Review Committee of (Victorian) TEAC (Transition Education Advisory Committee) and comprising people with experience in TEAC (State and Regional), the Supplementary Grants Program, the Victorian Institute of Secondary Education, the Youth Action Program, and the Student Action in Education Project.

The proposals included as ‘principles’ in the paper are intended to be positions which committees could work towards. Groups that do not initially feel able to implement all these points should not be deterred from starting to develop action. Action suggestions are included in each section ...

Marge Smythe
Chairperson
Policy Coordination and Program Review Committee

And Peter Cole comments upon specific aspects of such programs as they relate to the transition of young people from school to work or further study:

... the transition from school to work or further study is one significant part of the broader process of the transition of youth from dependent to independent status; the process by which youth in transition are assisted, should value rather than devalue the contribution which youth can make to society; schools and their communities have an important role to play in the process by which youth are prepared for transition; youth facing difficulties in exercising options should be assisted and supported whilst negotiating the process of moving towards chosen paths; youth that are most severely disadvantaged should be given priority in the allocation of support resources.

Participation by young people in the planning, implementation, evaluation and review of programs must be developed in the context of the above general statements. Since circumstances vary between programs, specific consideration needs to be given to the reasons for such representation and the outcomes expected from such representation. It is vital that such consideration provide a model for the basis of continuing representation and involve students in joint planning of the purposes for involvement.
Recommendations

The following recommendations are presented as statements of principle followed by suggestions for action by committees:

1. Rationale

All programs need to consider ways of involving students in planning, implementation, evaluation and review at all levels. Such a criterion should be written into the formal Program guidelines.

In particular, in requesting or requiring student representation on Program committees, specific consideration should be given to the rationale for such representation in terms that cover Program views of:

a) the intent of such representation – educational (for students and the committee), political, pragmatic etc;
b) the nature of the representation – from whom, how broad, etc;
c) the action to be taken by representatives – as a result of meetings, between meetings etc.

Action:

1. When the committee considers student representation, it should adopt a specific statement outlining the above points which then forms the basis for negotiation between the committee and student representative/s to lead to a shared understanding;
2. The program should allocate funds from its budget for the support of representatives (as envisaged later in this paper) and should officially approach other funding bodies for financial support of representatives.

2. Influence

Student representation on committees should have parity of influence in decision-making with all other groups and individuals.

In order to have authority on committees, all members (including students) should have a broad electorate of whom they are representative, to whom they are responsible and from whom they draw power.

Action:

1. Committees should discuss this issue both prior to and at the start of the period of student representation;
2. Committees should devise techniques to monitor influences within decision-making, to overcome discriminatory practices and to enable parity of influence. These techniques could include:
   • keeping records of speakers;
   • use of ‘observers’;
   • regular reflection sessions; etc.
3. Committees should ensure that representatives are elected or appointed by broad student-run organisations, or work specifically towards such a situation if that is not initially possible. Funding could be allocated for the development of such broadly representative student bodies.

3. Perspective

Student representatives on committees should have the opportunity to meet with other students from other areas in order to broaden perspectives on student concerns and issues.

Student representatives on committees should have the opportunity to meet and work with representatives of other groups in order to broaden perspectives on educational issues.

Action:

1. Working parties on all issues should be open to student representatives;
2. Representatives should be funded to meet with students from their own and other areas;
3. Time, funding and accreditation should be available for these forms of support activities as well as for meetings;
4. Committees could approach in-service funding committees for support for student in-services.

4. Constituency

For effective student participation on committees to take place:

a) Student members of committees should be elected by students, not appointed by other means (eg teacher nomination);
b) Forums should exist at school, local, regional and state levels to enable students to develop links/contacts for information sharing and mutual support;
c) Such forums should provide the basis for an ‘electoral college’ for the election of student members to committees at corresponding levels of organisation (eg school-based forum elects students to School Council, School Proposal Committee etc);
d) Students elected by student forums/electoral colleges should have the opportunity to report back regularly to these forums for information, policy decisions, advice etc;
e) Student numbers on school, local, regional and state committees should be in such proportions to ensure that they are able to have effective influence/input;
f) Student representation should reflect the composition of the ‘electoral college’ with respect to gender, age, language, background etc.

Action:

1. The Minister of Education be asked to issue a policy statement on student representation on committees to cover:
   a) the need for student representation to be elected by other students, as in the case of School Councils;
b) the need for school, local, regional and state committees to ensure adequate numbers of student positions on these committees;
2. Regional student groups should be set up to include student representatives from all government post-primary schools (initially);
3. A State-level student group be set up to include members from all regional groups;
4. The role of the regional and state groups be to:
   a) promote the issue of student participation in decision-making in schools, through in-service, publications etc;
   b) assist individual schools in setting up appropriate student forums;
   c) provide the basis for closer student links/networks within and between schools;
   d) act as a resource group for students and others seeking information and assistance.

5. Support
   Issues pertinent to the area of support for students involved in decision-making include:
   • a concern about student inexperience in such processes;
   • a concern about student disadvantage in relation to general meeting procedures;
   • the need for communication channels between student representatives and their broader student constituencies.

   These issues could be re-stated as positions of principle:

   In order for effective student participation in educational decision-making forums, the following principles should be endorsed:
   a) All student participants must have access to support programs designed to assist them in their work in decision-making forums;
   b) All forums which include student representatives should adopt meeting procedures to maximise the effectiveness of student participation;
   c) All student representatives be required to utilise appropriate communication channels with their broader constituency as an integral part of their role.

   Action:
   The above principle positions need to be supported with appropriate programs and resources in order to make the statement of principle an actuality. The following methods are raised for consideration:

   1. a) Generate in-service programs for student representatives resourced by the auspicing body. Issues to include: meeting procedures, methods of developing communication channels, rationale for student participation, elaboration of roles of all participating bodies;
   b) Develop a network of students as consultants, resourced by the auspicing body, to assist the work of new student representatives.

   2. a) Adopt a program of committee tutors, responsible to each student representative, required to assist student representatives on committees;
   b) Adopt a program of pre-meeting meetings, resourced by the auspicing body, whereby agenda and major issues are discussed and clarified with student representatives;
   c) Adopt a more flexible meeting procedure allowing for short adjournments whereby particular issues can be clarified and elaborated with student representatives;
   d) Adopt a meeting reporting format which clearly itemises decisions taken and persons responsible for actions;
   e) Adopt a procedure of a verbal summary of all business completed at the end of the meeting by the executive officer;
   f) Encourage a point form synopsis or summary of the main concepts presented in committee documents as a face sheet to all documents.

   3. a) Develop a program of report-back meetings conducted by student representatives with their broader constituency, supported by the auspicing body;
   b) Support the development of student media programs to which student representatives submit reports of decisions taken and the nature of the debate;
   c) Develop a program of student seminars/conferences at which substantial and long-term issues relating to the work of student representatives can be considered.

6. Credit for Students’ Work
   Students, it must be understood, are at school firstly to pass and progress. They hold this responsibility to themselves and often to their parents. If involvement has to happen at the expense of academic or scholastic achievement, then it is an oppressive system which will not allow equality for students in decision-making processes.  

   Students should not be disadvantaged by their participation on committees occurring at the expense of their school work. To ensure that this does not happen, students should receive full credit for their committee work and attendance. Such credit should, wherever possible, be integrated into the school’s curriculum with the committee work given full value as an important learning experience.

   Action:
   Negotiations will have to take place when student membership of committees is being arranged, involving the committee, School Council and administration, students, parents and teachers. The committee concerned will have to take substantial responsibility for this action by having a committee member or members act as liaison person/s, keeping in regular contact with the school’s involved. This liaison could include:

   • seeking Education Department endorsement for the proposal to have students on the committee;
   • developing a task orientation to the role of students on committees. Students would benefit from having specific tasks/projects/responsibilities to oversee, to identify with and to report about;
   • seeking negotiated ‘contracts’ covering such things as:
     a) school subjects or programs with which the committee work links;
b) probably time commitments of the committee work and arrangements this might necessitate for the student/s with other school subjects or programs;

c) agreed goals and format for descriptive assessment of the student's committee work;

• writing of assessment and other reports regarding the student's committee work.

7. **Arranging Time Out of School**

Students should be able to be involved in committees and to assemble and discuss issues of concern to them, during school time.

**Action:**

Liaison between the committee and school/s will have to take into account:

1. the need for flexibility in both committee and school timetables/timelines;
2. commitments students have regarding such things as exams, study, part-time jobs, family holidays;
3. school procedures for endorsing student out-of-school procedures.

8. **Transport**

All young people face severe restrictions of transport including legal and financial limitations and dependency on restrictive public system or on parental chauffeuring. As well, there is the contrast of positions of students to all others in education regarding travel allowances for in-services and committee attendance.

Students should receive full financial support for travelling arrangements to and from school/home and committee meeting place. In order to support individuals and families and for reasons of safety, no student should be expected to travel alone.

**Action:**

The committee concerned will have to accept responsibility for action here, although some School Council responsibility may be appropriate here. Funding for taxis would seem a likely arrangement.

9. **Legal Liability**

Obviously legal liability problems can severely restrict any student out-of-school-time activity. This has been a worry for some time now, particularly for TEAC programs, and the whole issue is under investigation by the Education Department. The (Victorian) Director General's memorandum ‘Supervision of Students’ dated December 8th 1983 is important to note.

**Provision for legal liability should protect, not restrict, student participation on committees.**

**Action:**

The situation with respect to legal liability and student participation on committees needs to be clarified to all parties concerned and resolved in line with the above principle. The committee would have to liaise with the current Education Department investigation into legal liability with the above action in mind, and specific instances referred to TEAC personnel currently investigating liability issues, cases and policy.

10. **Payment**

Paid student representation on committees is a possibility in the same way that we sometimes have paid parent and teacher representatives. While students usually do not have an income and participate on committees on a voluntary basis, adults usually have responsibilities for committee work as part of their paid employment. As the Participation and Equity Program has stated aims to investigate combinations of schooling, training and work, the issue of payment for students becomes especially important.

Professor Ken Polk (University of Oregon, at VISE during 1983) includes the issue of payment in his check points for youth action programs:

... What I am suggesting is that when we think about work experience and work-oriented programs, if we think in terms of youth involvement or youth participation along the lines of problem solving and service, we can begin to give young people a real sense that they have something to contribute.

... If possible, see if you can get pay for young people. There are lots of reasons for this. An important one is motivation for the young people. Pay provides an initial reason for their participation. However, the most significant reason is that we need to develop models of responsible employment activities for kids. The pay issue forces the participating institutions to think differently about young people. Youth affairs, youth service agencies should consider having a very significant part of their budget for the employment of young people so that their employment policy can be a model for the rest of the community. The community needs to know how to involve young people and employ them.

Favourable consideration should be given to the issue of payment for the committee work of student representatives.

**Action:**

When committees arrange for student representation, the issue of payment will need to be included in the negotiations and supported by committee (and other) funds where this is seen as appropriate given the above principle.

The committee concerned will need to plan for possible payment to students, structure this into their financial arrangements and negotiations for representation, and investigate appropriate awards and employment contracts.

**References**

1. James S Coleman (1972) *How do the young become adults?* Baltimore: Center for Social Organisation of Schools, Johns Hopkins University (Report No 130, May)
Introduction

If you’re on a committee, you might wonder what support the committee or your school should be giving you. This paper tries to give some ideas of what could happen. After all, it is Government policy that students should be on committees.

What sort of committees?

At a school level, the most likely one (in Victoria) is the School Council. In secondary schools, there should be at least two students on this Council. But there are also other groups: Curriculum Committee, management committees for various funds (Supplementary Grants, Transition Education, School Improvement etc), perhaps committees in faculties, year levels or sub-schools.

In the Education Department Region, you might be on the Regional Education Board, on Supplementary Grants Area Committees, on TEAC Regional Committees and so on.

At a central level, students are represented on the Committee of the Participation and Equity Program and could be on a whole lot of other groups (TEAC, Supplementary Grants, State Board of Education etc).

When you’re on these Committees, some questions come up, like:

- why are you on the committee?
- how much influence will you have? will you be listened to?
- will you have a chance to learn what the committee is doing?
- who do you represent? how?
- what support will you get?
- will you understand the meetings?
- will you miss out on school work?
- will you be allowed to attend by the school?
- how will you get to meetings? will it cost much?
- will you be able to legally attend?
- will you get paid?

Here are some ideas on these questions that we think committees need to think about. You probably have views on them too. Maybe you, too, could insist that you and the committee talk about these ideas.

Why are you on the committee?

A committee should give you a clear reason why they want you on it. But you, too, should know what you and other students will get out of it. All of that should be talked about by both you and the committee.

For example, one school has adopted the following list of reasons:

- to represent their homegroups on decisions made which affect the whole mini-school;
- to give students a voice in all matters which affect the mini-school;
- to make students equally responsible for decisions which are made;
- to give students practical experience in government;
- to give students the chance to work with adults on a shared basis.

How much influence will you have?

You should be listened to in the same way as all other members of the committee are. That will only happen if you really represent other students and take reports back to them.

It will also need to be checked up on by the committee - it is too easy to overlook you or not really listen to what you say. So the committee should work out ways of checking how it behaves.

It may also be necessary to give money to help you hold the meetings of students and build a student organisation.

How will you learn what the committee is doing?

You should have a chance to meet with students from other areas and from other committees, to find out what they’re doing and what they’re interested in.

You should also have chances to work with other committee members on a whole range of matters. That means you should be able to be on sub-committees on all sorts of things, not just on ‘student affairs’.

Money should be made available for you to meet with students and others.

Who do you represent?

You should be elected by students, not appointed by others. That probably means that students will have to be able to meet to talk about representatives and to choose them without interference. The type of meeting will depend on the committee. For example, if you’re talking about a representative on the School Council, the meeting (or ‘forum’) would be just in that school. On the other hand, if you’re asked for a representative on a Regional committee, it would be necessary to try for a meeting open to students or student representatives across the Region. At the moment it is hard to set up Regional or State-wide meetings, but these could be developed in the near future.

One school has suggested: Students represent their homegroups. They are the spokespersons for their homegroup and should strive to represent these people in a fair and honest way.

Once representatives have been elected, they should also be able to report back to meetings of students to give information, get ideas and advice etc.

It is important that enough students are elected to committees so you have support and influence. It is also important that representatives do match the type of students who elect you – particularly in things like sex, range of ages, ethnic groups etc.
What support will you get?
You are the voice of the people whom you represent. It is important that you are given time by your school or your teachers to talk to those people (to report back to them about what is happening in committee meetings, and to hear the views of the people you represent).

If the committee meets during school time, your school or teachers should allow you to attend meetings. If the committee meets outside school hours, you should expect that transport or money for transport might be arranged. This should also apply if the meeting occurs outside the school.

You should expect that other committee members will be prepared to assist you if you are having trouble understanding what the committee is doing.

Will you understand the meetings?
Most committees at present are made up of adults who seem to have made up their own language. For you to have an input into the meeting, it’s vital that you understand what is being talked about. If you don’t, you have the right to ask questions and to expect an answer.

If there are other students on the committee, you should talk to them about things you don’t understand.

You should request that an agenda be made available well before the meeting so that you know what is going to be talked about at the meeting. This way you will have time to find out information you will need to know at the meeting and talk about the issues which will be raised in the meeting.

Will you miss out on school work?
Obviously, being on a committee requires a certain commitment from you to give up some time. This should be taken into account before you join the committee. You have to think, “Is being on this committee important to me, or for my school? Is it as important as other work I have to do?”

One way of dealing with the problem is to say, “OK, I’m on this committee. That means I probably have to put in some extra time to catch up on my work I might be missing out at school.” This side of the issue is your responsibility.

On the other hand, because (in some cases) you are representing the school, the school should give you some credit for the work you do on their behalf. You would expect that your involvement with the committee should be mentioned in your final report or certificate. You should at least expect that your teachers are clearly aware of your involvement on the committee, and be prepared to make some allowances. Your committee should support you on this issue, and if necessary make contact with individual teachers to come to some arrangement.

Will you be allowed to attend by the school?
Most committees which operate outside the school (Regional TEAC, PEP, Supplementary Grants etc) will have approached your school first to ask for someone to be a student representative. So your school will probably give you permission to attend.

In many schools, you have to turn up to a minimum number of classes in a subject in order to satisfy the requirements of your course. You and your committee may have to talk with the school or your individual teachers to work this out.

Committees which meet within your school should consider all committee members’ other duties when they’re arranging suitable times for meetings.

How will you get to meetings? Will it cost much?
Committees operating outside the school or outside school hours should be responsible for making sure you can get to meetings, either by arranging transport or by giving you funds for you to be able to attend by public transport.

Will you be able to legally attend?
Your Principal should have a copy of a memorandum from Dr Norman Curry, the Director General of Education (dated 8.12.83). This document states that if you are leaving school without a teacher supervising you, the school must have a record which includes this information:

- a description of the activity to be undertaken, including locations;
- the names and ages of the students involved;
- the time of leaving and return to the school.

It is recommended that prior written approval of parent or guardian be obtained before students are allowed to leave school environs without direct supervision of a teacher or other adult.

Will you get paid?
There is no official policy which says you should get paid for being on a committee. However, when the committee is arranging for students to be represented, they should consider the possibility of paying you and build this into their financial arrangements.

The committee should recognise that by paying you they will be encouraging you to take your work more seriously, and you would have a stronger commitment to do a good job.

It is worth keeping in mind that most of the adults on the committee are there because it is part of their job (for which they are getting paid). You, as a student, however, have few real rewards for your work, and payment for your services on the committee is one way of making certain that you get something back for all your efforts.

We hope this paper will answer some of your questions and that it will give you an idea of how to approach your work on the committee. It’s quite possible that the committee will not have considered all these issues. If not, don’t be afraid to bring them up yourself.

Good luck.

Graeme Fletcher and Roger Holdsworth, 1984
Introduction

The Schools Commission PEP Guidelines for schools should equally apply to the procedures adopted on Program Committees:

3.40 Parents and students are too often involved in token ways ... The establishment of formal participatory structures is necessary but not sufficient for real participation to occur; resources must also be provided to develop the capacity of young people and inexperienced parents to contribute to school planning and policy ...

These suggestions are a first attempt to define steps that could be taken to achieve this. As a Committee attempts to implement this, further needs will, no doubt, become obvious and these too should be documented.

A. Before the meeting

1. A detailed agenda should be sent out, giving (where possible) recommendations to be moved;
2. Meetings should be held before the meeting to go over the agenda and main business. For example, students could meet with other students and with an advisor, to talk over what is likely to happen;
3. Meetings beforehand could be held with other committee members where they explain to students what they aim to do in the meeting and how they will do it;
4. In particular, experienced committee members who will act as in-committee ‘tutors’, should meet with students before the meeting;
5. Pre-meeting meetings should be seen as part of committee members' commitments. In particular, accurate time commitment information should be given to students when approaches are made;
6. A support person should be allocated to meet with students before the meeting and, where possible, to sit with students during the meeting;
7. The meeting should be held at a time when student representatives can attend with minimal disruption to their studies.

B. At the start of the meeting

1. An experienced committee member should be nominated as a ‘tutor’ to each student member for each meeting. This role could rotate between members, with attention paid to positive gender roles;
2. All members should be introduced and identified, for example, with a place name. This should show both the name and the organisation represented;
3. All documents should have a face sheet summarising the main ideas or recommendations.

C. Procedure of meeting

1. The meeting should stop before decisions are made, to allow time for students to:
   • talk with each other;
   • talk with committee tutors;
   • talk with any support people present;
   to make sure they understand the issues;
2. Motions should be written out and, where possible, copied for all members of the Committee;
3. There should be a clear statement about the style of each part of the meeting - identifying 'brain-storming' or 'formal' times;
4. Arguments and discussion from subcommittee meetings should not be repeated in committee meetings;
5. At the end of each item of business, the chairperson should summarise the decisions on action to be taken and clearly indicate responsibility for action.

D. Language

1. All members should avoid forms of jargon:
   • initials should be avoided except where they’re explained in documents;
   • other groups, committees or individual roles should be explained fully;
   • an attempt should be made to put motions and discussion in direct language;
2. Any member should be able to query the use of a name, word or phrase and have that query treated seriously.

E. After the meeting

1. At the end of the meeting, the chairperson or Executive Officer should summarise the major decisions made, especially indicating what action is to be taken, by whom and by when;
2. The committee tutors and/or support person should meet with the students to talk over what happened in the meeting. This should also be regarded as part of the meeting commitment.
In my role as Year 8 Coordinator at an all boys’ Catholic school (located in central Melbourne across two campuses – Years 7-10 and VCE), I was asked in 2014 to create a program for Year 8 students to help promote students as leaders and to develop their leadership skills. This year, with the parallel introduction and review of a Pastoral Care program at the school, I realised that I had not formally reviewed the Leadership Program nor had I sought student feedback, and that many students wanted to reflect on this program.

Students as co-researchers: A Year 8 ‘student voice’ initiative

Over its three years of delivery, I have self-reflected and made changes based on observations, but these were not formal reviews – nor did they allow for students to provide feedback. I wanted to see if the program is actually enhancing student leadership at the school and allowing the students to have a say in how it is operating. This story tells how we went about this – through a process of using students as co-researchers. It is a story about process, rather than about the (still emerging) results of the review.

Background
The college has a population of approximately 500 students between the two campuses. It is very diverse and multicultural, with 59% percent of students from a mid to low socio-economic background. The school has a large migrant and refugee population with many of the students living in commission housing or travelling from the outer suburbs to get to the school: 74% of students speak a language other than English at home. The enrolments at Year 7 come from about 50 different primary schools from a range of areas; therefore many boys only know one other, if any other boys, when they start at the college.

Student voice can be defined as the opportunities provided for students in schools to be involved in making decisions that impact on their lives and the lives of their peers. Although there is substantial evidence in the research to indicate a strong correlation between student voice and student wellbeing, and the push for student voice in schools is widely published in government policy, it is still not thoroughly explored within schools. Many schools feel that they effectively incorporate student voice, but the reality is that many of the opportunities they provide are tokenistic, as these student voice avenues do not engage with students as participants.

Our college provided several formal student voice opportunities but none that allowed for students to take a leading role or allowed students to be agents of change.

My original aim in the Year 8 Leadership Program was to develop an opportunity for students to collaborate with adults to make a change in the school. In extending this aim to the review of the Year 8 Leadership Program, I decided to establish a student action team. Together with students, I would review the current Year 8 Leadership Program by collaborating with students, who would be working as co-researchers. In establishing the review in this form, I hoped to show my school what establishing an effective student voice activity looks like, as well as reviewing my program using those who are directly involved within it. I wanted the students to feel as though their feedback was actually being heard, that their involvement was important and made a difference to the review.

As I began to develop this project focus, I realised that engaging students in the process as co-researchers could be built into the leadership program itself, becoming another facet of it. Through being involved in the review process, the students would develop communication skills, teamwork and research skills. I moved away from focusing on the review of the program, to refocus on finding out how being involved in the review process would impact on the students.

In looking at previous research, the most important factors that would need to be addressed were the choice of participants, the project topic focus...
and the level of support from the school. Facilitators and students who participated needed to be very enthusiastic but they also needed to be committed, value each other’s input and be willing to work together as equals. To fulfill the objectives of the project, commitment from all participants needed to be established. A project that is established out of need and allows for the agenda to be driven by the students, is more likely to be effective and realise the desired outcomes. School support, not just enthusiasm, allows for participants to fully immerse themselves in the process of the project, as participants feel that their work is highly valued by the school and, thus, project success is more likely to occur.

Setting up the project team
I acted as the primary researcher and facilitator for this project, leading the student action team through the research process. Initially the project group was comprised of two Year 8 homeroom teachers and seven Year 8 students. All students displayed a keen interest in being involved in the project and both teachers, like me, saw the value for both themselves and the students in actively listening to student voice. Unfortunately by the end of the project, both homeroom teachers, through pressure of work, and one of the students, through disorganisation, had withdrawn. So the final research team consisted of six Year 8 students and myself.

I realised that this action team would need to consist of students who understood, and had invested interest in, the project’s aim. Therefore I initially set out to establish a team that consisted of a mixture of Year 8 and Year 9 students, all of whom had been involved in the Leadership Program. I wanted to be inclusive, so the recruitment process aimed to ensure that all students from these year levels had the opportunity to be involved. Initially I set out to have five students from each year level, and three teachers within the group – with the intention of addressing any possible power imbalances between adults and students. This size would also allow for an effective focus group.

To establish the team, I first sought out teacher collaborators. As I had decided that those directly involved would have more investment and greater commitment, I recruited from within the current Year 8 homeroom teachers, speaking to them directly about what it would mean if they were to be involved. As a result, two out of four teachers initially joined the action team, stating their high support of this project.

Effective promotion of the project would be through the use of the online student bulletin, giving all Year 8 and 9 students equal opportunity to be involved. Unfortunately this did not produce many responses, possibly due to the fact that the system is relatively new. I decided that I needed to seek other avenues of promotion. To encourage Year 8 involvement, I sought to promote the action team at the end of Term 2’s Year 8 assembly. Immediately after the assembly, students volunteered to be involved, either in person or via email, indicating that this method was somewhat more effective. Despite every effort to engage the interest of Year 9 students, including direct email and explicit Year 9 teacher correspondence, no Year 9 students volunteered.

To decide which of the Year 8s should be involved in the action team, I conferred with my teacher collaborators. As the original plan was to have 8-10 students involved, and it was thought being involved would be beneficial to all students who volunteered, it was decided that all eight Year 8 students who volunteered would be invited to be a part of the action team.

Because of other school commitments, it was decided that the action team would meet before school on Tuesday mornings. Even though all members were asked to commit prior to volunteering, the development of this as a meeting time caused one student to withdraw. Lack of attendance at the first three meetings made it apparent that the timing of the meeting was an issue for the other members as well. Both teacher collaborators found it difficult to commit to the time, feeling overcommitted by other school work, and subsequently withdrew from meeting attendance. In an effort to keep their support, I asked these teachers if they would help on a needs basis and both agreed to this. It became apparent that the main data source for the project would be from the perspectives of the students.

In the first three meetings, student attendance ranged between one and three students. When approached about this, the students said that they found it difficult to both remember and arrive at school on time for the meetings. As a result, there was little to no progress occurring between meetings. I consulted with the students to find out how we might improve meeting attendance. They suggested that perhaps a lunchtime would suit better; after school was also too difficult as no one day suited all members. I reviewed my timetable and found that, even though I was teaching the majority of the day, I had Monday lunchtimes free of duties. I proposed this as the new meeting time to the students. Fortunately all agreed that they could make this time and that it would work better for them, as they would all be at school anyway and could remind each other to come to the meetings. This time seemed aligned with all group members’ availability.

Initiation of team action and progress
At the first lunchtime meeting, at which five students were present, the importance of commitment was rediscussed, highlighting how partial or non-attendance would result in stagnation of the project. All students in attendance repledged their commitment to the action team. Due to the minimal attendance at previous sessions, group members had not progressed past individual reflection on the Leadership Program. As a result, this session brought together their thoughts and allowed students to begin to work out how they could officially review the program.

I proposed a variety of data collection methods for the review, highlighting the pros and cons of each, but ultimately allowing the students to make the decision on how they wanted to proceed. The students decided to develop a survey consisting of six questions, three closed and three open ended, which would be completed online. To guide the students with the development of the survey, I asked each member to formulate three questions that they felt would work in the survey and bring these to the following session.

Over the subsequent two sessions the students combined their question ideas, formulating a short concise survey. Once the questions were formulated, we brainstormed possible responses to ascertain whether the questions would yield desired responses. Questions were adjusted as necessary and then the students worked together to decide
on roles for survey delivery and data collection. By the end of the second session, the students had all volunteered for different roles and were ready to deliver their survey. It was decided that they would do this before the end of the week in either homeroom or pastoral care in an effort to ensure it was completed before the end of Term 3. The students took charge of execution and delivery of the survey, ensuring that all Year 8 classes had completed it.

The last session was originally aimed at analysing the collected survey data. Unfortunately the student who compiled the survey posted the incorrect link on the online student network and thus no data was collected. As a result, during this session the students worked on fixing the survey and decided on how best they could collect the data for a second time. As students collaborated, they agreed that, although it was a little frustrating, it was part of the learning process for completing research.

The next stage for the action team is to analyse the data. I hope to teach the students how we can use thematic analysis to code the responses and draw conclusions. Based on these results I hope that we will be able to formulate an improvement proposal for next year’s program and initiate desired changes.

My own data collection
In order to gather data about the process, I kept a reflective journal, noting down attendance patterns, observed student attitudes and behaviour, decisions from meetings and reflections on my own participation within the project. The students in the action team were also asked to participate in a focus group to discuss how they felt about being involved in this project. During this session, as with all of our group meetings, confidentiality, autonomy and anonymity of participants was respected and maintained.

This led me to some conclusions on the themes of setting up student voice initiatives, student commitment, and leadership support, and also provided some student reflections.

Establishing this student voice initiative was far more difficult than I originally expected. Although I was aware of the many possible barriers that could arise, I did not anticipate the difficulties I would face in gaining student commitment and leadership support.

**Student commitment**
Students were free to leave the project without penalty or negativity, however it was understood commitment was essential to allow the group to progress. The average attendance at meetings was four out of seven students. Most of these students consistently attended other school activities so these results suggest that, for some students, this activity did not carry the same standing as other school activities.

During the project, one of these students was approached about his lack of attendance. He admitted that he had played sport instead of attending the meeting. His response indicated that students struggled to prioritise and understand the essentiality of their attendance at meetings. As meetings were regular and students received numerous reminders, it could also suggest that students found it difficult to remain organised and remember that meetings were occurring.

During the focus group, students were asked: ‘How well do you think we have worked together as a group?’ Student responses confirmed that, during Term 3 especially, they found it hard to manage attendance with their other school commitments. The initiation of this activity may not have occurred in the most appropriate time in the school year; this factor should have been considered prior to starting the activity.

Several group members were absent for several sessions in succession and I wanted to understand why this was occurring. I was able to have meaningful conversations with some students about how their attendance affected the group whilst further highlighting to them the processes involved for change to be successful. Interestingly this approach seemed to make students feel more heard and valued whilst also giving them an exit strategy. Two out of the three students approached chose to recommit to the group and attended all subsequent sessions. Speaking to students about the change process and highlighting their value, whilst not penalising those who choose to leave, can help to re-establish commitment.

**Leadership support**
On two occasions it could be perceived that this project was ‘forgotten about’ by the school’s Principal, as the meeting room was changed without notice and a meeting was booked in with myself, the leader, without notice, for the time of our meeting. These occurrences, together with the lack of willingness to give staff a time allowance to be part of the project, could suggest that leadership at this school is yet to see the full benefits of developing effective student voice initiatives and therefore see the validity of this project.

I felt disempowered and undervalued by this lack of involvement from school leadership, forcing me to consider why this may have occurred. Was it a result of me not clearly stating the intentions of the project, or was it that the importance of leadership support was not explained to the school leadership team? When approached about booking in another meeting at the time when the action group meeting was to take place, I explained to leadership the reason for my inability to attend and discussed with them the importance of their support for the project, directly explaining the need
for their support. I wonder if I had been more forthright with asking for support, more often, and more forcefully, would it have made the delivery of my project more effective? And as a result would the project have been better promoted within the school? These unanswered questions suggest that further research needs to be done to explore the full effects of school support.

**Student reflections**

As the main focus for this project was to determine how involvement would affect students within this school, a key source of data became the students directly involved in the project. To establish how participating in this group affected these students, the student action team was asked to become a focus group, stepping out of their role as action-researchers to reflect. As the group at this stage only consisted of six students, all group members were invited to participate. Unfortunately two students were absent the day the focus group meeting was held (they were ill), therefore the focus group consisted of four action group members and myself. The students articulated their thoughts about the group's action-research process and reflected upon their individual involvements. Even though this was a small action group, some interesting key themes arose from their discussion.

All students responded favourably to their involvement within the project, giving responses such as it was 'fun', 'enjoyable' and 'exciting'. Students also felt that, even though the project was ongoing and that outcomes were not yet met, they were influential through this group, making a change and helping their school community by improving the system. Other researchers have noted that giving students the opportunity to be involved in reform, re-engages students with the school community and allows them to feel validated. The students here felt empowered and further valued by their school community.

Teamwork was an integral element for this project; students were required to continually collaborate to make decisions about how the group would progress through the research process. As a result, communication became one of the key learnings for the students. Working together allowed students to improve their communication skills as they both listened and felt completely heard by the group throughout the process. Students identified that this was a result of the fact that they all volunteered to be part of the group and were therefore all involved for the same reasons.

The effects of the development of communication skills in the group setting, could be seen both within student interactions within the group and also beyond the group. Due to the fact there was an unspoken protocol that we listened and were all able to speak within the action team, they said they became better listeners in other situations as well: ‘I’m quiet and listen more.’ One student even identified that: ‘I should listen more to others’ opinions as it, um, may be a very good idea and instead of just shutting them down.’

Through their involvement, the students not only developed better communication with their peers but also became more empathetic to others’ opinions and concerns. Adult facilitators also became more empathetic to others’ ideas and opinions as it, um, may be a very good idea and instead of just shutting them down.

Although the students felt that, as a group, their communication was effective and highly collaborative, they did not feel that this extended into non face-to-face communication. When communication was not face-to-face, eg via email, they were non-responsive and often forgot about the plans they had made with the group. This suggests that, although young people are avid online users, they do not use email as a key form of communication. Interestingly email communication was suggested by the students but I now wonder if this was due to the fact that I was to be included in the communication and therefore that they were attempting to adapt their usual communication to include me. Based on discussions about how students communicate online, future projects could use communication across interfaces such as Facebook, as this is more likely to elicit continual communication and collaboration.

As the involvement in the action team was a new experience for all of these students, they admitted that the issue of commitment become a challenging factor. They concluded that being involved forced them to become more organised in general, and to learn to prioritise better. The novelty of involvement helped to encourage commitment.

During the focus group the students were also asked if they felt that involvement had had any negative effects for them. Remarkably all students noted that, although it could be seen by other students that involvement could negatively impact on other areas of their lives, they saw being involved as mostly positive. Even though there were challenges, they felt that this involvement enhanced their social life and their sense of belonging. It involved a minimal commitment of time and allowed them to work with new people and build new friendships.

I assumed that the students would develop leadership skills through their involvement. When the students were asked: ‘Do you think you have learnt leadership skills by being in this group?’ and about their ability to lead others through the process, the students did not seem to feel that involvement within this group had any effect. They felt that their participation in the delivery of the surveys required continual teacher support. The teachers who provided informal feedback
on this process, highlighted how well the students delivered their surveys and monitoring the integral role they played in monitoring the participation from students. These varied responses could indicate that involvement did enhance the students’ leadership skills but that they themselves did not fully understand the attributes that are associated or required of a leader. Even with this misperception, the students unanimously agreed that, if given the opportunity, they would participate in this type of activity again and, although they do not feel well versed enough yet, lead a research project of their own.

**My own reflections**

Student voice is concerned with improving young people’s understanding of their role as citizens of democracy, by developing activities where students and adults work together to improve school practices. Giving students an avenue to be heard allows for students to reengage with the school whilst also allowing for school reform to be more effective.

Even though schools know the importance of student voice, many of the activities developed are in fact tokenistic and do not allow for effective participation. Government policy is encouraging the effective use of student voice in schools. Many schools believe that they are doing this through offering activities such as the Student Representative Council (SRC). However these activities often do not allow students to participate as democratic citizens and work with the school through collaboration on worthwhile projects. Students need to have the opportunity to collaborate with adults, working together to establish meaningful changes within the school.

Upon reviewing the current student voice activities running at our college, it became apparent that the bulk of activities run as student voice initiatives were superficial; they did not instigate the use of student voice for making meaningful changes within the school. Those student voice avenues that do exist have been minimal and are low or non-participatory for the students. Most engagement with student voice comes from surveys and, until the implementation of this action-research project, there were no meaningful student voice activities. The aim of this project was therefore to create an avenue that allowed students to work with adults and show the impact this has on the students and subsequently the school.

Despite the implementation challenges, the benefits for students can still be realised as long as teacher-student power relationships are kept in check. The successful outcomes of a project depend on the rapport developed with the students. Here, it was my ability to take on a ‘coaching’ rather than ‘commanding’ role when working with the group. This was one of my aims as leader of the project; but I was concerned that I had not been fully successful in it. Interestingly, the students disagreed with this:

‘You’ve given us the opportunity to express our way about the leadership program. At the start you said you’re not as a teacher, as more as a person to listen in and I think that’s worked a lot because it’s not like teacher led, it’s more individual led which is better.’

I would also acknowledge the importance of incentives for implementing change. I saw these as inherent for staff and students as they gained new experiences. However, when commitment declined, I think I needed to re-examine these and provide additional incentives such as food during the lunchtime meetings to ensure more regular involvement.

The outcomes of this research indicate that it is important to recognise the essentiality of school leadership support and its pivotal role in the effectiveness of student voice activities. I came to understand the importance of acceptance from school leadership and of ensuring their support to allow for effective implementation. Through the project implementation, I experienced the complexities of this requirement: what a lack of involvement looked like and the effect it would have on project success. A larger involvement of leadership in the project may have benefitted its outcomes from inception to delivery.

**Conclusion**

Regardless of the issues that arose through implementation, successful outcomes for the students were realised. I was able to guide the students through the research process, allowing them to feel successful in their endeavour to review. As a result, the students learnt leadership skills, felt their ideas were heard and were engaged as full participants. As long as the facilitator honestly listens and works alongside the students as equals, there is possibility for success.

For those attempting to implement similar programs, the complexities of implementation should not be underestimated. Start small; develop a collaborative group with whom you can work cohesively and ensure their continual involvement; explore the avenues of student recruitment early, working with the students to build the action team; and do not underestimate the importance of leadership support. Thoroughly exploring these challenges prior to initiation will allow greater success once the student voice action-research project in underway. I would recommend that:

- Student voice initiatives are driven through a collaborative process, which should entail students working with teachers from the beginning, including through the recruitment process.
- School leadership should be approached through a formal process with students, and that involvement be monitored. In doing so, concrete outcomes may be required of leadership, ensuring their ongoing involvement throughout the project. This may also help to root student voice into the school culture.
- Facilitators/leaders should work with students to decide on the focus of the change project, as lack of investment can hinder commitment.
- The group should be given set roles so that leadership is distributed and all group members become included throughout the process, ensuring that adult collaborators feel a continual sense of connection with the project.
- For collaborative group meetings, incentives are provided to group members in order to encourage continued support and a deeper sense of connection to the project.

As this student voice initiative has not yet concluded, I will be considering some of these recommendations as the group works towards its final outcomes. These activities should then be reviewed and developed into more rigorous initiatives, which will allow for more effective student voice to occur.

Madeleine Smooker
madeleine.smooker@gmail.com
Year 6 Students Researching Leadership and Training Year 5 to be Leaders

I’ve been trying to find out whether student voice initiatives could help to raise student engagement in the year 5 and 6 classrooms in our school. To prepare the Year 5 students for student leadership the following year, I started by giving the current Year 6 students a unit of work researching what they had learned as leaders. They analysed the authenticity of their leadership experiences during the unit, and then planned and implemented a training experience for the Year 5 students to help them in their student leadership preparation – informing them of what they had learned in their own experiences.

This took place in St Finbar’s Catholic Primary School in a bayside suburb of Melbourne – a comfortable, aspirational middle class community. We have recently undergone a change of leadership including a new Principal and a new Deputy Principal. The Principal took an active interest in the project, was always available as a sounding board for ideas, was constantly looking for ways to build on the project, and looking to integrate it into the school’s current practices. The Deputy Principal, who is also the school’s Student Wellbeing Leader, was a rich source of information and support, offering resources and professional knowledge to aid the process, both when requested and voluntarily.

I have worked at the school since 2012 and I am currently a Year 5 classroom teacher and also Maths Leader of the school. In this project I worked with the two Year 5 teachers and the two Year 6 teachers, liaising between the classroom teachers, the leadership team, the student wellbeing team and the student voice committee. Being a member of each of these suited the process of liaising well.

Within our school setting, there has been a perceived lack of student engagement. This was noted through our annual school surveys, and through the school’s reviewer’s interviews of students from Years 5 and 6. In response, began to explore factors that have a positive impact on the engagement of students and their connectedness to school. Our school’s Annual Action Plan for 2016 includes the goal of increasing student engagement, and a ‘Key Improvement Strategy’ relating to the goal is to ensure that student voice is evident in all aspects of learning. An honest assessment of the current levels of success in implementing that strategy would lead to the observation that, as a school, we are still a long way from achieving it.

When considering a way to combine a student voice initiative with an action that would increase levels of student engagement, I was drawn towards the possibilities within the Year 6 leadership program. From my position as a Year 5 teacher and having very recently taught Year 6, I felt that this was an area in our school in which we could make gains in terms of student engagement.

In the past, the students have not begun their student leadership process until they got to Year 6, which meant that much of the time they spent as leaders was invested in developing their skills in the area.

At the beginning of 2016, the school changed from three composite Year 5/6 classes to two Year 5 and two Year 6 classes. It was very different from the situation of being a teacher of both the Year 6 leaders and the Year 5 students in the one class and meant I was able to focus the Year 6s on their leadership preparation. The same feeling had been reported by the Year 6 teachers, who were able to focus on the student leadership roles and actions within the school more attentively than when they had the responsibility of Year 5 students in their class.

I read an article by Pat Thomson1 that described the process of Year 6 student leaders at a school in England researching their own learning and effectiveness as leaders and this idea struck me as being particularly powerful for our Year 6 leaders. It was aligned with many of the characteristics of meaningful student voice initiatives: it was inquiry based, it was a partnership between the young people and teachers, it was relevant, and it would impact on others in the school – as I planned to hand on their findings to the current Year 5s as part of their preparation. The idea then expanded further, with the suggestion that the Year 6s might, themselves, devise training experiences for the Year 5s based on their research.

Background Survey

I began by establishing the current status of student voice in my school at the beginning of term 3, 2016. I surveyed 10 teaching staff and 38 Year 6 students from the school with a mixture of questions that required a written response or responses on a 5-point scale.

From the teacher survey, the data suggested a positive attitude from teachers about student leadership and student voice, but little action taking place in the school. Teachers wrote:

- “I think we still have a very traditional approach to education at [the school] which doesn’t lend itself well to student voice.”
- “...teachers don’t receive time or training to prepare us for how to do this (student voice) and what to expect. There are no examples or structure to follow.”
- “This is an area we need to develop further as a school, both as teachers and students.”

The student data provided more information. Year 6 students felt happy with their levels of student participation and student voice, however a closer look showed that students’ reasons were based upon their evaluation of experiences that
did not reflect authentic or meaningful student voice experiences. For example, in response to the question: "What has worked well in your leadership role this year?" some wrote:

- "Dressing up and doing the sports bag."
- "...looking after the chickens and helping to sell the beads."
- "Being encouraging in sports carnivals."

This suggested that the students didn’t have a grasp on what meaningful student voice looked like or represented.

A Learning Unit

So with the Year 6 teachers, we sat down and planned some learning experiences that would expose the Year 6 students to the concept of ‘student voice’. The inquiry unit we devised was intended to facilitate the students in researching their own experiences as student leaders and evaluating it against their new knowledge of student voice, which would be acquired as a result of their research. The Year 6 teachers chose to share Hart’s Ladder with the students. This places examples of student participation and youth/adult partnerships on a scale from ‘tokenistic’ to ‘meaningful’ (below):

The students investigated the ladder (using child friendly versions of it) and firstly came up with hypothetical examples of each of the levels to illustrate their understanding. The students were then asked to rate their personal experiences of student voice activities against the rungs on Hart’s Ladder. Students’ ratings tended towards the top of the ladder and indicated that they felt that they were engaging in meaningful student voice opportunities:

- “I put us at a 7 because we were partners in planning the talent show.”
- “On the ladder I had us at 8 because we decided we would fundraise for Caritas.”

Students also made posters to illustrate their work as Environment Captains, Sport Captains and SRC Captains (see above for an example).

However we, as teachers, still felt that student voice wasn’t as authentic in our school as the Year 6 students were indicating. We needed to plan further opportunities for the Year 6 students to evaluate their leadership roles and work with us to design a more authentic student voice experience.
We decided to gather further data through a focus group of Year 6 students. We chose a good cross section of boys and girls, academically diverse, that also included the marginalised voices of two of the quietest students, to form a ten person focus group. The two Year 6 teachers facilitated the group with individual questions, where each member in the group took a turn to answer, and used the ‘magical tool’ technique described by Erminia Colucci. In this technique, the students had a magical stick that could make their ideas come to life. The overwhelming and unexpected outcome from this group was that the students did not actually see the benefit of designing their own curriculum experiences. A Year 6 girl summed up the feelings of the group and the evidence we collected:

“Yo’re the teacher, you should have to decide what to teach us. We’re just here to learn”.

Further Explorations

While Hart’s Ladder had been useful in providing one aspect of evaluating student voice in terms of partnerships, the students needed to consider the actual impact their actions were having on the school and the impact that they would like them to have. It was also time to start preparing the Year 5 students for leadership by conducting a unit of work that examined their own values, their goals for leadership and an investigation into examples of leaders, both contemporary and historical.

It was also important for students to explore whether curricular activities were more meaningful to student voice than were extra-curricular activities. The Year 6 teachers asked students to rank what was most important to them at school: friendships, teacher/student relationships, wellbeing, learning and extra curricular activities. The students ranked learning as the most important and extra curricular activities as of least importance. This evidence was shared for discussion and analysis by the students themselves.

The Year 6 teachers then asked the students to revisit the leadership activities that they had evaluated against Hart’s Ladder. As researchers of their own learning, the students were encouraged to re-examine these activities from the perspective of whether or not the activities had an impact on their own curriculum, and/or on the learning of the students in the year levels below them. The overwhelming response from the students was that the activities were predominately extra-curricular, with very few of their leadership experiences impacting on their learning, or on the learning of the younger students in the school.

With these findings in mind, the two Year 6 classes held a brainstorming session to devise an action. They agreed that the Year 6 students would use the findings of their research unit to present a learning experience to the Year 5 students that informs and prepares them for Year 6 leadership in 2017. Ideas on the format of these learning experiences were collected and listed on the whiteboard by the teachers. The teachers and children then discussed and analysed the merits of each, including time and logistics. The group arrived at the consensus that a ‘Leadership Expo’ would be the most efficient and effective way to deliver the benefits of their learning to Year 5.

As the student leadership system at the school is broken up into a series of different areas eg House Captains, Library Captains, Tech Captains etc, the students broke off into their groups to plan their ‘stall’ for the Leadership Expo. With four students in each group, the work focused on analysing their leadership positions and then devising ways in which the Year 5 students could make meaningful change from that leadership position in 2017. This information would then need to be presented in an engaging way, both verbally and with the use of material resources. The Year 6 students practised speeches and prepared colourful and attractive materials - such as brochures, cards and bookmarks - espousing their messages of meaningful leadership to be
shared with the Year 5 students at the Expo. The Year 6 students then came back together as a whole group and planned the layout of the classroom spaces for the Expo, as well as co-writing the welcoming speech for the Year 5 students as part of their literacy lessons.

The Expo was conducted over an hour, and the Year 5 students appeared to be engaged and enjoying themselves throughout. Aside from the cakes and lollies provided by the Year 6 leaders, they were able to take away a wealth of information on the possibilities for leadership that exist within each of the different areas. They gained significant insights into student leadership both by talking to the Year 6 children and by reading the brochures etc that they carried out with them in bundles.

**Follow Up**

In the afternoon following the Leadership Expo, the Year 6 children were asked to re-complete the survey that they took at the beginning of their research unit. A comparison of the two surveys showed that a significant majority of the Year 6 students had changed the way they viewed leadership during the six weeks of the research unit. For example, in each survey they provided advice for the Year 5 students:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Survey 1</th>
<th>Survey 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| A       | • For them to remember that they are the leaders of the school and that people look up to them;  
• To help your mentor teacher if needed | • Don’t be afraid to speak up, leadership is all about student voice |
| B       | • Always participate;  
• Always encourage everyone;  
• Always share your opinions | • Don’t be afraid to speak up if you have any ideas;  
• Encourage everyone;  
• Come up with ideas so you’re not just doing nothing |
| C       | • Make sure you have lots of ideas for your role;  
• Know exactly what each captain does | • You have to speak up and think of your own ideas;  
• If your 1st idea doesn’t work, think of another one;  
• You can’t rely on the teachers to assign you to projects – you have to speak up |
| D       | • To put 100% in everything you do;  
• Never give up;  
• To help anyone who needs it | • If something doesn’t work out, keep trying! “Never Give Up”;  
• Always try to get a say in anything (Student Voice) |
| E       | • To be yourself  
• Set the bar high | • Don’t be afraid to say what you want;  
• Doesn’t matter what you get, all roles are really fun;  
• Don’t be shy to have a voice |
| F       | 1. Have a voice in what you want to help with  
2. Be organised  
3. Be consistent | 1. Be organised  
2. Have a student voice  
3. Say what you think |
| G       | • Be brave and have confidence to make decisions in your leadership role;  
• Try to do a lot to make a difference in your leadership role and have different ideas and think outside the box;  
• Most importantly make it fun for everyone! | • To speak up at the start and don’t hesitate to speak up and say your ideas;  
• In the meetings talk to your mentor teachers if you don’t like something;  
• Think outside the box;  
• Come up with new ideas and be independent |
| H       | • If I was them right now I would be very excited because you will love your leadership role;  
• Even if you don’t like your leadership role, just go with it and keep on going.  
• And if the teachers didn’t put you in your leadership role it means you were put in the one that they thought you were best at and that’s what happened to me | • Interact with your mentor teacher because they can do anything with your ideas |
| I       | [No response recorded for this question] | • To get something out of it you have to put something into it;  
• Refer back to Hart’s Ladder every time you have a meeting or an activity that you are hosting;  
• Have fun, relax and don’t stress too much |
It could not be described as a seismic shift in thinking, but the themes running through this qualitative data suggested that some small changes had occurred in the understanding of – and attitude towards - student voice.

In comparing the quantitative data I anticipated that there would be a decrease in the average score for each question between surveys. (A higher score means that the experiences that student leaders had this year had been more meaningful.) But we found:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Survey 1: Average Score (N=38)</th>
<th>Survey 2: Average Score (N=38)</th>
<th>Net Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. I feel like I was listened to by my teachers and principal, and that they gave me the power to follow through my ideas for my leadership role</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>+0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Having a Mentor. Teacher has had a big influence my leadership role</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>+0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I feel like I had a lot of input into decisions made in my leadership role</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>+0.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These responses seem to show that, after completing the research unit, the students felt they had experienced more meaningful student voice during the first semester that they had previously thought when first completing the survey. The second survey was administered in the afternoon after the Leadership Expo, and the more positive responses were a response to a very positive and meaningful student voice experience the students had just participated in.

Reflection

The outcomes of this project were both anticipated and unanticipated. The Year 5 students left the project feeling that they were well on their way in their preparation for leadership. While the broad goal of raising the levels of student engagement at the school is a difficult one to measure in such a short space of time, I would say that there is an indication of raised levels of student engagement, as evidenced in the Year 6 survey responses and the excellence and enjoyment on display at the Leadership Expo.

But in thinking about: “what constitutes authentic student voice and authentic student participation?” the answers here were unexpected. The Year 6 students did not initially seem to have a clear understanding of what meaningful student voice and student participation is or could be. So in asking: “what role does the teacher play in the student teacher partnership, when facilitating the Year 6 students in their preparation of the Year 5 students for their school leadership roles?” I feel that the teacher should scaffold the Year 6 students’ understanding of meaningful student voice and student participation and challenge them to reflect critically on their input into their roles as leaders.

The Year 6 students were able to create new knowledge on the topic areas of student voice and student participation. Using this, they could plan and implement a training activity for the Year 5 students that met the stated objective of the Year 6 students preparing the Year 5 students for leadership opportunities – by passing on their knowledge and experience in an informative and engaging way.

However, reaching the marginalised voices continued to be an issue. While everyone in Year 6 participated in the project, there were still some students who were sitting back a lot of the time. These were the usual students who we know tend to take a back seat in learning experiences unless they were in a small group or one to one. They were not proactive in the large group decision making processes, slightly better contributors within their leadership groups of four students, but in the small focus group, only the students who were familiar with the group facilitator made any contributions. This was a negative effect.

In the past, as a teacher, I have always seen the value in getting feedback from students and briefly reflecting on learning, all in the space of perhaps ten minutes, and at the most a lesson. After observing the Year 6 students’ completion of their six week research inquiry, I can see that there is a
valuable pedagogy that concerns itself with the creation of new knowledge by investigating past experiences. This pedagogy serves two purposes. It creates new knowledge for students whilst deepening the understanding of previous experiences. It also makes for meaningful and authentic learning. As a result of my experience gained from conducting this research I now have a deeper understanding of how students learn. When learning is relevant to students, when it makes an impact or creates change in their environment, and when learning grows the student as a citizen, it becomes more engaging.

**Conclusion**

The potential for the change that this action may result in, if sustained in the school, is significant. The students were introduced to a new perspective on their learning, and they were given the opportunity to view what they could be capable of in terms of designing their own learning. The teachers were given a snapshot as to how difficult the task of implementing student voice initiatives is. However, they were also privy to a glimpse of the possibilities it holds, and the rewarding nature of those experiences.

For the concept of student voice to flourish at the school there are a number of steps that need to be taken next. It is important now that the Year 6 students carry on their momentum in working with the Year 5 students on their preparation for leadership. The gains made in providing the Year 6s with a meaningful student voice experience can be lost just as quickly by abandoning the concept. It is also important that the entire staff is made aware of the details of what the Year 6 unit of inquiry entailed. This should be undertaken formally during dedicated staff meeting time, and open to critical analysis by all staff members so the deepest possible understanding of what took place - and the possibilities for extending it – can be established.

We cannot hope to fully develop student voice in our school unless we are proactive about it.

Wayne Daniell
wdaniell@sfbrightoneast.catholic.edu.au

**References**


2. Colucci, E. (2007). Focus groups can be fun: The use of activity-oriented questions in focus group discussions. *Qualitative Health Research* 17(10): 1422-1433
Mount Alexander College (MAC) is a small secondary school of about 350 students situated on Mount Alexander Road in Flemington. We have students from a wide range of cultural backgrounds with many countries represented.

In 2016, MAC embarked on an exciting new approach to schooling. It is becoming a student-centred school with a focus on authentic student empowerment. This has involved switching to vertically structured student-centred learning in all subjects, and the introduction of a large number of new classes including student-led electives. The ultimate goal is for students to be able to select subjects they are passionate about, regardless of their year level.

Every student has an individual learning plan catering for their passions, needs and interests. Under this new system, it is possible for a Year 8 student to do a VCE or pre-VCE subject if they feel they want to and are considered academically ready. All students are guided in their subject choices through individual course counselling.

**Negotiating Learning**

**Student-led electives** are classes where students negotiate with teachers about what will be learnt and how it will be learnt. Students are involved in negotiating assessment and providing feedback to their teachers on both their own performance and that of the teacher. Every student chooses six subjects per semester.

Students are encouraged to work with their teachers on developing the curriculum and providing feedback to their teachers on their performance. For example, in *Writers Hub*, an English class of Year 8 to 10 students, the students discussed with the teacher the class novels and assessment tasks they would look at, as well as writing the student magazine together.

Some Maths classes had similar student-teacher discussions with students choosing Maths topics they are interested in. This has led to students learning more about the subject and choosing assessment tasks that are more fun or interesting. In other student-led electives with less curriculum guidelines, students can choose the overall focus of the class and drive their own learning.

We have also introduced **Clubs and Societies** in 2016. This is run twice a week and all students can choose an activity that interests them. There are over 20 activities to choose from such as *Dice and Dungeons, Anime, Debating and Philosophy*, and *Primary Science*. In the second half of this year, a group of girls developed a proposal for a *Girls’ Group*. They suggested a range of topics and activities, identified students who wanted to be involved and facilitated staffing and a room. This activity is a great example of how things can happen at MAC!

**Authentic Student Voice**

Through this approach, the school aims to meet the diverse needs of all students and prepare them to be adaptable, curious, lifelong learners of the 21st century. A new **Leadership Team** of teachers at the school are driving this change through a commitment to authentic student voice.

Of course, these changes needed to be accompanied by the introduction of a new **Student Leadership Team** to promote more opportunities for a strong student voice and replace the old SRC system.

As part of the vertical structure, four new **Houses** were introduced: *Apollo, Artemis, Athena and Poseidon*; the House names were chosen by the students. Each house is broken into three or four mentor groups of about 20 students each with two **Student Mentor Leaders** elected from each group. **Student Mentor Leaders** are supported with pastoral care by their mentor teacher and work with their group to raise issues, facilitate student programs and encourage participation in House and whole school activities. The mentor group meets every morning for 10 minutes.

Two of these **Mentor Leaders** are then elected by the students of the House as **House Captains**. The students and staff all participated in a democratic election for the two overall **College Captains**. All students could nominate for these positions and had to write why they wanted it. They then attended an interview with the Assistant Principal and Student Engagement Leading Teacher. The nominees addressed the Assembly and then all members of the school voted.
This new structure was necessary because the old SRC system did not reflect the vertical organisation of the school. Although students were elected as SRC representatives, there was not the same sense of student empowerment and decision making. The new system fosters students’ House identity and team work.

**Students at the Centre**

While 2016 has involved some trial and error, especially around getting our new **Student Leadership Team** organised and understanding their roles and responsibilities, students at MAC are at the centre of everything.

Students participate in all sorts of things, including:

- **Facilitating Whole School Assemblies**: Assemblies begin with an *Acknowledgement of Country* and the *National Anthem*. Students organise the activities for the Assemblies which often have different themes. Activities might include a musical performance, a speech from a student, a guest speaker or a House presentation. Points are awarded for House competitions including athletics, debating, poetry, swimming and the House tug-of-war. Points are also awarded to individual students as part of our school wide *Positive Behaviour Program*. Students who have received individual points are eligible to win prizes each term.
  - **Running a weekly Breakfast Club**: Each House takes it in turn to organise breakfast each week.
  - **Organising house activities such as Refugee Week**: For this special week of activities, each House had responsibility for one activity. These included hosting the Assembly, developing a program of lunchtime activities, organising a dress-up competition and facilitating food stalls. We had a guest speaker and raised money for refugees.

- **Reporting to School Council on student-led activities**: Our two **College Captains** attend all **School Council** meetings and make a written report on student activities.
- **Participating in teacher interview panels**: Students involved in the interview panels for teaching appointments and student team selections had to go through the appropriate training prior to interviews.
• Attending the VicSRC Congress and Conferences.
• Facilitating and hosting Information Nights.
• Leading school tours.

The Student Leadership Team has provided the focus and organisation for all students to be involved in these activities. By having students representing every mentor group, students who attend leadership forums can gather volunteers from their Houses and involve the entire student body.

Into 2017

Going into 2017, expectations of the Student Leadership Team have increased. They will have several new responsibilities including introducing and facilitating a Buddy Program for new Year 7 students and participating in a number of leadership workshops. The selection of the team for 2017 was organised by the current team and included encouraging nominations, describing their experiences this year and facilitating Election Day.

During each term throughout 2016, the Student Leadership Team held meetings (fortified with fruit and scones!!). Items on the agenda included reports from students who participated in VicSRC Congress and Conferences, reports on House activities and planning for new events.

Challenges

A particularly challenging part of setting up the Student Leadership Team was the election process. We were keen to provide all students with the chance to go for a leadership role while ensuring that those who apply are there to help the school rather than just because they were popular. Students had to address their mentor group to persuade students to vote for them.

Students realised this year that there was much more expected of students who were in these leadership positions. Some students stepped aside from these positions once they realised what they had to do. As a consequence of their experiences this year, students have a much better idea now of what the student leadership positions involve.

The biggest change for students has been recognising that positions of leadership come with responsibilities. It has been fantastic for students to have more control over what we learn and how we learn it. It has also been great to be able to follow new areas of interest and build on our strengths. This doesn't mean losing sight of the new things that we need to learn.

It is also fantastic to have so much say in how the school works. At MAC, the default position is: “Yes”! If a student wants to introduce something new, we have to make a proposal, research what is involved and find students who are interested in pursuing this activity.

Change is always challenging. Sometimes we are out of our comfort zone.

We have to make sure that all voices are heard … not just the loud ones. The mentor group allows us to encourage all students to speak. There are many opportunities for students to step up. Student-centred learning means that students who have not been confident in the past can become the leaders in the class that is tailored for their interests and skills. Students have more interest in class because we are actively engaged in our own learning.

MAC is a very different school in 2016 to last year. We plan to build on these changes to continue to strengthen MAC to become a truly student-centred school where students are empowered to have control of our own learning and where student voice is heard.

Henry Frazer
Year 10; Student Mentor Leader for Athena House; member of Writers Hub
FRA0008@mountalexandercollege.vic.edu.au
Empowering Students - Promoting Student Voice

Coatesville Primary School has been committed to empowering students through promoting student voice and choice and building school pride in the school and wider community. Through this ongoing commitment from parents, teachers and students we were honoured to be the winner of the SRC of the Year - Primary Schools at 2016 VicSRC Recognition Awards.

Our goal was to empower our students by drawing on student voice to affect or change the decision-making processes within our school. Through the weekly classroom, SRC and Action Team meetings, students are consulted for their opinions on changes, and their ideas and opinions have been continuously sought through surveys, discussions and collaboration with the student body.

“Each SRC member is responsible for seeking advice, feedback and issues from their class and peers, then reporting back at SRC meetings.”

Chevonne Mendez
Grade 6 SRC

At Coatesville PS, the Student Representative Council (SRC) is made up of students from Grade 3 to Grade 6 – one male and one female from each Grade – who are voted into the SRC by their class members. Their key role is to represent student views from within our school. These 40 students, including four school captains, meet weekly to discuss, debate and decide on their collective views about what is important to our school community.

As well as this, each SRC member nominate themselves for an Action Team (Student Wellbeing, Student Voice, Building Communities and Sustainability) which are led by the school captains and facilitated by teachers who coach students on how to initiate change and implement authentic student action. Throughout the year, teachers and students work in balance with each other in the different action teams. The teachers facilitate students’ ideas and opinions and encouraged them to take risks and have a collective voice for change.

“All the SRC members play a part in the action teams and that goes to show how well we operate student voice at our school. When students pass their ideas on to the SRC council, these ideas spread out to the action teams. The action teams commit to achieve the student driven goals so the students feel they have a happier school environment.”

Patrick Dukas
School Vice-Captain 2016

The Action Teams have given the students the opportunity to drive authentic action with ideas generated from every student in the school. Each SRC Action Team aims to efficiently and effectively deliver results for students. This has created a collective sense of achievement amongst the student body.

“We know what it’s like to have an idea followed through and when we promote something that someone has suggested and it turns into a big event, it makes that person feel special and needed. Everyone at Coatesville feels included.”

Sienna Gleghom
School Captain 2016

Empowering Students - Promoting Student Voice
Achievements
So, what has been achieved?

Sustainability:
This team has problem solved the rubbish issue in our school, reorganised the type of bins used for rubbish and, after surveying the students, placed the rubbish bins in strategic positions around the school.

They have created a video about Sustainability at Coatesville to be shared on the ‘Coatesville Voice’ website and are working towards promoting Nude Food.

Student Wellbeing:
The Positive Wellbeing Day was a huge success, where students from Grade F to 6 dressed up in a colour that best represented themselves e.g. yellow represented creativity. They hosted mindfulness and fitness lunch time activities and promoted Walk to School Day so that each student feels a strong sense of wellbeing and inclusion.

Student Voice:
The student voice team has released four editions of the ‘Coatesville Voice’, which is a student website developed as a forum to share and communicate with the Coatesville community about what is happening around the school. Every digital device in the school incorporates a feedback button allowing students to give staff feedback anytime, anywhere.

Building Community:
This team has worked on providing a ‘Buddy Bench’ for the Junior School playground, with the support of the school’s grounds and maintenance committee of parents, who kindly made the bench after receiving a persuasive letter from the team. The ‘Buddy Bench’ is where students can meet new friends, make friends if you are new to the school and have some time out from the playground.

“Our SRC is effective because our students collaborate to meet the needs of our students. I attribute teamwork to our success and by working as a team we can reflect the thoughts, ideas, and opinions of the students at Coatesville”

Luca Villella
School Captain 2016

Supporting Factors
What has helped build an authentic and effective SRC?
• Student Wellbeing Leader
• Teacher mentors
• Student leadership Days
• Explicit teaching on how to run an SRC class meeting
• Essential Agreement negotiated by the SRC
• Staff honouring the role of the SRC member in their class and making time in the weekly timetable to have a class meeting
• Timetabled weekly SRC meeting negotiated with staff and students.
• Weekly lunchtime meetings with teacher mentors and the Action teams.
• Commitment from both teachers and students
• Student-led whole school and Grade level assemblies
• Communication to the school and wider community about the SRC achievements through whole school and Grade level newsletters, the student website ‘Coatesville Voice’ and student led whole school and Grade level assemblies.
• Releasing teachers and students to work on different actions

“Our SRC always puts their peers before themselves. They always try out new ideas based on the feedback they get from their class meetings and communicate with SRC members on how they can take action.”

Sophie Willis
School Vice-Captain

Challenges
What challenges have we faced over the years?
• Time constraints for teachers and students
• Lack of commitment from teachers and students
• Collective purpose and timetabling structures

“Our team have had to overcome the difficulties of students and teachers being busy and having limited amount of time. In our SRC, we work cooperatively and compromise. We share the workload and work in our own time. We value the meetings and discussions we have and are always keen to be open minded and respect everyone’s time constraints.”

Gabby Stoupas
Grade 6 SRC

Marg Kennedy
martin.margaret.i@edumail.vic.gov.au
When I commenced grade 5, I was excited to be chosen as part of our school’s Student Representative Council. I clearly remember our meetings in the Principal’s office, but what I don’t remember was ever saying a word in those meetings. They were sombre affairs, mainly consisting of us being spoken to by our Principal about our responsibility to be role models in all things.

Times have certainly changed! The Student Representative Councils (SRCs) of today are dynamic, student-led and have the ability to produce lasting change and influence in the school community. A student-led SRC is a crucial element in allowing students to have a voice. As our understanding of the impacts of student voice on learning and engagement has increased, it is becoming more important to provide opportunities for the voices of our students to be heard in a variety of ways.

SRCs are empowering our students to speak up, to develop vital communication and leadership skills and to be an effective conduit of communication and sharing between the students they represent and the staff.

Drouin South Primary School is a small rural school of around 200 students. Our SRC is made up of our School Captains and two students from each class between grades 3 and 6. The process of election to our SRC typically involves a student nominating and making a presentation to their class, a class vote on the nominations and then a staff discussion, whereupon the successful applicants are presented with their badges at the start of each school year at assembly. Participation in the SRC is a commitment that the students do not take lightly. They give up a minimum of one lunchtime per week and have a significant amount of involvement in a variety of activities held across the year. The SRC meetings are run by the students for the students.

Our current SRC functions can be categorised into three main purposes:

- To provide activities that engage students and enrich students’ daily school experience
- To facilitate fundraising opportunities to purchase school equipment
- To contribute to the betterment of our local and wider community by participating in fundraising efforts

Enriching the school experience

An important role of the SRC at Drouin South Primary School is to organise and run activities that promote a spirit of community within our school and involve a wide range of students. As we are located some distance from our nearest town, we are unable to engage with the town community, so creating activities within the school to build community spirit is very important.

We also have a Kidsmatter committee who are responsible for issues related to student welfare so we are careful to keep our roles clearly defined.

The SRC students carefully consider their peers when planning activities. We cater for a range of interests and age levels and try to ensure that we consider everyone. Some popular and very successful activities this year have included ‘Drouin South’s Got Talent’, a Student Colouring Book made with student artwork, and movie and popcorn lunchtimes in cooler weather. Students have also run lunchtime sports and activities throughout the year.

We are currently preparing and looking forward to a Christmas Carnival in December. Student groups have created their own carnival games and are now looking forward to running them.

Jack and Willow running a meeting

Money Snake fundraiser
in the process of making them. We have found that activities such as these build friendships between students of different year levels and promote a spirit of pride and engagement in the school.

**Fundraising for our school**

At the commencement of each year, the SRC representatives visit all the classrooms and ask students what they feel we need at the school. This year it was decided by the SRC that our goal was to purchase new sports tops for students to use when representing the school. Students were involved in designing the tops and a short list of designs was presented to each class for their ideas. We had a target that we needed to reach in order to afford the tops and worked towards this goal all year. Students learn much from these experiences. It takes planning, persistence, commitment and work to achieve any kind of goal but the results are worth it.

**Fundraising for the community**

An important element of building global citizens is developing an awareness of the needs of our local and wider community. Raising money for community causes teaches students empathy and an awareness of local and global issues.

This year we were saddened by the loss of one of our students’ homes to fire. The SRC students wanted to do something to help and decided to organise a money snake for the family. Students brought their loose change to school and created money snakes over the floor, raising a considerable sum of money. We have also joined with the wider community raising money for charities and community organisations.

Students love being involved in the SRC. They are enthusiastic and want to change the world!

**Challenges**

I was recently asked what challenges I had faced in being the teacher responsible for facilitating the SRC meetings. I can honestly say that it is a pleasure to work with the students. Their enthusiasm and energy is inspiring and my only challenge is to channel their enthusiasm to ensure feasibility of ideas. With an enthusiastic and energetic group of students the sky is the limit!

Our SRC model has changed over the last few years and will continue to evolve as we move towards a more student-led SRC. Our goal is for students to take more ownership by not only running the meetings but also in forming norms for our meeting, goals for the year, preparing agendas and evaluating our progress. It is exciting work and we love it!

Adelle Phillips

phillips.adelle.j@edumail.vic.gov.au

Rachael, Emily, Hailie-Jade, Ryan, Holly, Olivia and Sharni getting ready for the Christmas photo

Rachael, Ainsley, Willow and Holly compiling colouring books made students artwork
The Wrap Up: 2016 VicSRC Recognition Awards!

An incredible night in October celebrated the students, teachers and schools working tirelessly to transform education in Victoria.

Drawing together over 250 students, family members, sponsors, stakeholders and government representatives, the 6th Recognition Awards took place on Tuesday 18th October. Held at the Arena at NAB Village, the event celebrated best practice in student voice and student-led action in Victoria.

The finalists
With 63 nominations from 47 schools, our judging panel was blown away by quality of the candidates and the genuine engagement with student voice.

Special congratulations go to:
Group Action Award
Winner: Emerald Secondary College
Runner up: Nossal High School
Second runner up: Rural Youth Ambassadors

Department of Education and Training SRC of the Year - Primary Schools Award
Winner: Coatesville Primary School
Runner up: Swan Hill Primary School
Second runner up: Rosanna Primary School

Department of Education and Training SRC of the Year - Secondary Schools Award
Winner: Mount Waverley Secondary College
Runner up: Bendigo Senior Secondary College
Second runners up: Mount Alexander College & Braybrook College

Pearson Australia Teacher of the Year Award
Winner: Zack Pretlove (Melbourne Girls' College)
Runner up: Kristie Satilmis (Auburn High School)
Second runner up: Sonya Gregorio (Barwon Valley Special Development School)

Newsboys Foundation Youth Leadership Award
Winner: Kelly Phan (Bendigo Senior Secondary College)
Runners up: Thomas Velican (Nossal High School) & Kristen Sellings (Yarram Secondary College)

Join the roar of student voices
Student voice is critical in education. Research tells us that when students are given a meaningful role in shaping their education, magic happens. The VicSRC Recognition Awards give us a chance to hear the stories of teachers and students from Bendigo to Swan Hill, Braybrook to Yarram. They value the collective genius of teachers, parents and most importantly, students.

This event could not have happened without the generous support of our sponsors. A massive thanks goes to the Department of Education and Training, under the leadership of Minister for Education James Merlino MP, the Newsboys Foundation and Pearson Australia for their fantastic support of the VicSRC Recognition Awards.

Sophie Moore
Empower, Ignite, Sustain: The new Teach the Teacher models

The VicSRC is thrilled to launch three new models of VicSRC’s Teach the Teacher program.

Change and growth go hand in hand, and Teach the Teacher is no exception! From a fledgling idea developed by students at Congress 2011, to a program championed through over 60 schools by 2016, Teach the Teacher is set to take flight with three new models of delivery:

Teach the Teacher: Empower
www.teachtheteacher.org.au/empower

Designed for schools with an active student voice practice and student leadership structure.

Teach the Teacher: Ignite
www.teachtheteacher.org.au/ignite

Bespoke program for schools with a low SES community, diverse student population or an alternative learning setting.

Teach the Teacher: Sustain
www.teachtheteacher.org.au/sustain

Refresher courses for schools that have previously participated in the program.

What is Teach the Teacher?
“It’s the single most transformative flipping of pedagogy I’ve seen in 40 years of education.” Principal

Written by students, for students, Teach the Teacher is a student-led professional development program for teachers, and a platform for teachers and students to have a say in the decisions that affect their learning and lives at school.

Why Teach the Teacher?
Teach the Teacher provides students with skills and the opportunity to engage teachers and other staff in conversations about issues in school that are impacting on their learning. These student-led conversations provide the space for teachers and students to work together to make positive changes that lead to school improvement and increased student engagement.

How does it work?
Through student-led professional development workshops for teachers, the program creates more effective student-teacher relationships through collaborative conversations. It is a powerful step for schools in creating a culture where students are front and centre of their own education.

What next?
From 2017, schools can participate in three models of Teach the Teacher - Empower, Ignite and Sustain - to suit specific needs and contexts.

Register your interest online
Teach the Teacher is now taking bookings for 2017!
Send an enquiry to Nina Laitala, VicSRC Project Officer: projects@vicsrc.org.au or call her: 03 9267 3714.

Teach the Teacher is developed by the Victorian Student Representative Council (VicSRC) with funding from the Victorian Department of Education and Training.

www.teachtheteacher.org.au/get-involved
Meet Some VicSRC Executive 2016-17 Members

Feyla Anja
Hey y’all! I’m Feyla, that super-enthusiastic, talkative 16-year-old girl. Currently a Year 11 from Mount Waverley Secondary College, I love studying biology, re-reading the Harry Potter series, playing the viola, listening to Tchaikovsky and Beyonce, and chilling with friends. I’ve seen heaps of young people take initiatives in improving our education and community, and it’s honestly so empowering that I love to get involved too! I’m really excited to take on this challenge and represent you in all the decisions that will affect us as students, together with the rest of the Executive team. For now, peace out!

Sam Ilobuchi
Hey! I’m Sam Ilobuchi and I’m in Year 10. I am currently attending Frankston High School. I am really passionate when it comes to public speaking, and anything along the lines of it! From a personal standpoint, I truly believe that every student attending school in Victoria should have a say, regardless of their age. Being re-elected onto the VicSRC Executive Team has given me the privilege to represent those very students, ensuring that everyone can contribute towards their education. I really look forward to working with the Executive (and everyone in between) for the next 12 months!

Bryce Pace
Hi, I’m Bryce, a Year 11 student at Brauer College in Warrnambool. I love video games and the great outdoors. I believe that every student should have a voice regardless of age, gender, ability or vocational choice. This is my first year on the Executive and my main goal for the next twelve months is to change people’s perception on what someone with a disability can do. I was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder when I was 9 years old, and in primary school I was treated like I couldn’t do anything. I want to give students a chance to prove what they can do and not let community perceptions stop them, as it did with me.

Key VicSRC Dates for 2017

The VicSRC is gearing up for a big 2017!

In preparation, please mark the following key dates in your diary and stay tuned in early 2017 for all the details on how to book, register or apply.

VicSRC Student Voice Workshops
13 Metropolitan and Regional locations
28 February – 5 May 2016 (Term 1 and Term 2)
VicSRC Student Voice Workshops (formerly Regional Conferences) enable over 1,000 students to work together on common issues, define what really matters to Victorian students, and drive positive change in their schools, communities and education system.

For dates and venues, please stay tuned to:
www.vicsrc.org.au

Presented in partnership with Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership.

VicSRC Congress
10, 11, 12 July 2017
The VicSRC Congress is a three-day explosion of student voice. Run by students, for students and attended by the Minister for Education, the VicSRC Congress brings students together from all across the state to debate, decide and act on the issues that really matter to their education.

More information will be coming in 2017.

VicSRC Recognition Awards
Metropolitan Melbourne
Thursday 12 October 2016
More information will be coming in 2017.
All you need is a voice

At the VicSRC Recognition Awards on 18th of October, 16 year olds William Wilson and Chloe Laurel made the co-note address. Both Chloe and William are in their first terms on the Executive, and they are determined to give a voice to all students in Victoria.

There are approximately 1.8 billion young people in the world, but tonight, we are going to share with you a story of one individual, who has inspired us and will capture why we are here.

In 2012, at the age of 14, the Taliban shot Malala Yousafzai in the head and almost killed her for believing in the right to education. This young girl is an advocate and activist for education, a voice for the voiceless Pakistani girls who are deprived of their basic right to go to school, and a representative for all young people around the world.

She began her advocacy journey at the tender age of 11 when the Taliban began attacking schools in her hometown and banning school for girls. She presented a speech titled “How dare the Taliban take away my basic right to education?” From then on, she became a target for the Taliban.

Malala blogged for the BBC under a pseudo name in efforts to conceal her identity. This allowed her the freedom to speak about her experiences, her passion for education and about human rights without the risk of harm to her and her family. Even after she was exposed, she continued to be vocal about girls’ rights to education on her growing platform, despite the danger she was in. She was nominated for the International Children’s Peace Prize and won Pakistan’s National Peace Prize in 2011.

On October 9th 2012, Malala was travelling on a school bus when she was shot in the head but miraculously survived because of her strength, courage, determination. People from around the world rallied to support her, inspired by her story. She is currently the youngest person to ever receive the Nobel Peace Prize, which she obtained in 2014. She continues her fight for education through The Malala Fund, which provides resources for disadvantaged girls to attend school.

The VicSRC Recognition Awards are about celebration; celebrating young people and teachers who are just like Malala. You don’t need to win a Nobel Peace Prize to shape education and be recognised. All you need is a voice. A voice which comes in different forms, with all the same intention, to empower young people!

We are proud to be a part of the VicSRC, an organisation which lives by the mission to empower all student voices to be valued in every aspect of education. We cannot emphasise the importance of student voice enough, but what we know is that, most definitely, we are here for the same purpose as Malala.

In the words of Malala: “We are here to raise our voices, not so that we can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard. To be here for those forgotten children who want education; for those frightened children who want peace; for those voiceless children who want change; we are here to stand up for their rights.”

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

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

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


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

To sign up to the VicSRC online e-newsletter ... visit:

www.vicsrc.org.au/joinin/mailinglist

The VicSRC receives funding support from the Victorian Department of Education and Training and the Catholic Education Office, Melbourne. It is auspiced by and based at the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACvic). It can be reached there on 03 9267 3744 or, for the cost of a local call from outside Melbourne, on 1300 727 176; or by email: manager@vicsrc.org.au

December 2016
We are thrilled to announce the launch of the inaugural issue of the International Journal of Student Voice. You can access the journal at: https://ijsv.psu.edu/ and we encourage you to participate in the discussion boards for each article.

Inaugural Issue

Unlocking students’ perspectives of school leadership: Toward a theory of engaging students in school leadership (Jonathan Damiani)

Creating a shared ownership for learning: Instructionally focused partnerships (Cristine H. Chopra)


Video: Resilient Families Community Movement (Margaret May et al)

The International Journal of Student Voice (IJSV) is a peer-reviewed, open access e-journal publishing on the ways in which students co-lead their schools and communities by collaborating with teachers, administrators, and community stakeholders to define problems and develop potential solutions and/or take the lead on making change in their schools and communities. We define students to include a wide range of young people, from early childhood to university studies. Taking as foundational the right of students to develop their voices and leadership capabilities and take an active role in analyzing and shaping their educational experiences, the journal publishes research related to pupil/learner voice, youth-adult partnerships, child rights, youth participatory action research, students as activists and change agents, and related fields. Likewise, we acknowledge the importance of adult educational stakeholders who share this belief and work to make the development of student voice, participation, and partnership a reality.

IJSV, established in 2015 by the Pennsylvania State University, welcomes pieces from researchers, practitioners, and students including traditional research-focused articles, practitioner reflections, and multi-media submissions. Peer review in this journal will include feedback from researchers, practitioners and students. All articles must have a user-friendly abstract that is understood by all audiences. Articles will be expected to end with a set of discussion questions to encourage online dialogue. Each submission will include a discussion forum to encourage conversation about the submissions.

Dana Mitra
Professor of Education Theory and Policy
Editor, International Journal of Student Voice
Penn State University
dana@psu.edu

The International Journal for Students as Partners (IJSaP) is a new open access journal about learning and teaching together in higher education that explores new perspectives, practices, and policies regarding how students and staff (meaning academic staff/faculty, professional staff, and other stakeholders) are working in partnership to enhance learning and teaching in higher education.

IJSaP is produced using a partnership approach with teams of students and staff from Australia, Canada, UK and USA. It can be accessed at: https://mulpress.mcmaster.ca/ijsap

Submit: IJSaP values multiple forms of analysis, including research articles, case studies, opinion pieces, reflective essays, and reviews. Submissions details are at: https://mulpress.mcmaster.ca/ijsap/about/editorialPolicies#sectionPolicies

Review: Students and staff are invited to be peer-reviewers for submissions by joining the International Review Panel. New to peer-reviewing journal articles? No problem - IJSaP has a new to reviewing training scheme in place. Express interest to review at: http://ow.ly/S4x6306BUT2

Kelly Matthews
University of Queensland
k.matthews1@uq.edu.au
On the occasional conference flyer or postcard, we have sometimes offered our most succinct expression of this journal’s purpose: “Democracy & Education – for people who can’t think of two more important things.” It made us smile to say it. And yet we awoke last week to find that the current election cycle had delivered on its threat to call into question the fundamental commitments that bind us together as a democratic nation. Today we worry that this social fabric, though stretched and frayed in so many places before, now nears its breaking point.

The cultural and political ascension of a narrative that openly embraces racism, misogyny, and xenophobia – among other virulent forms of bigotry – has shaken us to our core. We struggle to hold our friends and family tight, we worry about the safety of our neighbors and those already made vulnerable in society, and we stand before our students facing their fear of what will happen next and their perplexity at the divisions that cleave us apart.

We bring you the latest issue of Democracy & Education with a steadfast and unwavering commitment to the kind of open, engaged, inclusive dialog on which the future depends. We have never promised, nor delivered, the comfort of a single perspective or worldview in these pages, and while we feel deeply the need to marshal our efforts in opposition to the forces of intolerance, we do so by offering a place where the rigorous assessment of diverse perspectives and generous exploration of alternatives is the basis for our hope.

We offer our deepest gratitude to the authors and readers of this journal for being part of a community full of individuals who can talk and argue, who find their views stronger after that conversation or who find good reason to change their minds. Most of all, we respect everything you do to carry these ideas forward through your work in classrooms, schools, and communities.

Scott Fletcher  
Executive Editor
Democracy & Education  
0615 SW Palatine Hill Rd.  
Portland, OR 97219, USA

Current Issue
In the newest issue of this US-based journal, we are proud to feature the following articles:
• Toward a Transformative Criticality for Democratic Citizenship Education, by Lisa A. Sibbett, with a response from Nicholas C. Burbules
• The Challenges of Gaming for Democratic Education: The Case of iCivics, by Jeremy Stoddard, Angela M. Banks, Christine Nemacheck, and Elizabeth Wenska, with responses from Ellen Middaugh and Brooke Blevins and Karon LeCompte
• Sam and Cristina: A Critical Dialogue Between a Teacher and Student About the Commoditization of People of Color by Schools, by Samuel J. Tanner and Cristina Corrie
• The Common Core and Democratic Education: Examining Potential Costs and Benefits to Public and Private Autonomy, by Benjamin J. Bindewald, Rory P. Tannebaum, and Patrick Womac
• The Cultural Contours of Democracy: Indigenous Epistemologies Informing South African Citizenship, by Patricia K. Kubow and Mina Min
• Democratic Foundations for Spiritually Responsive Pedagogy, by Audrey Lingley

Also in this issue, responses to previously published articles, including the following:
• Esperanza De La Vega responds to Deliberative Democracy in English Language Education: Cultural and Linguistic Inclusion in the School Community
• Todd Dinkleman responds to Reinventing the High School Government Course: Rigor, Simulations, and Learning from Text
• Theresa Redmond responds to Transaction Circles with Digital Texts as a Foundation for Democratic Practices
• Jayson Seaman responds to How to Be Nice and Get What You Want: Structural Referents of ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ in Experiential Education as (Un)Democratic Practice
• Melinda Jackson, Dari Green, Lori Latrice Martin, and Kenneth J. Fasching-Varner respond to We Were There Too: Learning from Black Male Teachers in Mississippi about Successful Teaching of Black Students
• Ted Hartman responds to Building the Dream: Transformational Resistance, Community-Based Organizations, and the Civic Engagement of Latinos in the New South

Also in this issue, we are proud to present four book reviews:
• Mathew Goldwasser on Youth, Critical Literacies, and Civic Engagement: Arts, Media and Literacy in the Lives of Adolescents
• James Johnson on Educating for Insurgency: The Roles of Young People in Schools of Poverty
• Tony DeCesare on What Kind of Citizen? Educating Our Children for the Common Good
• Amy Shuffletton on Strike for America: Chicago Teachers Against Austerity

You can view the issue online at: http://democracyeducationjournal.org/home

About Us
The mission of Democracy & Education is to provoke rigorous, open, and inclusive engagement with the challenges of educating youth in the pre-K-12 age span for active participation in a democratic society. The journal seeks to support and sustain conversations that take as their focus the conceptual foundations, social policies, institutional structures, and teaching/learning practices associated with democratic education.
‘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

Student Voice Practitioners: Blog & Podcast

A community for young people and adults

http://studentvoicepractitioners.com/

The Student Voice Practitioners blog is a Canadian-based community of young people and adults who believe in the power of the student’s voice and who have first-hand experience in initiating and implementing student voice projects or programs or in advising policy makers.

Launched in September 2015, posts have included:

- Who represents student voice?
- Empowering Students to be the Change;
- Student Voice=Student Choice;
- Students as Researchers

as well as a challenge to readers to prioritise the disengaged.

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

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

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

www.asprinworld.com/student_action_teams

Student Voice Research and Practice facebook group

www.facebook.com/groups/studentvoicepage/

This open facebook group was initially established by Professor Dana Mitra, and is now supported by the work of academics, practitioners and students throughout the world. It provides a valuable community of people working and interested in the area of ‘Student Voice’ - in Australia, USA, UK, Italy and elsewhere – as well as access to useful resources and examples, and up-to-date information about initiatives. You can easily log on and join the group at the above address.
StudentVoice represents the opinions and views of school students just like you from all across the country. It’s time to listen.

YEA: It’s a Film!
https://media.ed.ac.uk/media/1_etof4nna

This is a partnership project between the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships (at the University of Edinburgh) and Young Edinburgh Action (YEA), which is an innovative approach to implementing the City of Edinburgh Council’s Youth Participation Strategy.

YEA seeks to address the very familiar problem of children and young people’s participation not having an impact on decision making. YEA has been working to change this, with young researchers exploring topics of interest to them and engaging with decision-makers to identify potentials for change. This film captures how YEA works, some of its successes – and how it seeks to deal with the challenges. Our blog on the film’s launch can be found here, along with links to its associated briefing: http://ow.ly/INE1306ELAG

We very much welcome you to view, show and otherwise use this film in your own work. Indeed, if you find it useful or want to discuss YEA’s work further, please do get in contact with me in the first instance.

Kay Tisdall
k.tisdall@ed.ac.uk

UK Youth Parliament: Citizenship Education

The UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) recently voted for better Citizenship Education in English schools - to include participation in democratic decision making in the every day life of the school.

In an impressive debate in the House of Commons, the UKYP voted for a ‘Curriculum For Life’ for English schools with proper Personal and Social and Citizenship Education which have substantially disappeared in the face of endless testing and narrowing of what is taught - but not necessarily learnt.

This entirely complements the demand that was recently made at the World Forum on Democracy in Education at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg for Democracy and Human Rights to be practised in schools and not just taught in dry lessons - accompanied by a demand that at least 20% of curriculum time should be negotiated between students and teachers in a democratic process to allow students to have more control over what they learn.

Derry Hannam

This is a call for papers (conceptual, research, conceptual-reflection, evaluation, etc...) for a special issue of the intersection of student voice and school leadership to published with the Journal for Ethical Educational Leadership. Katherine Cumings Mansfield and Marc Brasof are co-editors. Manuscripts are due in May 2017.

More details at: http://ow.ly/SaQ7306EMh9

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.
**Connect Publications: Order Form**

**Tax Invoice:**  ABN: 98 174 663 341

To:  **Connect**, 12 Brooke Street, Northcote VIC 3070 Australia  
e-mail:  r.holdsworth@unimelb.edu.au

**Connect** On-Line Subscription *(all 6 issues annually e-mailed to you FREE):*
Simply supply your e-mail address (below or by e-mail) and name and phone number (in case of bounces). There is no cost; however donations to support **Connect**'s work are appreciated and acknowledged.

☐ I enclose a donation to support the work of **Connect**.

or:  ☐ I am already a subscriber to **Connect**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>A:</strong> Donation to <strong>Connect:</strong></th>
<th>$.........</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Connect Publications:**  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>copies</th>
<th>Student Action Teams</th>
<th>normal price</th>
<th><strong>Connect</strong> subscriber price</th>
<th>$.........</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$30</td>
<td>$25*</td>
<td>$.........</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$30</td>
<td>$25*</td>
<td>$.........</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$20</td>
<td>$15*</td>
<td>$.........</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$6</td>
<td>$5*</td>
<td>$.........</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$6</td>
<td>$5*</td>
<td>$.........</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Publications available from **Connect**:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>copies</th>
<th>Foxfire 25 Years</th>
<th>normal price</th>
<th><strong>Connect</strong> subscriber price</th>
<th>$.........</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$20</td>
<td>$10*</td>
<td>$.........</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes a Shining Moment (1 available) §</td>
<td>$20</td>
<td>$10*</td>
<td>$.........</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Foxfire Christmas (1 available) §</td>
<td>$20</td>
<td>$10*</td>
<td>$.........</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foxfire 9 (1 available) §</td>
<td>$10</td>
<td>$5*</td>
<td>$.........</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students and Work (maximum of 10 copies per order)</td>
<td>$6</td>
<td>$5*</td>
<td>$.........</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SRC Pamphlets Set (2 sets available) §</td>
<td>$6</td>
<td>$5*</td>
<td>$.........</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(§ check availability before ordering; * discounted rate for subscribers to **Connect**)

**B:** Total for publications:  $.........

**NOTE:**  all amounts include postage/packaging within Australia (GST not applicable - input taxed)

(Postage:  **Outside Australia** add $5 per copy of publications  $.........)

**Payment and Mailing:**

I enclose a cheque /money-order/official order for:  A + B: Total Payment:  $.........

(make cheques payable to **Connect**; payment in Australian dollars please; contact **Connect** by e-mail to make arrangement to pay by EFT on invoice)

**Mailing details: send to:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (attention):</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisation (school etc):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mailing Address:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Town/Suburb):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(State &amp; Postcode):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail (free subscription):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone number:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Anyone may submit an original article to be considered for publication in Connect provided he or she owns the copyright to the work being submitted or is authorised by the copyright owner or owners to submit the article. Authors are the initial owners of the copyrights to their works, but by successfully submitting the article to Connect, transfer such ownership of the published article to Connect on the understanding that any royalties or other income from that article will be used to maintain publication of Connect.

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.

www.asprinworld.com/connect

&

research.acer.edu.au/connect

Clearinghouse

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:

Improving student wellbeing: having a say at school (Donnahn L. Anderson & Anne P Graham, Southern Cross University, NSW) School Effectiveness and School Improvement, Vol 27 No 3: 348-366; 2016

‘Negotiating the curriculum’: Realizing student voice (Jeroen Bron, Catherine Bovill, Eddie van Viet & Wiel Veugelers, Dutch Institute for Curriculum Development, Glasgow University; University of Humanistic Studies, Utrecht) Social Education: Journal of the Social and Citizenship Education Association of Australia Vol 34 No 1; May 2016

Research Developments (ACER, Camberwell, Vic) November, 2016

VicSRC Recognition Awards 2016 Program (VicSRC, Melbourne, Vic) October, 2016

International:

Children’s rights in a 21st-century digital world: Exploring opportunities and tensions (Vicki Coppock & Jenna K Gillett-Swan, Edge Hill University, UK & Queensland University of Technology, Australia) Global Studies of Childhood Vol 6 No 4: 369-375, 2016

Freedom to Learn (Michael Fielding, UK) Forum Vol 58 No 3; 2016

Recovering lost histories of educational design: a case study in contemporary participatory strategies (Catherine Burke & Karen D Könings, University of Cambridge, UK & Maastricht University, the Netherlands) Oxford Review of Education, 2016

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

THinking the Yet to be Thought: envisioning autonomous and alternative pedagogies for socially just education (Catherine Montgomery & Max A Hope, University of Bath & University of Hull, UK) Forum Vol 58 No 3, 2016

Transforming Pedagogy in Primary Schools: a case study from Australia (Alys Mendus, University of Hull, UK) Forum Vol 58 No 3, 2016

UPdate (UP for Learning, Vermont, USA) November 2016

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 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](http://research.acer.edu.au/).

You can find these issues of *Connect* at:


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 45!

Let us know

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

**Most importantly, please USE this resource.**

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