Challenging assumptions

- **With no pre-conceived ideas**
  Student voice at Merriang Special Developmental School, Vic
- **Students on School Councils:** *Election procedures in two schools*
- **Student participation and wellbeing**
  New research from Southern Cross University, NSW
- **Warmer Nights, Brighter Days:** *St Catherine's PS, Moorabbin, Vic*
- **Student voice beyond the classroom:** *Hester Hornbrook Academy*
- **NSW North Coast Region SRC Conference**
- **Youth Adult Partnership:** *UP for Learning, Vermont, USA*
- **"Democracy and only democracy':** *Art Pearl*
- **VicSRC:** *Congress 2018; Teach the Teacher going global!
  VicSRC Student Voice Awards; Student Voice Hub*

Resources:

- *Amplify*: a new student voice practice guide
- 2018 Youth for Peace Project Award
- Resilient Australia Awards
- WISA Conference in Western Australia
- *International Journals of Student Voice* and *for Students as Partners*
- *Student Voice Research and Practice* facebook group
- *Connect* ... available on-line ... on *facebook* ... archived ... access to other on-line resources

Connect

Cover:

Power walk activity about empathy at **Student Voice Workshops**: *Photo by Matty Sievers, VicSRC*

Why does *Connect* exist?

Connect has been
published bimonthly since 1979!

It aims to:
• **document student participation approaches and initiatives;**
• **support reflective practices;**
• **develop and share resources.**

This Issue:

Here we look back and we look *forward.* Forward to hearing more about the work of **UP for Learning** (at the *Amplifying Student Voice and Partnerships* gathering in late June in Vermont, USA); back via the challenging ideas about democracy from **Professor Art Pearl**.

Art Pearl was a great inspiration during his visits to Australia starting in the 1970s. He wrote about *The Atrocity of Education*, but also about *The Value of Youth* - and these books provided a framework for ideas about 'youth and student participation' and a springboard for practices such as students as cross-age tutors, creators of community media and so on. Art Pearl recently celebrated his 96th birthday and is still writing and arguing. The article that we republish in this issue is from last September, and part of his on-line blog: *Art Pearl Against the World.* It provides a salutary reminder in times that are becoming increasingly strange and dangerous.

There are also important local stories in this issue. **Sue Young** from **Merriang Special Developmental School** builds on the article in the last issue of *Connect*, to provide an overview of that school's exploration of student voice and agency – in perhaps some of the more difficult contexts. **Sandra Surace** from **St Catherine's Primary School** in Moorabbin describes student initiatives, through the SRC and classrooms, to address social needs. **Dave Wells** from the Melbourne City Mission's 'alternative' multi-campus **Hester Hornbrook Academy** outlines some of the challenges and successes involved in supporting student voice from students who have been traditionally marginalised in education. And importantly: the VicSRC's *Teach the Teacher* program has been listed and praised as a **HundrEd** *spotlight*!

Later, **Wren** and **Ryan** from the VicSRC Executive describe the steps taken at their schools (**Nossal** and **Upwey High Schools**) to **elect students to their School Councils**. We hear (mainly from students) that some schools are uncertain how to implement the new requirements for an elected 'student' category on government secondary School Councils, and it is hoped that these mini-case studies might be useful to encourage other schools to develop and document their own practices.

From New South Wales, we include two important reports: first, of research into **student participation and wellbeing**, from **Southern Cross University's Centre for Children and Young People**; and secondly, of a **Regional SRC Conference** held recently in the North Coast Region.

There are many other opportunities and resources presented here too, including the new *Amplify* document from the Victorian Department of Education and Training.

Next Issue ...

This is a big double issue of *Connect* - indicating that I'm off to Vermont and beyond. So it will cover the normal August issue as well. The next issue will be published in October. I think there will be stories about the **VicSRC Congress** - and more. I'd love to hear of examples of participatory classroom practices in *Connect*, so we learn from each other. Over to you.

Roger Holdsworth

With no pre-conceived ideas…
Exploring student voice

Our school is unique. It resides in the category of a **'specialist school',** that is, not a mainstream school. In the 'hierarchy' of schools, we fit at the bottom, two rungs below a mainstream 'normal' school. Our students have a wide range of special needs that fit into many categories, including severe epilepsy, low IQ (coming in at a full scale cognitive score of below 55), autism, Down's syndrome, non-verbal, complex medical needs, trauma, foetal alcohol syndrome … the list goes on.

We have two campuses that are separated by 11 kilometres of busy roads, road works and 40 km school zones. This is a challenge when we try to get the staff from both campuses together for a professional learning meeting.

The **Early Years** campus (5 to 12 year olds) is housed at **The Lakes P-9** mainstream school in South Morang surrounded by paddocks, kangaroos and new housing developments. The classrooms are just like mainstream classrooms but with toilets.

The **Middle and Later Years** campus (13 to 18 year olds) in Lalor sits in amongst child care centres, TAFE Colleges, a community garden and 1970s brick veneer houses. The school building was designed for students with autism. Stage one was built seven years ago … we are still waiting for stage two.

But … what goes on in these two settings is amazing both educationally and socially. Across both campuses the high expectations are the same, the opportunities are the same, the passion of the staff is the same. And without any pre-conceived ideas, we are exploring student voice, agency and participation in both campuses.

Our Journeys

Here is a snapshot of our journeys.

For any new initiative you need a passionate teacher and an expert – a teacher who believes in the concept and will give of their time freely. At our school those teachers are **Natalie Harrison** (EY campus) and **Leonie Gaff** (MLY campus). If you can get an expert with years of experience in the field and the associated passion it is a bonus! For us that expert is Roger Holdsworth who has encouraged us to take this journey.

Our **'Student Voice'** groups look totally different at each campus but the purpose is the same: providing the students with an opportunity to talk to us about their learning, their environment and their lives.

Early Years Campus

There are nine students in the **Early Years Student Voice Group**. They have been selected by Nat for the skills they bring to the group. Most of the students are verbal and are participating in the inclusion program with **The Lakes School**, participating in art, music, PE and language lessons. One student has been included for her amazing art abilities. She is non-verbal. Her mother was stunned when Natalie told her that she is a member of the **Student Voice Group** as she wasn't sure what her daughter had to offer. When Natalie explained her role in the **Student Voice Group**, the student's mother was thrilled! One student left the group at the end of Term 1 as she has graduated to a local special school. Two students were suggested by the teacher as a replacement. The students voted and a new student has joined the group.

This **Early Years Group** meets every week at lunch time, where Natalie has a structured meeting that begins with the students acknowledging each other, as they come from different classes. The students select two games to play at the end of the meeting. Four choices are provided and the **Student Voice Team** vote for the final selection. Natalie then begins a discussion that focuses on one of the three **School Wide Positive Behaviour**

Support (SWPBS) expectations: be *safe*, be *respectful*, be *a learner*. Questioning is scaffolded and open ended. The following are notes from the minutes of a **Student Voice** meeting:

Students were asked the question about **when do they feel safe at school**:

Responses:

1. *By keeping my hands and feet to self* (Talia)
2. *Safe on the bus, sitting in the bus, staying in your seat with the seat belt on* (Ilana)
3. *Get help* (Phu)
4. *Friends at school* (Ilana)
5. *When we look after each other* (Skye-Leigh)

All answers given with assisted technology including visual support and SWPBS behaviour matrix.

Our **Student Voice Group** participates in weekly assemblies, helping with the *Acknowledgement to Country* (for which they have written their own interpretation), and giving certificates to students who have demonstrated the SWPBS expectations. It is a highlight of the assembly.

Middle and Later Years Campus

Student Voice at the Middle and Later Years campus has begun in a small way. Four students meet every week during a lunch break. We meet in the *Wanna Bite Café* and sometimes there is a treat at the end of the meeting ... the coke spider was very popular!

In this group there is gender balance and year level balance: a girl and a boy from the middle years and a boy and a girl from the later years. Members of this group have again been selected by Leonie for their ability to participate in discussions. Chris from the Middle Years is non-verbal. He contributes by writing his

ideas on paper. The group is also using signing and we are all practising this skill to improve this form of communication.

Be safe has been the focus for this group of students, again linking directly with *School Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS)* program. When we began this group, our idea was to start with asking the students what their playground looked like when it was safe. We then had to explore what the word *'safe'* meant to them. Leonie and I have changed the way we use our prompts many, many times; the scaffolding of questions has been a challenge. Our students often repeat what we say; getting **their** thoughts and ideas has been an interesting journey.

Last week we had a fantastic breakthrough! After meeting weekly for around eight weeks, the students have provided feedback without being given the words. We were discussing the certificates that the **Student Voice Group** will be giving to students they nominate in the playground for *being a happy person* or *being a good friend*. Enthusiastically all of the group provided their ideas: colour, logo and student photos to be included. It was a brilliant moment ... real student voice!

Student Voice badges are the next step for our groups: being acknowledged by other staff members and students as the conduit for ideas, suggestions, feedback, and as a vehicle for change however small. The possibilities are limitless when you have no pre-conceived ideas of the outcomes.

We are engaging the **Middle and Later Years Group** in a *Citizen Scientist* project through the Phillip Island seal count. Connecting our students with this community project is a great way to strengthen our community connections. It will also open up our small group of students to include others on the campus ... those who can confidently count past ten.

Finding our way with the *FISO Essential Elements for School Improvement* #4 is, to say the least, a challenge – but an exciting one. We are looking forward to exploring the possibilities further with educators in special settings. If you are interested in joining with us to share ideas, possibilities, celebrations and challenges, I would love to hear from you.

Wouldn't it be great to have the opportunity to meet regularly and help one another? Our mentor Roger is keen to help us; so what do you say?

Why don't you join us?!

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Student participation and wellbeing
Launch of exciting new research

This month saw the launch of research reports from a recent Australian Research Council (ARC) funded study titled: *'Improving wellbeing through student participation at school'.* Led by **Professor Anne Graham** at the **Centre for Children and Young People (CCYP)** at **Southern Cross University**, the partners on this collaborative, cross-sector *Linkage* project were the **NSW Department of Education**, the **Catholic Schools Office (Diocese of Lismore)**, and the **Office of the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People**. Along with researchers at the CCYP, the team also comprised Chief Investigators from the **Australian National University** (**Professor Sharon Bessell**), **University of Sydney** (**Professor Judy Cashmore**), and the **University of Central Lancashire** (**Professor Nigel Thomas**).

The research was guided by an advisory group of 14 individuals comprising representatives from the partner organisations, school principals, teachers and Year 7-10 students.

The project investigated the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: *How is student participation currently articulated in education policy in Australia?*

RQ2: *How do students, teachers, principals and policy stakeholders currently understand and experience participation in NSW schools?*

RQ3: *To what extent is participation at school associated with student wellbeing, and which specific elements of participation are core predictors of student wellbeing?*

RQ4: *Do Honneth's modes of recognition mediate the relationship between partici-pation and wellbeing?*

To answer the above research questions, the study took place across four phases:

Phase 1 (RQ1): The policy phase included an extensive analysis of documents that referred to student participation: educational policies, guidelines, toolkits or strategies from both the NSW Government and Catholic education systems, as well as relevant Commonwealth documents (143 documents in total were reviewed). The analysis focused on understanding the framing and intent of student participation across these documents.

Phase 2 (RQ2): Focus groups took place with Year 7-10 students (n=177 students) across ten high schools in NSW, as well as individual interviews with teachers and Principals (n=32) and education policymakers (n=9). The focus groups and interviews comprised semi-structured questions and activities aimed at identifying understandings and experiences of student participation at school.

Phase 3 (RQ 3 & 4): Results from Phases 1 and 2 above were used to develop a quantitative scale to measure student participation, alongside existing measures of wellbeing and recognition, and demographic characteristics. The scale's structure, questions, reliability and validity were developed through two rounds of online surveys with different groups of Year 7-10 students across seven NSW Government and Catholic schools (n=536 participants in total).

Phase 4: The validated online survey was administered to students in Years 7-10 (n=1435 in total) across 16 NSW Government and Catholic schools. The survey tested the links between elements of student participation, wellbeing and recognition, including measuring students' current social and emotional wellbeing at school.

The sample included a diverse range of schools in terms of size, socioeconomic status, geographic and cultural characteristics, and whether they were single sex or co-educational. Some schools had adopted distinctive approaches to student participation.

The key findings were:
Phase 1

The findings from the policy analysis suggested that there is no consistent or comprehensive definition of student participation. The term is used in an *ad hoc* manner across the policies and guidelines to describe very different forms of activity or engagement. In some cases, participation is little more than students' presence at school or being involved in a specific activity. In other cases, participation is used to describe student engagement in issues that are often already decided by adults. Only a few documents make reference to the kinds of intergenerational collaboration central to meaningful and effective student participation.

Overall, student participation was found to be framed in policies and

related documents in eight very different ways: (1) consultation; (2) engagement; (3) connectedness; (4) positive and respectful relationships; (5) student leadership; (6) equality and inclusion; (7) a human right; and (8) collective decision-making.

The Phase 1 findings suggest the need for greater clarity and consistency at state and national policy levels around the meaning of participation and where and how it can occur at school.

Phase 2

Phase 2 data from students and teachers indicated that student participation is broadly connected to:

HAVING VOICE
HAVING INFLUENCE
HAVING CHOICE
WORKING TOGETHER

Policymakers mostly conceived of participation in terms of student-centred approaches to teaching and learning, such as tailoring teaching to students' needs.

It was found that student participation is experienced at school in a range of 'spaces': in the classroom (such as being able to choose different assignment topics); in activities outside of class (such as having a say in extra-curricular activities); via formal structures (such as student councils); and in informal ways (such as conversations between students and teachers). Other experiences of participation were linked to being supported individually at school, such as with additional learning needs, and in policy development.

The participants identified the following barriers to meaningful participation in schools: policy; time; funding constraints; the difficulties in facilitating opportunities with high numbers of students; and mindsets and attitudes towards participation from students and staff, such as a lack of interest or not being wholly open to or receptive of student perspectives.

Phase 2 findings also pointed to many ways that participation could be improved. These included:

• Developing the participation skills of students and staff;

• Asking students what they would like to contribute at school;

• Maintaining on-going communication between staff and students about what is going on in the school;

• Making the school community more enjoyable and fun to be a part of.

Overwhelmingly, both staff and students reported the key role that respectful relationships between students and staff play in fostering meaningful participation at school.

Phase 3

The survey responses during the development of the *Student Participation Survey* showed that student participation comprises six elements:

• Students working together with other students and teachers to make positive changes at school;

• Having a voice about schooling (like classroom rules, homework, learning);

• Having a say with influential people who make decisions (like the Principal or SRC);

• Having influence on decisions that are made at school;

• Having a voice about activities at school (like sport teams, excursions); and

• Having choice (about school or classroom activities).

The *Student Participation Survey* was shown to be reliable and valid in both Catholic and Government school samples. The structure of the elements of participation did not differ across gender, year at school, Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, Cultural and Linguistic Diversity status, or disability status.

Phase 4

The Phase 4 survey investigated the association between the six elements of student participation (above) and student wellbeing using rigorous statistical analyses. **The results provide robust evidence that participation is positively and strongly associated with wellbeing at school.**

The element *'Working together with other students and with teachers to make positive changes at school'* was the most strongly associated with student wellbeing. This was followed by: *'Having choice', 'Having influence',* and *'Having a say with influential people who make decisions at school'.*

The survey results clearly show that opportunities to merely express views – captured in the other two elements – *'having a voice about schooling'* (classroom rules, homework etc.) or *'having a voice about activities at school'* (such as excursions, fundraising etc.) did not significantly predict student wellbeing after the other four elements of participation above were taken into account. These results suggest that just being able to express opinions at school (*having voice*) – without these opinions being taken into consideration in decisions – is not sufficient to be associated with student wellbeing.

The research also looked into why there is a connection between participation and wellbeing. Mediation analyses showed that greater opportunities to participate at school were positively associated with greater wellbeing at school.

This association was partly accounted for by students' experiences of recognition as theorised by Honneth (that is, feeling cared for, respected and valued at school and giving care, respect and value to others).

The results found that participation predicted greater recognition, which in turn pre-dicted greater wellbeing. However, the opposite pathway was also statistically significant. That is, having greater wellbeing at school also predicted greater recognition, which in turn predicted greater student participation.

Other combinations of these three student experiences were also statistically significant, indicating the close associations between student participation, recognition and wellbeing.

This study is the first to provide empirical evidence of the associations between student participation, recognition and wellbeing. On the basis of this evidence, future studies should consider using a longitudinal design so that a causal relationship between student participation, wellbeing and recognition can be investigated further.

Additional analyses also investigated differences in wellbeing at school between students in various demographic categories. Results showed that students in higher year levels (i.e., Year 9 and Year 10) reported significantly lower levels of wellbeing at school than students from earlier years. Further, students with disability also reported lower wellbeing than their peers without disability. These results suggest that students' year at school and disability status need to be taken into account when designing and implementing wellbeing policies and processes for schools.

Overall, the results of this study suggest that schools seeking to improve student wellbeing would benefit from introducing, monitoring and increasing opportunities for student participation.

Where to now?

In addition to the research reports and summaries, a number of practical outputs are also being developed from this project, including a *Good Practice Guide for Schools* and the *Student Participation Survey* with information on how to administer and score the survey such that schools can readily use it to measure students' perceived experiences of participation. Professional learning modules for teachers, based on the results of this research, are also currently being developed in close consultation with project partners. We will provide an update on these outputs in a future edition of *Connect*.

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Resources and documents from the study will be available from the CCYP in the near future - contact as above.

Warmer Nights, Brighter Days:
Student voice helps children in our community

It was a lesson exploring social justice in class that led current Year 6 student, **Sapphire Khodr**, to think about the children in her local community who were doing it tough.

Beane & Brodhagen (2001) outline that inquiry learning and classroom negotiation enables students to define common areas of interest and formulate questions around them. This was clearly at play as Sapphire wondered how she could help make a difference to youngsters like herself. Through great thought and discussion, an idea was born. She called it **Warmer Nights, Brighter Days**.

As a Catholic school, we explore the principles of Catholic social thought. These are drawn from papal documents, conciliar documents, and statements from Bishops' conferences over the last hundred years (Eick & Ryan, 2014). They are best understood by exploring

Scripture and in the lives and work of many men and women. Catholic Social Teaching explores matters based on human dignity and the common good in society and its development continues today in both theory and practice. This was evidenced in a young girl's voice as she explained her dream to teachers at **St Catherine's Primary School** in Moorabbin.

Warmer Nights, Brighter Days is an initiative that grew from one student's voice. Sapphire passionately wanted to help children in her local community who were struggling. She realised that there were probably many children in her local environs

who did not have the comforts that she was accustomed to having. She was saddened at this realisation. Her main objective was that she wanted all children to feel cared for and not forgotten.

Her idea was to create a backpack full of things that would brighten up a child's day, especially through the cold and dark days of winter ahead. You can see her speak about her vision on the Catholic Education Melbourne (CEM) website in an article entitled *Help where it's needed* (https://bit.ly/2xHHLto). Here Sapphire explains that each backpack will include a collection of items such as socks, undies, a beanie and a scarf, notepads or colouring books, pencils or textas, pyjamas and a blanket.

Our school's Student Representative Council (SRC) team backed her idea

wholeheartedly and they set off planning the best way to execute this through a whole school and wider community plan. It was decided that different classes would be allocated the various items to ensure we were not inundated with one item and missing another. The target was to fill about 50 backpacks. Items for donation were allocated according to the following plan:

Foundation: Socks and Underwear
Year 1/2MH: Notebooks and/or colouring books
Year 1/2LA: Pens, pencils, textas
Year 3/4BH: Beanies and gloves
Year 3/4MP: :Scarves
Year 5/6TO: Pyjamas
Year 5/6SS: Backpacks
Staff: Blankets

Sapphire was offered the opportunity to present her idea to the community at a whole school mass. She worked hard on a clear speech and delivered it with enthusiasm, passion and focus. From this, the news began to filter across the school, first in small amounts, then in larger waves.

The local *Leader* newspaper for Moorabbin reported the story in their May 16th edition on page 11, which did allow the wider community to be aware of all the good work going on at our little school of 160 students. From this coverage and through making contacts, we received support from the local businesses in the community. We have been very grateful for the support of Bendigo Bank Highett, Officeworks Moorabbin, K-Mart and Woolworths Southland as well as Bakers Delight's head office in Camberwell and Lush

Productions Cheltenham. Their contributions, both financial and material all helped to ensure backpacks were being filled and children would be cared for.

Our Art Department even created a special logo to support the drive, which was used on posters and advertising material for the school and the community.

Research has shown that student voice and participation is improved through supportive leadership. Sapphire had an amazing idea and drive but she needed a team and a pathway to grow her idea to fruition. Mitra, Serriere & Stoicovy (2012) explain that the relationship between teachers and the school leader is a critical context for enabling voice and action. As a leader, is important to focus and lead three things which are necessary for success:

1. a clear vision and timeframe in terms of action;

2. opt-in strategies for various staff, families and community members;

3. strategic support systems for classroom and family involvement.

Once the dream was beginning to grow into its reality, we looked to find a suitable charity that would fit the criteria of the initiative's vision. A few phone calls led us to *St Vincent de Paul*, whose work in their school's program matched the philosophy and intent of the **Warmer Nights, Brighter Days'** initiative. St Vincent de Paul were thrilled to hear from us, and the volunteers there were very appreciative of our school's support and Sapphire's great idea

in helping others. They will be collecting the backpacks at the whole school mass on June 27th for distribution in our local suburbs.

We are currently still accepting donations until June 22nd and the SRC team are in the process of packing backpacks. School family members are participating in this last stage by purchasing further items with the money supplied by our financial support benefactors and our upcoming pizza fundraiser. In order to support our target of 50 backpacks being met, the school is running a pizza lunch, supplied by *De Marconi's Pizza and Pasta*, Highett. The proprietors have kindly donated all the profits to the school in order to further purchase the items we may require for complete packs. The St Catherine's community are very much looking forward to the tasty lunch treat and are very grateful to *De Marconi's Pizza and Pasta*, not only for their delicious food but also their fantastic support.

It cannot be more strongly emphasised that we need to elevate student voice with a collaborative team effort.

Together we can do great things!

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Student's winter warmer

Lifting student voice beyond the classroom:
the Hester Hornbrook Academy playbook

At the **Hester Hornbrook Academy** in Melbourne, hearing the voices of students is part of our DNA. It is built into who we are and what we do. We're passionate about ensuring our students' voices are heard well beyond the doors of our school. We believe that young people **must** be engaged in conversations about issues that affect them, and empowered to shape solutions. For us, student voice is just as much about influencing big picture political and systems change as it is about student-led classroom learning.

A tangible expression of the culture we create within all **Hester Hornbrook Academy** classrooms is the way in which we use our position and reputation of our parent organisation, **Melbourne City Mission**, to create opportunities for our students to 'have a seat at the table' with leaders and decision-makers. We proactively seek out opportunities for students to represent their own views in government inquiries and policy conversations, at forums and events, and in the media. **We privilege student voices over our own.**

This is how earlier this year we came to see two young leaders from the **Hester Hornbrook Academy** striding through the corridors of power on Spring Street.

Over the past six months, students from the **Hester Hornbrook Academy** have been actively engaged in the Parliament of Victoria's *Inquiry into Career Advice Activities in Victorian Schools*.

The lived experience of our students is that the pathway from school to work is not always straight-forward. In a written submission, **Hester Hornbrook** students provided our elected representatives with profound insights into the barriers and enablers for young people whose experiences include parenting responsibilities, homelessness, mental illness and learning disability.

Last month, on the strength of that submission, one of our current students and one of our alumnae attended State Parliament to provide expert evidence at a public hearing convened by the Inquiry Committee.

At the hearing, due to the students' ability to speak from genuine experience and knowledge, MPs listened with the

type of respect that you would not usually expect in an intergenerational, cross-cultural interaction.

The MPs were 'right there', grounded in that moment. I was watching as the students told their stories, and could see how deeply engaged and moved the Committee members were. Students were shifting the Committee's thinking not only about the subject matter, but about labels that our students are often burdened with, such as "disengaged student".

Importantly, the process of participating in the inquiry also shifted the young people's thinking about themselves.

In response to a question about future aspirations, our alumnae representative reflected: *"I do have a few options in mind. I would be particularly happy with either a history or sociology teacher, because I love history and I love sociology, or a community worker specialising in the LGBTIQ community. But I am not going to lie. Sitting here has actually raised a lot of interest in the opposite side of the table, so that is interesting."*

The hearing concluded with a request by a Committee member that it be put on the record that the hearing with young people was *"the best session we have had yet."* It was the Committee's final session after several months of hearings.

So – what does it take to lift student voices beyond the classroom?

At the Hester Hornbrook Academy we have built intentional strategies into our education model that nurture students' confidence to understand and own their agency and their power.

This is not easy work.

Many of the **Academy** students are engaging in education against a backdrop of significant challenges and structural barriers, including insecure housing and intergenerational early school leaving. They come from families and communities who are typically 'studied' and are the targets of policies and government and community interventions that have been designed without their input and the rich perspectives that come with lived experience. Many live with complex trauma and have experienced deep social exclusion, including exclusion from mainstream school settings. They don't identify as *'disadvantaged'* or *'disengaged',* but nonetheless have these labels ascribed to them by others. Their power lies in their unique perspectives, stories and insights gained through their lived experience.

Our small school model (currently eight classrooms dispersed across five campuses) intentionally caps student numbers at no more than 25 students per classroom and features a teacher and youth worker pair in each classroom. This model is key to building positive identity, self-esteem and voice.

We know each student has something to say and a story to tell, and that confidence is the first stepping stone. But we know that to be **heard**, students need to develop that narrative and unpack it. So **we teach students how to articulate themselves in written and spoken word**. We teach them how to unpack and communicate what can be very complex narratives.

As well as building confidence, we build resilience. We provide our students with the additional supports they need as they lift their voices. We provide this through mentoring with youth workers who work with a student over the long journey of education.

We also have a central policy and advocacy team who provide additional expert coaching to students. This equips our students with additional skills to maximise their impact when they speak with decision-makers in government or with influencers in the media. Our central team ask students questions like *"What do you want to feel most proud of when you look back on this moment?"* and *"What's the stand-out message you want your audience to remember when they think of you?"* and work back from there to ensure that students are supported to reach their goals.

Central to all of this is our school culture and the culture of our parent organisation, **Melbourne City Mission**. We purposefully create an environment that is **empowering** for students. We are prepared to sit with the discomfort and uncertainty this may at times create.

We trust and believe in our students. We know that their stories hold deep value and meaning. We believe that, in lifting their voices, they can and will be agents of positive social change.

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Youth-Adult Partnership: The keystone to transformation

Five years ago, the state of Vermont mandated ambitious learner-centred reforms: all high schools would establish flexible pathways toward proficiency-based graduation. Every student would have an annual **personal learning plan (PLP)**, developed by the student with guidance from teachers and parents. And, the PLP would define goals and strategies, laying out each individual learner's path to demonstrated proficiency—and a diploma. To this day, these requirements offer the promise of transformation across the public system.

In this historically decentralised state, schools have responded in varied ways. We have seen places where personalised learning plans develop as an engaging and meaningful experience, constructed together by learners and caring adult guides. These PLPs are dynamic; they're frequently reviewed and updated as new interests and goals emerge. Youth count on adult partners to help make adjustments to the PLPs as interests and passions change and to explore alternative pathways to their desired goals—say, working on a goat farm or writing a novella to meet a similar standard for graduation.

When students have the freedom to explore topics of personal interest, the adults become co-learners as students lead them into new domains. Ultimately, this partnership allows adults to gain rich insights into learners' lives, resulting in a deep-seated relationship built on mutual respect and trust.

On the other hand, we have also heard a school administrator declare: *"We set aside the second Tuesday in September to do PLPs"* using a series of computerised questionnaires. Then, they are essentially done with this state-mandated task for the year.

'Personalisation', in cases like this, appears to both students and teachers as

> **The future is not some place we are going to, but one we are creating. The paths are not to be found, but made, and the activity of making them…changes both the maker and the destination.**
>
> *JOHN SCHAAR*

another irrelevant adult-driven exercise, carried out through the traditional student-teacher power dynamic of command and compliance.

Partnership as an Essential Element in Learning and School Transformation

As Alison Cook Sather has remarked, *"There is something fundamentally amiss about building and rebuilding an entire system without consulting at any point those it is designed to serve."* (Cook-Sather, 2009)

Youth-adult collaboration is, in fact, an essential factor in educational transformation. Authentic youth-adult partnerships in learning are equitable, respectful, trusting, cross-generational relationships characterised by shared power, voice, and responsibility. Shifting the traditional student-teacher relationship to this context of partnership is a powerful strategy in building a robust learner-centred practice.

This shift is the keystone—the critical piece that ensures the fundamental stability of the structure, keeping all the supporting components in place—to a robustly transformed system. Without genuine youth-adult partnership, the change process can be reduced to perfunctory compliance or tokenism and, lacking structural integrity, it will quickly return to the status quo.

At **Unleashing the Power of Partnership (UP) for Learning**, a Vermont non-profit organisation focused on promoting youth-adult partnership for the past ten years, we've seen how easily promising reforms can fall apart.

We've also seen evidence of transformation.

We've learned that, once youth and adults enter into authentic partnership, their sense of agency and capacity as change agents alters. They develop a fresh mindset that sparks a culture shift and drives a new kind of action. The power struggles inherent in traditional student-teacher relationships drain a school's capacity for learning. Partnership replaces that dynamic with synergy and collective power.

One natural obstacle to this culture shift is the prevailing mental model about the proper relationship of young people and adults in learning environments. Partnership can seem an alien and unsettling concept across generations.

The traditional system, with its emphasis on a sheltered and prescribed preparation for distant adulthood, has fostered the belief that high school students—not to mention middle and elementary students—are too young and immature to be agents of their own learning. Students have been schooled to expect and accept passive roles as learners, either mastering how to play the 'game of school' or feeling marginalised. In fact, the idea of shared responsibility for learning can make young people very uncomfortable at first.

For their part, teachers defend their professional authority and expertise—increasingly devalued and eroded in contemporary society—along with their deep dedication to students' best interests. From this perspective, the idea that students and teachers can work in a reciprocal balance, sharing both responsibility and power, seems fanciful, counterproductive, and even threatening.

Of course, educators bring a wealth of professional expertise to their work. Young people, though, have their own expertise, an insider's perspective on the learning experience that adults cannot fully fathom—unless they ask and listen well.

> **Young people have their own expertise, an insider's perspective on the learning experience that adults cannot fully fathom—unless they ask and listen well.**
>
> *HELEN BEATTIE AND MARTHA RICH*

For us, our work in Vermont has affirmed that young people have the wisdom, creativity, and capacity for genuine partnership and that both youth and adults benefit from that relationship. When youth work closely with adults toward shared goals, they gain skills and confidence for lifelong learning and civic engagement. When adults work closely with youth as partners, the opportunity to learn from students' insights and unique perspectives often renews a professional sense of purpose and moves teaching and school transformation efforts toward more learner-centred modes.

With this evidence in front of us, our mission at UP for Learning is to shift the youth-adult relationship from one of command and compliance to one of partnership. When done well, this will increase youth agency—ensuring all young people have opportunities, support, knowledge, and skills to pursue active roles in their learning, their lives, and their community. Five of these effects stand out for us, supported by our own action research and experience in 88% of high schools and 37% of middle schools in Vermont over the past decade. We are sharing these persuasive reasons for anyone to use in creating a compelling case for youth-adult partnership being key and core to transforming or reforming education.

1. Youth-adult partnership improves academic success

In a proposal for increased democracy in schooling, a group of students suggested: *"If students feel some ownership in the school where they learn, we might have better attendance, fewer suspensions, and more respect for keeping our building clean. Also, having a choice in how we are taught might make most students more enthusiastic about learning."* (Forum for Youth Investment, Tolman & Pittman, 2001)

Research has borne out these predictions. A comprehensive review of findings on achievement motivation, school engagement, and student voice concluded that *"fostering student voice—empowering youth to express their opinions and influence their educational experiences so that they feel they have a stake in the outcomes—is one of the most powerful tools schools have to increase learning."* (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012) As a result, *"capitaliz[ing] on the power of self-determination can substantially increase achievement,"* even among struggling students and those in marginalised populations. It is also linked to expanded classroom participation, better reflection skills, and decreased behaviour problems.

2. Youth-adult partnership renews hope

Like self-determination, hopefulness is a significant factor in school performance. Hope drives high school attendance, credits earned, GPA, and retention in college. In fact, it is a more robust predictor of college success than high school GPA, SAT and ACT scores. (Gallup Student Poll Overview 2012-13, Snyder, Shorey et. al. 2002)

Research shows that a lack of hope leads to alienation and disengagement, reducing attendance, self-concept, academic achievement, and high school completion. (Mitra & Gross, 2009) Youth-adult partnership provides a context and support structure to promote hope and its positive effects. As Paolo Freire (1998) put it: *"Hope is something shared between teachers and students ... [when] we can learn together, teach together, be curiously impatient together, produce something together, and resist together the obstacles that prevent the flowering of our joy."*

3. Youth-adult partnership promotes ownership, which sparks motivation

Learners who feel a sense of control and ownership, with the ability to set goals and make choices, tend to be more engaged and enthusiastic. A survey of 56,877 students found that *"students who believe they have a voice in school are seven times more likely to be academically motivated"* than students who do not have that belief. (Quaglia & Corso, 2014)

This is a strong argument for the kind of partnership that puts learners at the centre with skilled and supportive adult guidance. As Alison Cook-Sather asserts, both youth and adults have roles to play: *"Students must have an active role in their learning if that learning is going to be meaningful and lasting, and such an active role should include having input into how their learning is facilitated. It is the right of the students, and it is the responsibility of adults to ensure that right is guaranteed."* (Cook-Sather, 2008)

> **It has been my experience that if most members of a school community perceive that they have limited input into what transpires in that community, the motivation to teach and to learn will be compromised.**
>
> *ROBERT BROOKS*

4. Youth-adult partnership is a right and part of being a citizen in a democracy

The right to an active role in learning has implications beyond the learner's personal explorations and achievements. It also speaks to a foundational premise of our nation's public school system—the goal of developing an informed citizenry equipped to participate in civic life.

As Carl Glickman (1993) noted, *"If the central goal of schools were to prepare students to engage productively in a democracy, then students would be working on the concerns of their immediate and future life and on the concerns of their immediate and extended communities."*

In 2015, however, 50% of Vermont students reported not feeling valued by their community (Youth Risk Behavior Survey). A 2013 national survey showed that fewer students reported having voice as high school seniors (37%) than when entering middle school (61%). *"In other words, the more our students mature, the less opportunity they have to offer their opinions and participate as leaders in meaningful ways."* (Quaglia & Corso, 2014)

Our own work at UP for Learning has shown that youth-adult partnership can counter this trend, affirming young people's rightful role as valued and responsible citizens while positioning them as active contributors.

One Vermont student who participated in our *Communicating School Redesign* initiative described her experience: *"I can make a difference. That was my biggest 'takeaway.' This was huge for me. I've always grown up with, 'little girls are supposed to be seen, not heard.' Because of this, I have always felt silenced. I was scared to make a stand and make a change. However, after this course, I learned I can make a difference. My voice is heard and it matters. Not only does my voice matter now, but it will matter later, too. Knowing how powerful my voice can be, I will no longer be afraid to use it. I will stand up for what I believe in. I will make a change. I will be an advocate for everyone else who feels their voice isn't heard."*

5. Youth-adult partnership meets the basic human need for agency

We all have a desire to be known, be valued, and have a sense of purpose. We crave to be heard, and we want to belong. All people—youth and adults—aspire to make intentional choices about the course of their own lives and find purpose through their efforts on behalf of others.

"Young people want to feel that they are part of a community...when they feel they belong, they feel more competent, more motivated, have more positive attitudes about school, and are more invested in learning." (*How Students Thrive: Positive Youth Development in Practice*, Springpoint, 2016)

From our work in schools and communities, informed by key findings in neuroscience and human development, we have come to believe that change-agent capacity is shaped by four factors:

1. mindset about personal power to influence change and the power of community;
2. skills to reflect, plan, implement, and communicate goals in the context of systems;
3. experience to make decisions, collaborate, find purpose, and make change; and
4. an environment of youth-adult collaboration, including access to resources and community partnership.

Quaglia & Corso (2014) summarise the value of youth agency this way: *"Schools that instill in students the confidence to act in support of their dreams are fulfilling the deepest purpose of schools: to help each and every student become the best possible version of him- or herself."*

The same is true for adult agency. In a transformed education system, both adults and youth should be able to fulfill their highest potential.

Youth-adult partnership: Setting the keystone to transformation

Even with the five outcomes above as strong incentives for a transformative culture shift, creating and sustaining authentic youth-adult partnership is no easy task. Few members of either generation have experienced this shift in context.

We know the change can feel risky and foreign, triggering fears, hidden assumptions, and confusion for both generations. In our work, we have developed learning experiences and materials to help youth-adult teams build the complex skills of partnership. They benefit from working together on authentic tasks; developing a common vocabulary; building trust and shared reliance; and frequent practice with high-quality dialogue, planning, and reflection.

Our reflective tool, *Taking the Pulse of Partnership*, provides a rubric to describe and assess the evolving process of youth-adult collaboration, helping teams set that keystone firmly as the educational culture takes on new forms.

We have seen repeatedly that when young people have clear purpose and agency, adults too, rise to the occasion. Intergenerational partnership calls us all to be our best selves, and we all change and grow in this process.

At **UP for Learning**, we envision a time when all youth will take responsibility for their own learning, collaborating with adults who support shared exploration. We also envision young people as full partners in school redesign.

Along the way, we hope to hear more adults say: *"We need the students in on this; we can't decide this without them."* And we need more young people saying: *"Of course we're taking charge of our education. Why wouldn't we?"*

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HELEN BEATTIE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND FOUNDER

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MARTHA RICH
LEADERSHIP TEAM MEMBER

Martha Rich *was the school leader at Thetford Academy (TA), Vermont for 21 years, where she worked to build a culture of trust in students. Youth-adult partnerships at TA led to nationally recognised programs in service learning, student participation in strategic planning and policy making, championship robotics teams, and new graduation standards that encourage students to take charge of their own education. As a national facilitator with the* **School Reform Initiative**, *Martha has helped TA and other schools develop strong professional communities based on shared responsibility for learning.*

UP for Learning

Unleashing the Power of Partnership for Learning

The solution to the world's problems is democracy and only democracy

Monarchy is like a splendid ship, with all sails set; it moves majestically on, then it hits a rock and sinks forever. Democracy is like a raft. It never sinks, but, damn it, your feet are always in the water.

Fisher Ames (1758-1808)

Democracy is defined by the following understandings and principles.

The essence of democracy is creativity. We have not yet tried democracy. Party or "interests" govern us with some fiction of the "consent of the governed" which we say means democracy. We have not even a conception of what democracy means. That conception is yet to be forged out of the crude ore of life.

Mary Parker Follett: **The New State: Group Organization - the Solution of Popular Government,** *1923. (1998 ed): p.3*

1. Vision

Where there is no vision the people perish

The Bible, *Proverbs 29:18*

Vision in a democracy is imagining the world good as it could be, establishing for everyone the goal of a public good, universal quality life. The vision has to be both desirable and feasible, achievable with what is now known. It cannot rely on not yet invented scientific achievements nor superheroes. Such visions have in the past had important impact on society. Plato's **Republic** had great influence on Jefferson inspiring his favor of meritocracy over democracy. Madison's dismissal of democracy resembled very much Plato's.

Vision must be thorough and complete, indicating how and where people live, what they do for work, how they are educated, receive medical treatment, what they do for entertainment, how they transport themselves, the justice stem, treatment of criminals, establishment of social justice, how government works. The economics of the vision must be described and explained.

A world as good as can be still has problems. Crime, corruption, war, poverty, sexual abuse, racism, destruction of the environment, loss of constitutionally guaranteed rights of protection from one's government, abuse of gay and lesbian rights all may have been almost entirely extinguished but could erupt again – in later blogs we'll take all of this into consideration.

With beginning democratic endeavors, the vision in all likelihood will be vague and incomplete and as the democratic movement grows and takes on more significant aspects of the public good, so too the vision will be modified.

2. The Group

The group process contains the secret of collective life, it is the key to democracy, it is the master lesson for every individual to learn, it is our chief hope for the political, the social, the international life of the future.

Mary Parker Follett. **The New State: Group Organization - the Solution of Popular Government,** *1923. (1998 ed): p. 11*

The group is the primary unit of a democracy, not the individual. As few as four people, who unite by sharing the same vision of a world as good as it could be; working cooperatively, with a conscientious effort to apply democracy's fundamental principles in a project designed to produce a public good. A public good makes the world better.

That short term goal is consistent with their long range world vision, and is a step, usually a very small step, in the direction of that vision. The project is always of short duration with a realistic time frame for completion and required reflection. Was the project successful? Did it make the world better without harming it? Was it informed by all of democracy's principles? What was learned about democracy? About its principles? About cooperation? Did it have any effect on the vision? Was it fun?

Following such reflection and establishing a base, the process is continued with the next project and, depending on was learned, the project can and should include more people, be more diverse, and be a little more

Art Pearl has been around for a while. He has taught at New York University, Howard University, Oregon University, University of California Santa Cruz and Washington State University, Vancouver. He also has taught in California prisons and was Director of New York's Division for Youth. He was a principal speaker at the only White House Conference on Teaching the Disadvantaged.

He was also a member and chair of the National Institute for Teaching of the Disadvantaged. He ran for Governor of Oregon and Oregon lost. He was elected three times to the Santa Cruz Board of Education, the second time with the highest vote ever recorded. He has been given a Martin Luther King, Jr. Lifetime Award and an award from the University of Oregon for his work in advancing social justice.

ambitious in its goal of public good. Thus democracy grows by bringing ever more people into the projects and by federation (*Mary Parker Follett*) with other democratic projects. What starts with four people, if done right, can grow to such an extent to elect a president, end poverty, bring about world peace.

It is an unending process and to be successful must provide personal gratification to all participants. The slogan found on the wall of all democratic classrooms: *"If we are not having fun, we are not doing it right,"* should be a requirement in all democratic projects from the one with four participants to the ones with millions.

3. Public Good

Pure public goods have two defining features. One is 'non-rivalry,' meaning that one person's enjoyment of a good does not diminish the ability of other people to enjoy the same good. The other is 'non-excludability,' meaning that people cannot be prevented from enjoying the good. Air quality is an important environmental example of a public good. Under most circumstances, one person's breathing of fresh air does not reduce air quality for others to enjoy, and people cannot be prevented from breathing the air. Public goods are defined in contrast to private goods, which are, by definition, both rival and excludable.

Mathew Kochen: **Public Goods. Environmental and Natural Resource Economics: An Encyclopedia,** *J. Whitehead and T. Haab (eds.), (1212), Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc.*

A public good makes the world a better place without negatively affecting the opportunity for quality life for any non-participants in the project. Any project, for example, whose public good has, as consequence, loss of influence of the Military Industrial Complex will not likely negatively affect access to quality life: a decent place to live, healthy diet, access to health services, time and opportunity to enjoy leisure, access to safe, comfortable and reliable transportation, protected from criminal threat, secure old age, access to quality public education.

4. Inclusion

Highlander Statement of Purpose:

The times call for an affirmative program, based on a positive goal. An army of democracy deeply rooted in the lives, struggles, and traditions of the American people must be created. By broadening the scope of democracy to include everyone. . . the army of democracy would be so vast and determined that nothing undemocratic could stand in its path.

Lucy Randolph Mason. (1952) **To Win These Rights: A Personal Story of the CIO in the South.** *New York: Harper: pp. 160-61*

A democracy includes everybody. In debates with those who oppose democracy, the intent is not to win the debate but to persuade. In such debates or discussions, the advocates are open to be persuaded to new ideas – responding to criticisms with logic and evidence.

Unity, not uniformity, must be our aim. We attain unity only through variety. Differences must be integrated, not annihilated, nor absorbed.

Mary Parker Follett, **The New State: Group Organization - the Solution of Popular Government** *1923 (1998 ed): p. 39*

Supporters of democracy are not evangelists. They are good hosts. They invite others in.

It was the struggle for inclusion that generated support for democracy. The Republic created in 1787 was exclusive, not open to slaves, indentured servants, white males without property, freed Blacks, women, or native peoples. The struggles for inclusion - bitter, long and bloody struggles - advanced democracy by inspiration, mobilization, character development and education.

From the very beginning, women resented exclusion and did something about it. Abigail Adams, wife of president John Adams, mother of president John Quincy Adams, made claim for inclusion of women loud and clear; Mary Wollstonecraft, friend of Tom Paine, expressed it in her 1792: *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. In 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott brought Seneca Falls to life with a convention that had 300 in attendance, over 100 of whom signed a petition demanding full inclusion US citizenship. With Stanton and Susan B Anthony at the helm, the struggle continued one frustrating decade after another. When Carrie Chapman Catt, one of the greatest organizers in US history, took leadership, she was able to secure women the vote in 1920. A monumental step, but far from full inclusion.

During those long years of struggle for women's suffrage, working people also fought for inclusion. Their struggle was less for the right to vote and more for the right to organize for livable wages and decent working conditions. That too met with brutal opposition. The government may have kept hands off the production and distribution of goods and services but there was no such reluctance to interfere with labor conditions, and almost always on the side of the employer. It was not until 1935, with passage of the Wagner Act, did workers win a major battle for inclusion: the right to organize. None of this came easily and, in recent decades, momentum has gone the other way. With help from a supine government, global capitalists don't fight unions. They don't need to. They just ship jobs to where labor costs are low and workers are excluded from power. Or, less noted but just as effective, use technology to eliminate jobs.

It wasn't until 1925 that Native Americans became citizens, but that hardly stopped their exclusion. The efforts for inclusion now is energized by Gays and Lesbians and immigrants and their supporters. And Occupy Wall Street had its moments in history protesting exclusion from economic security.

5. Authority

But man, proud man,
Drest in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he's most assured,
His glassy essence, like an angry ape,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
As make the angels weep.

William Shakespeare, **Measure for Measure,** *Act ii. Sc. 2.*

Strong Authority is an essential characteristic of democratic society. Robert Dahl in his book, **Democracy and Its Critics,** without specifying democratic authority's characteristics, distinguishes it from its two rivals, guardianship and anarchy. The noted social psychologist Kurt Lewin and some of his students conducted experiments in an effort to determine the relative merits of 'democratic' authority when compared to

'authoritarian' or 'laissez faire' (similar contrasts to Dahl's). The experiments conducted by Lewin in the years just after World War II found democratic authority to be superior to the alternatives. It is unfortunate that, for whatever reasons, those experiments were discontinued after a very few years. Since then, democracy has come to mean whatever anyone claims it to be. The Soviet's Eastern European client states were People's Democracies. No less absurd was unregulated capitalism's claim that it was democracy.

Democratic authority is: fair, transparent, accessible, persuades rather commands, negotiable, and in every way is expressed equally in its exercise. That means that everyone in an authority position in a democracy is required to legitimate that authority to everyone subject to it, by making precisely clear the logic for and the particulars of every authoritative decision; defending what is requested (or in some instances demanded) with logic and evidence. And, because a democratic authority recognizes that even the best argument will not persuade everyone, the democratic authority also negotiates with those not persuaded. And even further respects the rights of those who are neither persuaded nor have negotiated a mutually satisfactory solution to their differences.

6. Knowledge

Benjamin Barber:

Embedded in families, clans, communities, and nations, we must learn to be free. We may be natural consumers - and born narcissists, but citizens have to be made. . . The logic of democracy begins with public education, proceeds to informed citizenship, and comes to fruition in the securing of rights and liberties. Public schools are how a public citizenry is forged and how young selfish individuals turn into conscientious, community-minded-citizens .... Certainly there will be no liberty, no equality, no social justice without democracy, and there will be no democracy without citizens and the schools that forge civic identity and democratic responsibility.

America skips school, **Harper's Magazine**, *287, 1983: p. 39-46*

There is no such thing as an ignorant democracy.

Democracy is the triumph of reason. It becomes feasible only if a population is well enough educated to perform the challenging role of citizen. The goal of education in a society desiring to be democratic is providing **all** students by a certain predetermined age (eighteen?) that which is necessary to know, understand, and responsibly react as citizens in a democratic society. Given the complexity of that society and the magnitude of the difficult problems being confronted, ordinary citizens will need to know a lot.

Is what has to be known beyond the capacity of ordinary citizens? Until some effort is made to provide such education, it is impossible to adequately answer that question. We do know that humans have the capacity to learn a lot in education.

The major reason we have made so little progress toward democracy has been the inability or unwillingness to create an institution, an agency, to provide opportunity for the necessary knowledge.

Part of that knowledge comes from experiencing democracy: learning about democratic authority by experiencing the authority of democratic teachers; learning about democracy in projects in which the world is made a better place, through class projects that create a public good. As the student advances in school, the projects become more ambitious. It is through those projects, the information provided to make them work, and the reflection when completed, that students obtain the knowledge to become informed citizens.

Learning the skills required of democratic citizens by practicing them in school. In upper grades students research and debate with logic and evidence differing solutions to war, poverty, environmental devastation. The intent of that debate is to make the best case for a public good, not to win.

Today everything done has been dictated by a corporate mentality. The ostensible goal is to prepare a workforce to compete in the global economy. There is no such competition but that goal becomes the excuse to coerce passive conformity, to produce docile followers rather than informed citizens.

Docile followers are not what this country needs. Needed is an education that prepares students capable of addressing the problems that currently go unattended. Desperately needed is an education that promotes active engagement, encourages thought, challenges students to deal effectively and responsibly with both the major issues of the day - war, environmental destruction, poverty and injustice - as well as to make informed and responsible decisions in every facet of their lives: to become, good spouses, parents, friends, neighbors, citizens.

There are no known solutions to any of the above problems. Because there are no known solutions, it is necessary that students - all students - be helped to attain the background needed to discover, analyze, evaluate, debate, and synthesize a range of proposed solutions and, through thorough examination of diverse ideas, all defended with logic and evidence, arrive at the best solutions.

Is such an education possible? Who knows? We do know that, with a very restricted and limited effort, in Project Citizen, students respond positively: do the research, engage in the discussion and move significantly in the direction of democratic citizenship. If progress can be made in 6 months, think what could be accomplished in a 12-year effort. There is every reason to believe that we can make significant movement in the direction of education for democracy today if only we would try.

7. Becoming citizens by practising citizenship

Let us at all times remember that all American citizens are brothers of a common country, and should dwell together in the bonds of fraternal feeling.

Abraham Lincoln

Would that be true.

Political powerlessness is the feeling of an individual that his political action has no influence in determining the course of political events. Those who feel politically powerless do not believe that their vote, or for that matter, any action they might perform, can determine the broader outcome they desire.

Murray B. Levin, **The Alienated Voter: Politics in Boston***, 1960: p. 63*

We live in a time when an ever increasing percentage of the population feel their powerlessness. They feel powerless because they were never given an opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills to exercise power. Fascism is designed to limit power to a privileged few. Donald Trump rode those feelings to the presidency. Democracy promotes universal powerfulness and designs projects to make that happen.

The tyranny of a prince in an oligarchy is not so dangerous to the public welfare as the apathy of a citizen in a democracy.

Baron de la Brède et de Montesquieu, **The Spirit of the Laws**

In a democracy every citizen is encouraged and prepared to meaningfully participate in the creation of the public good. That means all are given multiple opportunities to develop the arts of citizenship. These arts or skills include: presenting arguments defended with logic and evidence, listening to arguments defended by logic and evidence, negotiating differences, respecting the rights of those not persuaded, mobilizing constituencies, bringing those constituencies to bear on the world to change it, make it better, create a public good, and reflect on that action. All of this can be learned in school and in the community, and needs to be Incorporated as a class project to create a public good in every school year.

The projects in the early grades will be necessarily simple projects and the changes small. As students advance, the projects become more complicated. In the upper high school grades the projects could integrate the efforts of several high schools and could produce public good that have important impact on the economy, the environment, social justice, violence, while at the same time develop socially responsible citizens.

8. Rights

Can any of you seriously say the Bill of Rights could get through Congress today? It wouldn't even get out of committee.

F. Lee Bailey

And if by some miracle it did, President Trump would most certainly veto it.

The founders, the 39, who signed the constitution, were universally opposed to democracy. They nonetheless established a framework that, with amendments, could open the door to Democracy. In the very first Congress they proposed and established the **Bill of Rights**. Excluded from those rights -- the constitutionally guaranteed protection of individuals from their government - were slaves, Native Americans, women, white males who didn't own property. Although flawed, the **Bill of Rights** provided a beacon of hope to the excluded.

The **Bill of Rights** was ratified in 1791. In the first amendment were the rights expression: religion, speech, press, assembly, and petition. The Fourth rights of privacy; Fifth –Eighth: the rights of due process which includes among the following: *habeas corpus* (charged with a crime), presumption of innocence, 'probable cause,' speedy trial, right to lawyer, right not to testify against self, jury of peers, protection from cruel and unusual punishment, and 'double jeopardy' (cannot be tried for same crime after being found innocent).

That individuals could be protected from their government was something new and exciting. That the vast majority of the

population were denied those rights was both depressing and a spur to action. Over time more and more of the population were protected.

Those rights were never secure. Less than a decade after ratification they were threatened by the Alien and Sedition Acts. They were suspended during times of war. Fortunately, most of our wars were of short duration. Not so now. Our rights are threatened now more than ever before. And there is no end of war in sight.

The Bill of Rights has been eviscerated, sacrificed on the altar of "national security" with little more than a whimper from the American people. We have entered a post-Constitutional America.

Bob Livingston: **The 9/11 conspiracy: Liberties lost** edition, 9/11/2017

It may be our current wars had nothing to do with 'terrorism' or non-existent 'weapons of mass destruction' but are the excuse to tighten the strangle hold of fascism.

Rights are also under attack by those who were at one time the strongest supporters. Universities have outlawed 'hate speech', attempting to spare minority students expressions of blatant bigotry. In a democracy, bigotry is not silenced: victims of hate speech are supported in a variety of public good projects.

In my final year at the University of California Santa Cruz I was provost of college eight. The University determined that perpetrators of hate speech would be expelled from the dormitories. A student came to me saying he was a standup comic and he wondered if his humor insulting women would cause me to expel him. I said: "I would do something much worse. I would make him come down and talk to me."

Democracy is more than the **Bill of Rights**. But there can be no democracy without rights.

The Bill of Rights is a born rebel. It reeks with sedition. In every clause it shakes its fist in the face of constituted authority... it is the one guarantee of human freedom to the American people.

Frank I. Cobb (1869-1923) Editor, New York World Contribution, **La Follette's Magazine**, January 1920

9. Optimum learning environment

... Life was to be lived, not to be devoted to acquiring utilities. The end or purpose of man was to use and develop his uniquely human attributes. A life so directed might be thought of as a life of reason or a life of sensibilities, but it was not a life of acquisition. If we wished to express this concept of man's essence in terms of maximization, we could say that man's essence is not maximization of his utilities but maximization of his human powers. Or we could say

that man is neither an infinite consumer nor an infinite appropriator but an infinite developer of his human attributes.

C. B. Macpherson (justification for including optimal learning environment in democratic theory) 1973: **Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval**: p. 32

I took some early writings of Marx on alienation where he argued the factory had deprived the craftsman of feelings of **usefulness** (no longer felt responsible for the product), **competence** (deprived of craftsman skill) and **belongingness** (no longer part of collective that provided craftsmen with mutual support). I said the same applied to classrooms where only some gained feelings of **usefulness, competence** and **belonging**. If we all were to succeed, I would have to find ways all would receive equally those powerful intrinsic motivations.

Almost everyone at the time, in the 1960s, were explaining differential achievement in classrooms as the result of 'deficits'; with conservatives it was genetic, liberals: 'accumulative environmental' (which led to **Head Start**) or 'cultural'. I argued that the achievement gap was the result of differential encouragement. Some students were encouraged to feel competent and others not, some to feel that which they were bring taught was useful and others not, and feel they were an important part of the class and others not. And that is what caused the achievement gap

With a small grant I tested it as best I could with 10 delinquents and got some amazing results: the delinquents stopped being delinquent. I was visited in the hospital recovering from a back operation by a University of Oregon professor who said the UO would like to interview me. I came, was interviewed, asked what it would take to get me there. I said Associate Prof with tenure and couple thousand more than Howard. UO countered with full prof tenure and a couple thou more than I asked. I came.

Arthur Flemming was president of the UO at the time. He asked me to take over the minority programs: *Upward Bound, HEP, Teacher Corp*. I applied usefulness, competence, belonging to minority programs and changed the University. Even though none of those minority program students had any chance of graduating, they graduated at roughly the same rate as admissible students. I was too busy running those programs to do much documentation or serious evaluations. I don't know if it would have made a difference.

Over the years I both refined the definitions of belonging, competence and belonging and added others. This is my idea of how a **Maximum Learning Environment** looks today. There is one important difference in how I consider it now and how I considered it in the 1960s. Then, I was into access and equity, helping the excluded into full and equal participation in the existing society. I no longer think the existing society functions

adequately. It has been effectively corrupted and has become an oligarchy or a plutocracy - or, more specifically, a fascist state. Now a **Maximum Learning Environment** is an integral part of the only alternative to fascism: democracy.

A **Maximum Learning Environment** has the following components

a. *Usefulness:*

Students see and can express the utility of what is being taught; moreover, are involved in projects that provide opportunity to validate the utility of the lesson.

b. *Competence:*

Students believe they "can do." Competence remains the most difficult to convince students with long histories of failure to try. So much of youth culture supports inevitability of failure. Need imaginative teachers who have a very positive relationship with students to succeed here.

c. *Belonging:*

Students see selves as part of learning community, mutually supported by all in class. Facilitated by all work done in teams.

d. *Feelings of physical safety:*

Schools can be dangerous places. One of the hallmarks of a democratic classroom is that it is safe. In many classrooms it is one the earliest public good projects.

e. *Encouraged to risk, to make mistakes, to speak up:*

This came to me first from my own experiences in school when I never volunteered and hoped I would never be called on. But also from observing thousands of classrooms.

Goodlad, and Brophy and Good in their books also observed the same phenomena. Only a rare few feel secure enough to take risks. As a cognitive psychologist I know that only when one risks does cognitive growth take place

f. *Meaning:*

This I got from Viktor Frankl and his *Man's Search for Meaning*. He argues that meaning is an essential and primary need. It would seem logical that a child would get a sense of the world from school. But that is not what happens. What does happen? For many, a lot of confusion.

When I was growing up, the world was a much simpler place. But even then, no one could explain to me why we were in the midst of a depression. A lot of what is happening to kids today is difficult to understand and virtually nothing in school explains what is happening to or near the student. Why can't he go home? Why does he have to go to this house? Why can't he go back? A lacking important component of education is sense making.

g. *Elimination of all unnecessary pain:*

Frankl talks about necessary suffering as part of understanding the world. But he also says: *"It goes without saying that suffering would not have meaning unless it was absolutely necessary."* (p. 11)

We victimize students with unnecessary suffering, the most prevalent being:

    i. boredom
    ii. humiliation
    iii. loneliness

Actually take away boredom, humiliation, loneliness and fear, and most students would find school a pretty nice place to go to.

However, when I picked up my daughters, who were not among the alienated, got good grades, etc. and asked them: *"How was school today?"* invariably from both: *"Bor-r-r- ring."*

It was comforting to see nothing important has changed in schooling in over a half of a century during which a world war that changed everything else that has occurred. But the worst was yet to come.

h. *Hope:*

Realistic aspirations for a gratifying life. However bad the future looked before and during World War II, hope remained alive. A president reassured us things would be getting better. Not only were we not to "fear fear", we were not to lose hope. Even in the midst of poverty was hope. The government wasn't the enemy; it was there for millions, particularly poor whites; it was their friend, and provided a glimpse of what could be done for the historical victims of what had the audacity to call itself a democracy: Blacks, Hispanics, and the most victimized: Native Americans.

All that has changed. The economy moved to the suburbs and took the jobs with them – those that weren't sent overseas to be filled by even more exploited, or were eliminated by technology. These were the factors that created the great recession of the 21st century; it meant for many students: no foreseeable positive path to the future.

When I was a teenager in the middle of the depression I was unusual in that I didn't see a positive future; not so my mother, my sister, my cousins, my neighbors - all seemed to believe things would workout: *"Happy Days were here again, skies above were clear again, life was full of cheer again."* That is not what youth in the ghetto, barrio or reservation are singing today, nor are many white youths.

How do we bring hope to those who see no path out of poverty, crime, drugs, misery, and how do we stop using all those things as excuses for not teaching?

> *Loss of hope and absence of meaning. For as long as hope remains and meaning is preserved, the possibility of overcoming oppression stays alive. The self-fulfilling prophecy of the nihilistic threat is that without hope there can be no future, that without meaning there can be no struggle.*
>
> Cornel West, 1993, *Race Matters*, p. 15

It won't be easy, but it is not impossible. It will take teachers who really understand life as it is lived by their students. Hope, like all of the other attributes of an **Optimum Learning Environment**, will not be created by teachers who drive to class from the protected suburbs, think they can relate because they had a had few courses in diversity and biculturalism.

i. *Excitement:*

… is a necessary component of an **Optimum Learning Environment** and is not generally associated with

Democracy has to be born anew every generation, and education is its midwife.

— John Dewey —

AZ QUOTES

classrooms. Students tend to seek their thrills and excitement outside of school. The classroom is not a place students associate with excitement.

It would be if the classroom provided the thrill of discovery. And if not education, OK, then if schooling is to provide anything useful to even a tiny minority of students, discovery rather than regurgitation has to become increasingly a part of class practices

How do we change that? How do we create the opportunity and the encouragement for students to experience the thrill of discovery? Discovery is part of almost all project learning. It comes when students do more of the teaching. And when more of classroom activity is problem solving.

j. Creativity:

Too many, maybe most, schools are a place where students are *not* encouraged to be or even permitted to be creative. Once there were some rare opportunities for creativity, but even these few are being cut back and are now viewed as extra-curricular. What is called reform is mandated boredom. Neither teacher nor student are provided latitude for creativity.

k. Significant participation in creating a public good:

The goal of any democracy is creation of a public good - making the world a better place without doing harm to the environment or to others not participating in the project. Nothing is as gratifying as accomplishing that goal and for there to be a truly **Maximum Learning Environment** for the learner, that particular project has to have played an important role in making his part of the world a better place. Because the project may have had no more than five people, it couldn't have been all inclusive, but it could have made clear that none were consciously excluded and still be democratic.

So that is what a **Maximum Learning Environment** looks like. How can it be assessed? It never will be perfect, but there should be striving for perfection, and whatever it is, it has to be equally there for everyone. We are a long way, maybe forever, from an instrument that could be applied to all environments. The best way to determine what kind of environment, is for

the student is to have a similar conversation with the teacher, generating from that a working assessment. It is not difficult to make rough assessments, which maybe is all that is needed. It is also much easier to suggest ways of making each component work better, than it is talking to the teacher about racism or prejudicial treatment. Moreover, even if the problem is racism, it will take the form one or more of the above components

10. Equality.

All societies that claim to be democratic also claim equality. None come close.

Some fantasise equality of results: taking from those who have too much and giving to those who don't have enough.

Not until the two main tenets of socialism: abolition of private property (which must not be confused with personal property), and equality of income, have taken hold of the people as religious dogmas, as to which no controversy is regarded as sane, will a stable socialist state be possible. It should be observed, however, that of the two tenets, the need for equality of income is not the more difficult to demonstrate, because no other method of distribution is or ever has been possible. Omitting the few conspicuous instances in which actual earners of money make extraordinary fortunes by exceptional personal gifts or strokes of luck, the existing differences of income among workers are not individual but corporate differences.

*George Bernard Shaw, **Encyclopædia Britannica** (1926)*

There are times in US history when such sentiments would get you in jail. What is current state of equality: jobs, justice, education, etc?

Blacks and Latinos fall behind on almost every dimension of equality:

Infant mortality:

Infant mortality rate among black infants is 2.4 times higher than that of white infants, primarily due to preterm birth. In the United States, the risk of preterm birth for Non-Hispanic black women is approximately 1.5 times the rate seen in white women.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Connect 231-232:

School Achievement:

High school dropout rates are 4.6 percent for White youth, 6.5 percent for Black youth, and 9.2 percent for Hispanic youth.

Employment:

Unemployment rates in 2016 for Whites were 4.3 percent, 8.4 percent for African Americans and the rate for Hispanics or Latinos was 5.8 percent.

The National Urban League's 2016 *State of Black America* study, used government data to compare black Americans' economic, social justice, health, civil engagement and education status to the rest of the country. The organization concluded that race discrimination drives disparities that are pervasive across the United States, and that African-Americans enjoy 72 percent of the benefits that whites have, said Marc Morial, President of the National Urban League.

Incarceration:

Incarceration rates for Whites in 2010 was 410 per 100,000; 2306 per 100,000 for African Americans; and the rate for Hispanics or Latinos was 831 per 100,000.

> *Arguably the most important parallel between mass incarceration and Jim Crow is that both have served to define the meaning and significance of race in America. Indeed, a primary function of any racial caste system is to define the meaning of race in its time. Slavery defined what it meant to be black (a slave), and Jim Crow defined what it meant to be black (a second-class citizen). Today mass incarceration defines the meaning of blackness in America: black people, especially black men, are criminals. That is what it means to be black.*
>
> Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*

Equality for women is also elusive:

> *Economic gender equality has also been in steady decline in the US. A decade ago, the US ranked 3rd globally in this area – today it ranks 26th in the world. During this time, although women's labor force participation has gone up (from 60% in 2006 to 67% today), the numbers are much higher in several advanced and emerging economies. For example, in China, women's labor force participation stands at 70% today. The earnings gap has also stalled for the most part, from women earning 62% of men's incomes back in 2006 to nearly 65% today. The US ranks a low 50th globally on this indicator.*
>
> *I find these economic and political gender deficits particularly paradoxical because they rest on a base of talent that in fact favours women. Nearly 89% of Americans aged below 24 get some form of tertiary education, and within this group, women outrank men 4 to 3. To some extent, American companies already recognize this vast pool of talent: more women than men hold professional and technical roles in the country. But those women do not make it into senior, higher paid roles in the same proportion, with only 43% making it into legislator, senior official and manager positions. What's more, this leadership gap is getting wider, having started out at 46% a decade ago.*
>
> Saadia Zahidi, Head of Education, Gender and Work System Initiative, Member of Executive Committee, World Economic Forum Geneva, 27 Oct 2016

Native Americans were denied equality to the same or even greater extent than African Americans. Native Americans - account for less than 1 percent of the national population, but make up nearly 2 percent of all police killings, according to data compiled by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Equality in a democracy is a fundamental principle. It is established in every arena of life. Often equality is the public good. (More about this in future blogs.)

Summary

- That is democracy and every effort at public good has to include all of the principles.
- It is not democratic to load up on one and ignore others.
- It is not likely that any will be done perfectly. They do not have to be.
- The object is to make things better not perfect. In democracy, perfect is the enemy of the better.
- It Is likely impossible to attain the vision. But it is valuable to give us a sense of where we are and how far we have to go. In that sense it is like asymptote to infinity.

Please read and pass it on to all you know.

And please make comments.

Art Pearl
September 2017
http://ow.ly/3buJ30fvyJd

North Coast Region Student Representative Council Conference

On the 24th May this year, over a hundred students from across northern NSW descended upon **Southern Cross University** for the annual **North Coast Region SRC Conference**. The region is a large geographic area that stretches along the pristine coast from the NSW and Queensland border down to the Clarence River.

The region also includes schools in the majestic hinterland and valleys of the mountains and ranges. Students travelled for hundreds of kilometres to participate in the conference, reflecting the theme for the day which was *"Be Awesome"*.

Following NSW Department of Education structural changes eight years ago, the regular regional meetings have needed to be organised by individual schools. This also meant the Department does not host a state-wide conference any more. The regional symposium allows students who are keen to have a 'Student Voice', time to network and interact with other schools.

The following schools attended and we thank them for their energy and enthusiasm. Huge congratulations to **Ballina Coast High School, Alstonville High School, Bonalbo Central School, Evans River K-12 School, Kyogle** High School, MacLean High School, Mullumbimby High School, Nimbin Central School, South Grafton High School and Southern Cross Distance Education.

Organised by **Ballina Coast High School,** the gathering of schools heard from a range of guests.

Special guest speakers

The event was opened by District Director of Schools **Ms Megan Johnson,** who provided a framework for student voice. Megan outlined a continuum for schools to follow and provided elements that students will need for successful leadership.

The presentation outlined by **Ms Melanie Loombes** showcased her successes at school based on participation in extra-curricula activities. Awarded the Shire *Youth of the Year* and the *International LEO of the Year* led to scholarships for university. Melanie believes these successes were a result of being involved in student leadership at school.

The previous Mayor of Lismore, **Mrs Jenny Dowell,** gave the students an insight into the highs and lows of community volunteering, with an intriguing speech that highlighted the need for planning, perseverance and participation.

Former SRC President and now Griffith University ambassador **Ms Erin Copeland** chaired a dynamic and interactive session on leadership. Erin questioned and challenged the audience, while providing insightful and thought provoking answers to how leadership is measured and maintained.

Interactive networking

Students welcomed the opportunity to join in an interactive exercise. This required each student writing an issue for their SRC on a sheet of paper. All the sheets were put onto the wall. Each student was then given *post-it* notes to write a comment on the issues. The resulting threads of conversation by *post-it*s provided as many questions as answers.

A quest was used as an ice breaker to encourage networking between the schools. This involved *"Finding 10 things"* about students from other schools. Examples included finding someone who was born overseas, finding someone with a part time job or finding someone with the same eye colour. The venue was loud and very busy for ten minutes.

Fun activities were held to break up the day. A popular game was *"Head and Tails"* which is very quick, easy and entertaining. Prizes of chocolates were shared amongst all the players.

School presentations

The opportunity for every school to present to the conference is always an excellent session. The schools presented in different ways and all were informative and passionate about the many projects and goals in which they are involved.

Some of the amazing projects by students included: recycling programs, 'sleep ins' for the homeless, landscaping, promoting school culture, donations for refugees, tree planting, whole school socials, Landcare, BBQs, social justice events, cancer fundraising, suicide prevention, Harmony Day assemblies, bush regeneration, increased activism and more.

Entertainment

A tour of the **Southern Cross University** at Lismore surprised many of the students. The size and quantity of the buildings is astounding. The splendour of the new library and the beauty of the grounds are outstanding. SCU offers many courses at Lismore, Coffs Harbour and Gold Coast.

Returning from lunch, entertainment was provided by brilliant guitarists from **Ballina Coast High School**, **Lachlan Jones** and **Jed Williams,** who played a ten minute melody of many memorable musical moments.

A range of opportunities that are calling for student participation was provided for schools and students. These included: *Connect, Youth Ambassadors, Youth Frontiers, Suicide Prevention, Greenpeace, Australian Youth Climate Coalition* and *Landcare*. There are also many more organisations that are looking for a student voice.

Presentation

The **Ballina Lighthouse** and **Lismore Surf Lifesaving Club** brought in a $10,000 drone – the same drone that assisted in providing life rafts for two swimmers who were caught in a rip. The presentation was a highlight of the day.

Andrew Dougherty, the club president, showed a presentation on the work of *Surf Lifesaving*. Videos included footage of the drone dropping the life rafts to the stranded surfers and their subsequent survival.

An announcement by Andrew that one of the students amongst the crowd was named **Young Surf Life Saver of the Year** was greeted with joyous applause.

Following Andrew's demonstration, many questions were asked about the drone's usage and abilities in an intense session before our conclusion.

Conclusion

The students were able to provide oral evaluation of the day that was voted a resounding success. Students returned to their schools to continue their awesome roles as **Volunteers with a Voice**.

The organisation of **Mrs Amanda Pratt**, *Ballina Coast High School SRC Coordinator*, was acknowledged as the driving force behind the day's success.

We look forward to next year when we'll have another **NSW North Coast Regional SRC Conference**.

Andrew Playford
*Teacher Mentor/Librarian,
Distance Education Supervisor
& SRC Coordinator
Ballina Coast High School*
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Congress 2018:
Day Tickets & Open Morning Available

It's that time of year again! The **Victorian Student Representative Council (VicSRC)** is gearing up to **Congress 2018** from **10th** to **12th July** at **Ormond College**, The University of Melbourne. At Congress, the top issues in education today will be debated, deliberated, defeated and decided by students!

With 250 students from all around the state coming to Melbourne for three days and two nights of capacity building and conversation, we've got all manner of things to look forward to! There's the dress-up gala dinner by invitation only (*One Night, Four Decades 60s-90s*), workshops on everything from zine making to public speaking, and the launch of the **Student Voice Hub**. Plus a whirlwind of campaigning and voting on the top issues for students, and announcement of the **VicSRC Executive** for the 2018-2019 term.

Day Tickets

Overnight delegate tickets are practically sold out but any student keen to have their voices heard can still snap up some of our **day delegate tickets** (plus an extra ticket for the fabulous gala dinner)!

Open Morning

Teachers, students and interested parties are also invited to our **Open Morning** on 12th July! **Open Morning** includes the *Lightning Lobby*, where the twelve issue groups campaign one on one to present the solutions they've got. Then there's the *RAP* session where everyone gets to hear the innovative pitches these young leaders have for improving their education system.

Thanks to the **Australian Education Union** who are sponsoring **Open Morning** so that we can accommodate all students - both primary and secondary - for **free**! That's right, students can attend open morning for **free**! We're also sponsored by the **Newsboys Foundation** and our venue at Ormond College, without whom we would not be able to make Congress the fabulous event that it is.

We're excited to announce that this year we're again partnering with the **Victorian Electoral Commission**. The VEC will be sponsoring the elections of the VicSRC Executive and will also be running an instructional workshop with the newly elected Executive students. We're also excited that, this year for the first time, we're partnering with **Sustainability Victoria** to make **Congress 2018** the most environmentally friendly and sustainable event it can be!

So keep your eyes on our hashtags *#Congress2018* and *#YearOfStudentVoice* during the **10th-12th of July** to see what's going on, what's up with students and what they're doing to address it!

You can get all the details you need and grab your tickets online through **VicSRC** right here:

https://bit.ly/2Ju5OBs

Students on School Councils

We did it! After years of campaigning for student voice to be better represented and heard at the highest levels in schools across Victoria, new regulations require School Councils in Victorian government secondary schools to include two Student members.

What does this mean?

You can find some information about the Student member category for School Councils at: **https://bit.ly/2GU5dHR**

In plain, non-government speak, the new legislation means that all Victorian government secondary schools (not Catholic or Independent) now have to have two Student members – elected by students - on their School Council. Some schools were already doing this, but now everyone has to.

Students at government secondary schools should receive information from their Principal when nominations are open.

What do School Councils do?

A School Council is a group made up of teachers, parents and other community members - and now Students - who make decisions about how a school is run. They meet regularly to work on things like:

- How the school spends its money
- The school's strategic plan and vision
- Maintaining school grounds and facilities
- Developing, reviewing and updating school policies
- Deciding what staff are required
- ...and lots of other things to do with the running of the school.

Why is student representation important?

The School Council should make all its decisions considering the best interests of the students at the school. No one knows more about what it is like to be a student at a school than the students themselves! Students have a right to have a say on decisions that might affect them – whether it's the placement of new water fountains, or the appointment of a new Principal.

The Student members on School Council have a responsibility to represent not only their own views, but the views of the student body. They should be consulting with students at their school regularly so they can be the best possible representative.

If you're into reading big reports, VicSRC's report on *Student Representation on School Governance Councils* (which can be found at: https://bit.ly/2IU7KyH) is a good place to understand more about student representation.

How do nominations and voting work?

Good question! The process will be different for each school. Generally, the Principal should call for nominations for the position of Student member. Any student from Year 7 to 12 is eligible to put their hand up to sit on the School Council.

If there are more than two students nominating, the student body will vote for who they want to represent them on School Council. The Principal should organise the voting process.

The election of students to School Council should be democratic and fair. Students who already hold leadership positions can't be automatically selected for School Council; a dedicated vote on Student members has to be held.

When will this happen?

The election process for new Student members needs to be completed by 29 June 2018, so that Principals can report back to the Department of Education and Training (DET).

What if I haven't heard anything about elections at my school?

Your Principal should have received lots of information about the new member category from the Department of Education and Training, so they should know about it! However, we know that Principals have a lot going on and so they might not have passed that information on to you yet.

The VicSRC suggests that you approach your Principal if you haven't heard any information about elections for School Council members. You can send them a link to this document: **https://bit.ly/2KWf1Pe** to show that you know what you're talking about!

Most Principals and schools are really supportive of getting students onto their School Council. However, if you feel like your school isn't following the proper process (eg assigning two students to School Council without elections) then you can email the DET at: **school.council@edumail.vic.gov.au** You can also call the VicSRC: (03) **9267 3744**.

What if I'm at a Primary, Catholic or Independent school?

If your school isn't a government secondary school it's not mandatory to have student representation on your School Council. However, it's still a great idea! You, maybe along with your Student Representative Council, could approach your school leadership with a proposal to include Student members on your School Council. Check out our research report on *Student Representation on School Governance Councils* for some insight into why Student membership is so important.

Any other questions?

Please let us know! Contact the VicSRC on (03) **9267 3744** or at **info@vicsrc.org.au**

Election of students to School Councils

From the opening of the young school in 2010, **Nossal High School** has been a proactive leader in advocating for student voice and agency, ensuring that student voice was always prevalent in the school's decisions and leadership. In 2010, 200 Year 9 students were welcomed into the fresh school with the two school captains already being appointed to the School Council. Since then, there have been two students on the School Council every year – with full voting rights and a key voice to the school's decision making.

In response to the new model of *'Students on School Councils',* introduced by the Government, **Nossal High School** has maintained an enthusiastic outlook by increasing the number of students on the School Council to **four members with full voting rights**.

The School Council voting process for students is completed in exactly the same way as for other 'adult' members. Every student in the school is entitled to vote for their choices. A total of 12 students nominated for the spots available through a confidential voting process involving secret ballots and confidential voting slips, which were placed in envelopes directly in the front office.

The current School Council has discussed the changes and has shown strong supportive feedback on the fresh implementation of more student voice. According to **Nossal High School** Principal, **Mr Roger Page**, the new model brings a more *"authentic say in the running of the school by having more students on the board."*

The complete voting process was simple:

1. All students were notified digitally and verbally in their respective tutorial groups about the new model.

2. Each student was given an individual pack including two envelopes, the twelve nomination forms and a voting page to be sent to the front office.

3. Every student was encouraged to vote for their choice, but was not forced.

4. Campaigns happened via online platforms from the nominees (optional).

5. Sealed envelopes of students' votes were placed in the school's white boxes placed around the school, which would be collected by the front office.

6. Votes were counted confidentially.

Actions that have already occurred since having students on the School Council include a section of the school's report being written by students, providing authentic and honest feedback. This was greatly commended by the Principal, **Mr Roger Page**. As well, there has been frequent communication between Mr Page, the school captains and the SRC, so that having *"more frequent meetings allows for an increase in communication, hence carrying less unnecessary information to be brought up in School Council meetings"*; this means a more efficient and effective use of meetings. Recent topics that have been suggested and discussed include changes to dress codes, the priority of fundraisers and of funding. **Nossal High School**'s next five years are currently being reviewed through a new strategic plan, and this involves focus groups from students on ideas and feedback from direct student voice. Mr Page seeks to encourage more student input on this.

Overall, the feedback and response has been positive and enthusiastic – and we encourage all schools to take this opportunity to its fullest.

Ryan Wijaya
VicSRC Executive Committee

Upwey High School has always been actively committed to matters concerning student leadership, and has been a constant and passionate advocate for greater student voice and agency.

Prior to the recent decision about the election of students to School Councils, **Upwey High** had always allowed and encouraged student voices to be part of the school's decision making processes. There were always seats on the Council readily available for students, however they weren't filled consistently ... as the position was never officially appointed. As a consequence, it was difficult to consistently and formally incorporate student voices into all of the Council's decisions, as there was an obvious lack of recognised student input.

After the Victorian Government officially introduced the new model this year, **Upwey High School** responded with strong enthusiasm to the roll out of *'Students on School Councils'*. **Mr Thomas Daly**, **Upwey High School**'s Principal, initially talked about the new model at a whole school assembly, following the advice from the Department.

The subsequent Council voting processes were conducted extremely well. Students put forward their nominations, either for themselves or for a peer (so long as there was mutual consent). The nominating students became publicised through their own campaigns and their conduct around the school yard. Each candidate was allowed to create one *Powerpoint* slide to be run over all of the school's digital information screens, one poster to be displayed in four designated locations around the school, and a 150 word statement to be distributed with each ballot paper.

The official student election involved ballots and a confidential voting slip to be completed and placed in envelopes directly in the front office.

The voting process was:

1. All students received digital and verbal notification of the requirements and process during **Upwey High School**'s whole school assembly about the new model.

2. Every nominating student was encouraged to complete:
   - One *Powerpoint* slide to be run over all of the school's digital information screens;
   - One poster to be displayed in four designated locations around the school;
   - A 150 word statement to be distributed with each ballot paper.

3. Every student of **Upwey High School** was given an individual pack including an envelope, the nomination information and a voting page to be returned to the front office.

4. All students were encouraged to vote for their chosen candidates, but they were not forced to do so.

5. The sealed envelopes containing each student's vote was then handed directly to the schools' front office.

6. These votes were counted confidentially.

This election process has officially appointed two students to the School Council, where this board's decisions will now have consistent student input.

Overall, the feedback and response from students has been extremely positive. There has been enthusiastic student participation in the process and an improved understanding of the value closely associated with student voice. **Upwey High School** encourages all schools to fully pursue this opportunity.

Wren Gillett
VicSRC Executive Committee

"Students and teachers working together to find solutions."

Student, Portland Secondary College

Teach the Teacher is going global!

The **Teach the Teacher** program from the Victorian Student Representative Council (VicSRC) is poised to spread across the globe as part of the **HundrED** *spotlight* on Victoria.

HundrED is a Finnish not-for-profit organisation seeking out the best local programs in education and taking them world-wide (see https://hundred.org/en). This year they've launched their *spotlight* system, focussing in on one area of education or one geographic location. In partnership with **Education Changemakers,** their first **spotlight** location is Victoria, Australia, where they're highlighting ten of the best programs in the state. And **Teach the Teacher** is at the top of their list!

Teach the Teacher uses seven steps to bring students, teachers and school leadership together to identify and solve issues in their school community. The student-led model provides a framework for students to survey their peers, capturing the issues that really matter to them. The project team then brainstorms independently before bringing their issues and ideas to a **staff professional development session**. Working together, the students and teachers make positive, lasting change, raising up student voice and fostering a collaborative spirit.

As part of the *spotlight,* the VicSRC will be working with HundrED and **Education Changemakers** to document the process of **Teach the Teacher** in an accessible video format, as well as simplifying and broadening the original program to make it internationally applicable.

The VicSRC is so excited to see this wonderful student voice program spreading beyond Victoria. We look forward to working with **HundrED, Education Changemakers** and the many schools who will have the opportunity to use this model moving forward.
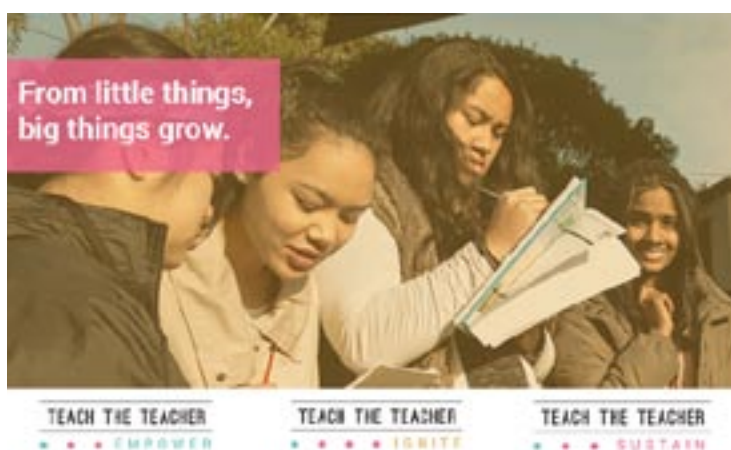
Teach the Teacher update for March to May

During the last three months, **Teach the Teacher** has provided sessions for students and teachers in 17 schools.

TEACH THE TEACHER
● ● ● ● IGNITE

Teach the Teacher Ignite introduces students and schools to the program. Students from diverse settings are supported to choose and lead a professional development session.

Introductory sessions outlining the program have been provided to **Baden Powell P-9 College, Mount Alexander College, Mornington Secondary College, Thomastown Primary School, Fitzroy Primary School, Balmoral College, Lake Bolac College, Westall Secondary College** and **Barwon Valley School** (a special development school for students with intellectual disabilities).

These sessions have been followed up with initiatives at:

Cranbourne Secondary College: students plan to run a 'speed friendship' style game with teachers and SRC students as a trail to running it on a larger scale and as part of another professional learning session run by students for teachers around student-teacher relationships.

Bendigo South East College: students are looking to develop some professional learning sessions for relevant staff in order to address student concerns with the school's teacher mentor program. The students felt that this was one meaningful way they could address their chosen topic of student teacher relationships that was established last year.

Baden Powell P-9 College: students chose to look at school connectedness and student teacher relationships as their issue using their Pivot Professional Learning data.

TEACH THE TEACHER
● ● ● EMPOWER

Teach the Teacher Empower is suitable for schools that have an active culture of student voice and established student leadership groups.

East Doncaster Secondary College students focused on *student teacher relationships*. Students hope to develop a professional development session for their teachers that allows them space to discuss student-teacher relationships and their impact on *student motivation* in class and as a way to create some time for teachers to learn more about the learning needs of their students.

Frankston High's SRC used the *Pivot Professional Learning Surveys* at their school to identify an issue for them to focus on for their professional development session. Before their VicSRC workshop they brainstormed their own responses to the five areas of focus on the Pivot survey (*Know students and how they learn; Know the content and how to teach it; Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning; Create and maintain safe and supportive learning environments; Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning*) in order to better understand them and to think about them in their school context. In their own discussions around what was revealed by the student data, *feedback* emerged as an area that needed to be addressed.

McClelland College used their *Attitudes to School Survey* data to identify potential issues and help them to craft a further survey looking specifically at these issues. They choose *student motivation and effort* as their main focus for *purposeful learning*, *teacher-student relations* and *classroom management*.

Suzanne Cory High School students chose '*school culture*' as their issue, with particular focus on *expectations for students' prior learning*. They feel that, because they are a select entry school, there are assumptions made about their levels of understanding and students needs weren't always being met because of this.

TEACH THE TEACHER
● ● ● SUSTAIN

Teach the Teacher Sustain is a refresher program for schools that have previously participated in **Teach the Teacher**.

Scoresby College students focused on *school connectedness* this year.

Clifton Springs Primary School students used the *Pivot Professional Learning Survey* data to make the decision that *teaching and learning* should be the focus of their next professional learning session. Last year they had a focus on *student voice* and felt that this would further extend this work into the classroom.

Melanie Gaylard
Teach the Teacher
Project Officer, VicSRC
projects@vicsrc.org.au

VicSRC Student Voice Awards

Every year the **Victorian Student Representative Council (VicSRC)** honours the best of student voice in Victoria. This year we've renamed the awards to the **Student Voice Awards** to better reflect their focus. It's never too early to start working on your entry, so see below for the categories, entry guidelines and more!

The **Student Voice Awards** celebrate best practice in student voice, leadership and student-led action in Victoria.

Apply

With a total of $20,000 worth of grants and prizes available, have a look at our categories and start thinking about your video! It doesn't have to be big budget, filmed in a studio or anything like that. Just take 1-2 minutes to tell us your story: what you've achieved in the last year!

The **Group Action Award** recognises a group of students speaking up, making change and amplifying the voice of others in their school community. *Have you made changes to school policies or spoken to leadership on behalf of other students?*

The **Teacher of the Year Award** recognises a teacher who makes sure students are heard through mentoring, empowering or simply listening. *Do you know someone who has offered opportunities for students to learn and lead or made changes in their classroom or school in response to students' needs?*

The **Newsboys Foundation Youth Leadership Award** is awarded to a graduating Year 12 student who displays leadership in their school or community. Three finalists will be listed and will receive $3000 (winner) and $1000 (runners up) bursaries to fund leadership development.

The **SRC of the Year Awards** come in two categories: **Primary** and **Secondary**. They recognise elected bodies of students who are making real change at their schools, who have asked what students want, reported to their leadership, and made real change in their school communities!

For more information on conditions of entry, check out the VicSRC website: **https://bit.ly/2LyXE7z**

When?

Save the date! The **2018 Student Voice awards** will take place **Thursday 18th October**.

VicSRC @ Principals' Conference

Cohen and **Alyssa** from the VicSRC Executive, ready to chat with the hardworking leaders of our schools at the DET's **Regional Principals' Conference**, June 2018

STUDENT
VOICE HUB

Community **is how we make change.** In 2016, one of the key ideas to come out of the VicSRC annual Congress revolved around creating a community for student voice.

Where could students go to find the resources and connections that would enable them to amplify and make use of their voices in education?

A plan was formed and, after securing funding in 2017, the VicSRC is very excited to be launching the

Student Voice Hub

at Congress 2018.

Conceived of, designed and populated by students, schools and community organisations, the **Student Voice Hub** will be a primary point for collaboration and communication. After the Hub is launched by the **Victorian Minister for Education** at Congress 2018, students and schools will be able to sign up to access vital resources, discussion boards and a community blog packed full of news – *for* students, *by* students.

Want to get involved?

Follow the **Student Voice Hub** on social media at *twitter | facebook | instagram*!

Coming up soon you'll also be able to:

• **Join as a student!**

Absolutely free! Take part in polls, discussions and more to make your voice as powerful as it can be!

• **Join as a school!**

Register up to ten teachers and take the student voice health check, download resources and connect with other teachers!

• **Write for us!**

Feeling fired up? Passionate about your pet project? Pitch your topic for the community blog and get your story out there!

• **Build best practice!**

Got a great story? Looking for the best way to set up your SRC? Check out our resources or contribute your own!

International Journal of Student Voice

Volume 3 of the *International Journal of Student Voice* is available now! This issue features articles on:

- *Developing Mutual Accountability between Teachers and Students through Participation in Co-generative Dialogues* by John Luciano Beltramo

- *Strengthening Student Voice Work through "Linking Across the Lines": A Story in Snapshots* by Alison Cook-Sather and Helen Beattie

- *How Do High School Students Create Knowledge About Improving and Changing Their School? A Student Voice Co-Inquiry Using Digital Technologies* by Jane Hunter and Linda O'Brien

- *Deliberate (Mis)Representations: A Case Study of Teacher Influence on Student Authenticity and Voice in Study Abroad Assessment* by Kayla M. Johnson

Articles are open access and may be viewed and downloaded at: **https://bit.ly/2H6v7Dt**

Dana Mitra, Ph.D.
Professor of Education

2018 Australian Students as Partners Roundtable

Save the Date: Tuesday 2 October

The 4th Annual Australian **Students as Partners Roundtable** event will be hosted at The University of Queensland in Brisbane.

Catherine Bovill from the University of Edinburgh will be a keynote speaker. Registration will open in July and be available from: **https://bit.ly/2sGtHdJ** – interested colleagues should join the **Australian Students as Partners Network** at: **https://bit.ly/2JguKIm** for updates.

Kelly Matthews
k.matthews1@uq.edu.au

The **International Journal for Students as Partners** (IJSaP) is a journal about learning and teaching together in higher education.

IJSaP explores new perspectives, practices, and policies regarding how students and staff are working in partnership to enhance learning and teaching in higher education. Shared responsibility for teaching and learning is the underlying premise of students as partners, and IJSaP is produced using a student-staff partnership approach.

IJSaP is designed to appeal to a wide audience of readers and potential authors in the higher education community. It aims to publish high quality research articles, case studies, reflective essays, reviews and opinion pieces from around the world. Contributions written collaboratively by students and staff are particularly encouraged, although single and other co-authored pieces are also acceptable. All submissions go through a rigorous review process involving both staff and students who are trained and supported as reviewers.

https://mulpress.mcmaster.ca/ijsap

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.*
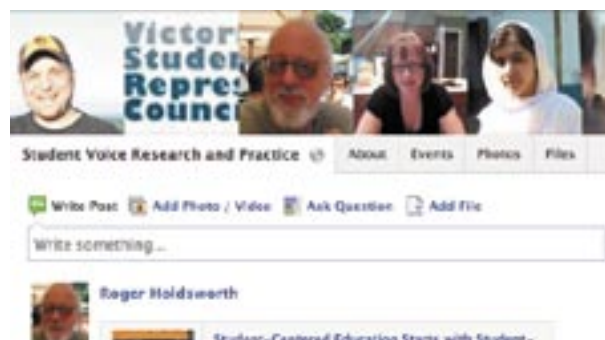
Amplify: A new student voice practice guide

Amplify is a new **student voice, agency and leadership practice guide**, produced by the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET). The draft guide is now available for consultation.

It gives an opportunity for school professionals and students to have conversations, collaborate and take actions to empower students, whatever their current starting points.

Amplify is available on-line as a Word document or a PDF from **https://bit.ly/2y4JGrX** . Victorian government schools and teachers can also order hard copies of *Amplify* through this site.

Empower students with Amplify

By empowering students, we enhance student engagement and enrich their participation. We help students to 'own' their learning and development and we help schools to create a positive climate for learning.

Amplify includes:

• a case for change

• information about the structures, processes and practices that teachers and school leaders can use to empower students

• links to the Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO) and the Victorian teaching and learning model

• links to tools and resources

• case studies from Victorian government schools

• a professional reading list.

Using Amplify

For teachers, Amplify represents an opportunity to reflect on the current status of student voice, agency and leadership in their classrooms. The definitions, strategies and practice examples included in Amplify will assist teachers to identify improvement opportunities and implementation ideas.

For school leaders, Amplify complements the FISO and Victorian teaching and learning model resources, bringing to the fore the central role that student voice, agency and leadership have in improving student outcomes.

Leaders can assist teachers to establish a culture where all school community members value and contribute to the advancement of student voice, agency and leadership.

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.

APS Australian Psychological Society
Believe in Change

Are you aged 12-18 years, or
do you work with young people aged 12-18?

Youth for Peace Project Award 2018

Psychologists for Peace
(an Australian Psychological Society Interest Group)
is excited to announce the *Youth for Peace Project Award 2018*

Groups of young people are invited to undertake a project that
builds peace - at school, in families, in communities, or globally.

Further details and for resources to support your project can be found at
http://bit.ly/peaceaward

Awards:
First prize certificate with $1000
Up to two Highly Commended certificates with $500 each

Closing date – Tuesday 30th October 2018

2018 Youth for Peace Project Award

Psychologists for Peace (PfP) are excited to announce the **2018 Youth for Peace Project Award**. It is for projects undertaken by groups of three or more young people aged 12-18 that seek to build peace – at school, in their families or communities, or globally. Young people who are interested in applying will have access to a range of resources including those produced by PfP and other *Australian Psychological Society (APS)* groups, and are encouraged to be creative. The award will be given annually. The closing date for 2018 is **30th October**.

For further details, including the application form: **https://bit.ly/2rWI7Go**

Psychologists for Peace

The *Australian Psychological Society*'s *Psychologists for Peace Interest Group* seeks to promote peace at all levels. Some people think of peace as simply the absence of war or violent conflict, and some think of it as tranquility (like 'peace and quiet'), but it is more than these. It includes: being at peace with yourself ('inner peace'); having peaceful families and relationships (where everyone's rights are respected and problems are resolved effectively); building peaceful communities (where people with different backgrounds and characteristics are respected and people work together for the community); and creating a peaceful world (where all people can live healthy peaceful lives in a healthy sustainable environment).

Some broad themes where more work needs to be done to build a more peaceful world include:

- **Culture:** eg how people from different cultural and faith backgrounds understand each other; why discrimination and racism occur and how they affect those who experience them.
- **Gender**: eg how women and girls can still be discriminated against in their families, schools, work and communities; prejudice towards those with different sexual orientations and how it affects them.
- **Environment:** eg whether our natural environment can continue to meet our basic needs for clean water, food and air; how climate change is leading to natural disasters like floods, droughts, bushfires and cyclones.

There are many ways in which young people can contribute to building peace in all of these areas, and more.

Projects can focus at a range of levels. Your project might be focused on local issues, perhaps in your school, sports club or community; at the national level, like refugee or environment policies; or at a global level, like international conflicts, climate change and sustainable development. Or it might involve more than one of these levels (eg learning about a global issue, and organising local activities to address it).

Projects can also use a wide range of formats. Some examples are: writing and performing songs, poems or plays; developing a website; writing letters to important people or the media; organising speakers; developing petitions; surveying students' opinions and feelings about a topic; working with people in need; restoring a natural environment; raising funds for peace-promoting programs. Again, a project might involve a number of activities with different formats.

It is also important that projects that are seeking to promote peace are themselves run in peaceful ways. This means that all members of the group are respected and heard and that problems are resolved peacefully. Research shows that one way to build peace is for people from different backgrounds to work together.

You can see the following information about the winners from 2017 for ideas and inspiration.

All projects that fit the selection criteria will be considered. Be creative!

The Youth for Peace Project Award 2017 Winners

The 2017 first prize winning project was **LGBTIQ+ United Youth**.

Jason (Caitlin) Mason, Celia Connolly and William Todman from NSW submitted a creative project to address the lack of representation and accurate information concerning LGBTIQ+ identities and the damaging mental health implications on LGBTIQ+ youth. They produced educational videos with positive information about LGBTIQ+ identities, created an online community and offered their support during the plebiscite. The group also raised money for *The Pinnacle Foundation*, an organisation that supports LGBTIQ+ youth who are disadvantaged. Jason, Celia and William received $1000 in prize money. Their videos and online content are publicly available at the following links:

https://bit.ly/2kaizSB
https://bit.ly/2IAbh9u
https://bit.ly/2x4bHQe

Highly Commended Certificates and $500 were awarded to two projects:

Donations to the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre

Miray Babawi, Meron Desta, Masho Tsegay, Mekides Zenebe, Fardin Jaberi and Miykail Maqdas, from **Lakeview Senior College** in Victoria, raised awareness of the needs of refugees within their school, collected donations from the student body and subsequently donated essential necessities including sanitary pads, tampons, toothbrushes and other hygiene products to asylum seekers at the *Asylum Seeker Resource Centre*. They presented their project to staff and students at their school and also inspired another club within the school to carry out a similar project.

Pride Week

Elizabeth Laughton, Erin Branagh and Sophia Branagh from **Asquith Girls' High School** in New South Wales, held a **Pride Week** at their school to address the lack of inclusion and sense of belonging communicated by the LGBTI+ community at their high school. This group raised awareness of LGBTI+ issues and promoted acceptance within their school community. They also created a *Snapchat* pride story and collected donations for *twenty10*, an organisation that offers specialised services to LGBTI+ young people in NSW.

Has your school delivered a project that made the community more resilient?

RESILIENT AUSTRALIA AWARDS

Resilient Australia Awards

As its **Education for Young People Program** evolves, the *Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience (AIDR)* continues to emphasise **student voice** as a critical factor in successful learning for disaster resilience, both at school and in the community.

Reading through newsletters and media updates, I have come across so many great examples of service agencies and organisations working effectively with young people at school and in the community. These efforts are empowering the next generation with skills and knowledge to prevent, prepare, respond to and recover from disasters.

If you are working with young Australians to promote disaster resilient communities, please share your learning with the *Education for Young People Program*.

Resilient Australia Award submissions closed at the end of last month, but if you are an educator or have worked with Australian school students on a disaster resilience initiative, please consider submitting an entry for consideration next year: **https://bit.ly/2FWK5NL**

Education for Young People (EYP) website resources and the Australian Curriculum

The teaching resources page of our EFYP website has updated and reorganised: **https://bit.ly/2IAbUvy**. A print-friendly Australian Curriculum DRE reference guide has been added, providing a detailed overview of links to disaster resilience education in the national curriculum.

This planning tool will support educators to match learning activities with content descriptions and elaborations from Foundation to Year 12.
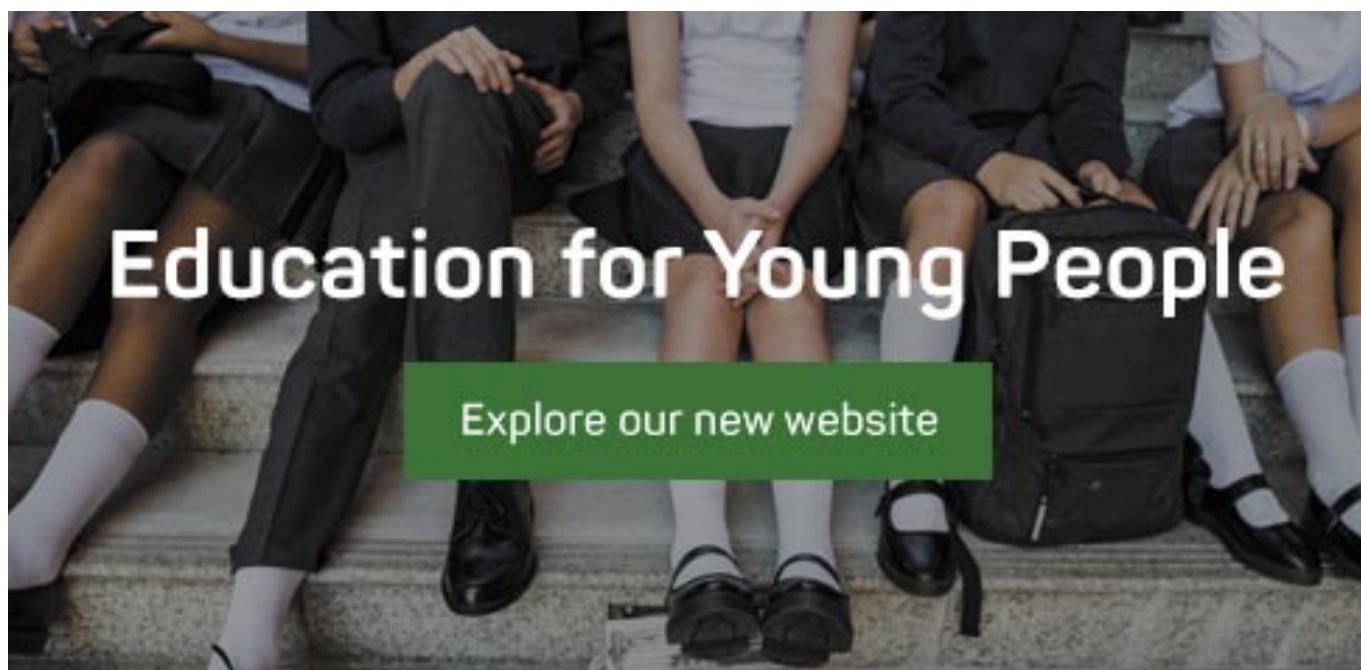
Education for Young People

Explore our new website

Return of the Firestick: Parent Trees are Talking

A walk on Country with Elders inspired **Dixon's Creek Primary School** students to create the drawings and stories for *Parent Trees are Talking*. The publication of this book was part of the **Return of the Firestick Project**, in partnership with Wurundjeri Elder Uncle Dave Wandin, Indigenous Fire Practitioner Victor Steffensen, Dixon's Creek Primary School students and the Yarra Ranges Council Municipal Emergency Resource Program, supported by DELWP (Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning). Students presented *Parent Trees are Talking* at a Reconciliation event on 1 June. Details at: https://bit.ly/2Iye4jz .

Connecting the classroom with the community: Project FireStorm

Project FireStorm from **St Ives North Public School** was the winner of last year's *Resilient Australia School Award*.

A recent *Teacher Magazine* provides an overview of curriculum-linked planning, delivery and outcomes of this inspirational unit of learning. Find out more at: https://bit.ly/2IxjnQi

Contribute

If you are interested in learning more or would like to contribute our next edition, please contact me here.

Brigid Little
AIDR Education for Young People Program
brigid.little@aidr.org.au
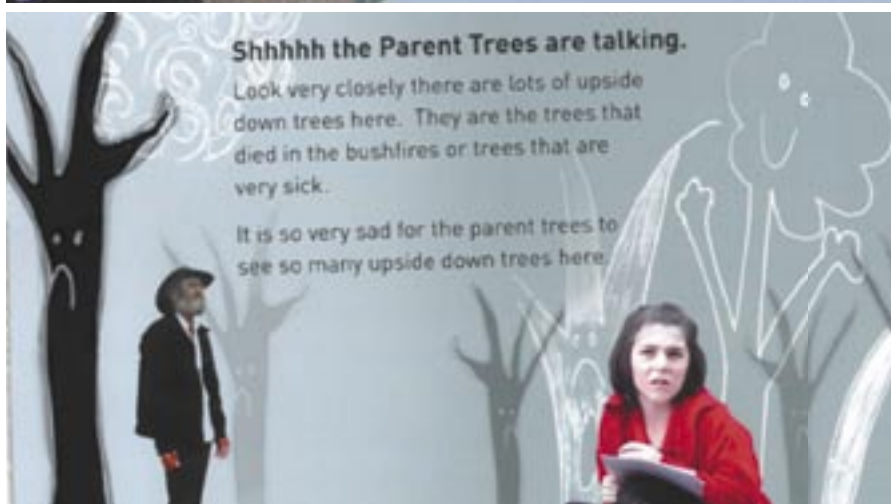
Shhhhh the Parent Trees are talking.

Some spots in the bush are becoming healthy. We need to help the trees, animals and nature.

We are their medicine and we can help them. The return of the firestick can help the country be healthy again.

Shhhhh the Parent Trees are talking.

Look very closely there are lots of upside down trees here. They are the trees that died in the bushfires or trees that are very sick.

It is so very sad for the parent trees to see so many upside down trees here.

ONE DAY CONFERENCE : WESTERN AUSTRALIA : 17 AUGUST 2018

Ensuring Safety and the Basic Needs for all Students to Thrive Educationally – It Takes a Village to Raise a Child

● OPENING ADDRESS

"Why Teachers are Better than Doctors in Prolonging Life"

Adjunct Clinical Associate Professor Bret Hart Curtin University Medical School, Chair Social Determinants of Health Alliance, Indep't Board Director Puntukurnu Aboriginal Medical Service, Deputy Chair WISA Wellbeing in Schools Australia

Bret will share the evidence of the influence of education on health and longevity. He will discuss why this is not widely recognised, why school dropout is not given the attention it deserves as a public health emergency and what action is needed for all students to remain engaged and thriving in education.

● KEYNOTE ADDRESS 1

Hearing the Views of Children and Young People

Mr Colin Pettit WA Commissioner for Children and Young People

It is vital that the views of children and young people are heard in decisions that affect them. The Commissioner will present the findings from his recent consultation with 1,812 WA students on the nine factors that influence a student's level of engagement in school and learning and the complex interplay these factors have on each other, overall engagement and a child's general wellbeing. The Commissioner will also discuss wellbeing monitoring in the areas of learning, safety and health as well as the efforts to promote and support the implementation of *Child Safe* principles and practices in organisations across WA.

● KEYNOTE ADDRESS 2

The Ways Young People can Help and Hurt have Evolved: Virtual but No Less Real

Professor Donna Cross University of Western Australia, Collaboration Director & Head of Health Promotion and Education Research, Telethon Kids Institute

Donna will describe the shared research findings about how technology can be used positively to influence children's social and emotional development and learning from birth to late adolescence. It will review evidence related to the positive actions schools, parents and young people can take to make the most of their digital time while minimising potential harm.

● SKILLS WORKSHOPS

1 Address Bullying, Social and Emotional Wellbeing, Cyber Friendly Students and Schools

Erin Erecg — National Director of Friendly Schools and Honorary Research Associate Telethon Kids Institute, University of WA.

DOUBLE LENGTH WORKSHOP

Children and young people are most vulnerable to the effects of technological advancements as they seek to make sense of their identity, relationships and sense of belonging in their online world. Their use of the internet and particularly social networking sites and apps can have serious and distressing outcomes for students, staff and families in our schools. Cyber bullying and social media are issues of significant concern. This workshop will introduce the most effective strategies, and give examples of how to utilise the resources and ideas from internationally recognised Australian evidence based projects to address and reduce bullying, build healthy and respectful relationships plus empower student voice and leadership skills in schools.

2 The Secrets to Successful Parent Engagement

Claire Orange, BEST Programs for Kids

In this workshop we will explore: The importance of the parent-teacher relationship, the obstacles to strong parent teacher relationships, the simple and regular practices that strengthen the parent-teacher relationship, three proven methods to managing a difficult or conflicted relationship, and the importance of self-care in the equation to avoid compassion fatigue.

- **SKILLS WORKSHOPS**

3 Responding to Students Experiencing Poverty and Trauma

Kaye Dennis Wellbeing and Education Consultant

We tend to think of trauma in children occurring as an isolated incident in which a person did something to cause the trauma. However, a major contributing factor to trauma in children is poverty, and poverty is one reason for the prevalence of trauma. This workshop will explore practical strategies to support disadvantaged and vulnerable students to remain engaged at school.

4 The Critical Importance of Sleep for Positive Student Educational Outcomes

Brad Felstead, WISA Wellbeing in Schools Australia & Felstead Education

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

5 School Based Prevention and Intervention in Mental Health

Linsey Hart, WISA Wellbeing in Schools Australia & Dr Lyn O'Grady Australian Psychological Society

With mental health difficulties affecting one in five students in Australia, it becomes critically important to keep all students engaged in school by implementing a whole of school approach to mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention. This double length workshop will help schools understand the critical importance of a whole of school approach and where to access training and resources. It will also explore the critical time if a suicide occurs in a school community and the implications for post-vention engagement with students, staff, parents and the community.

6 Ensuring the School Wellbeing Essentials are in Place

Maria Hart WA Manager WISA and Jac Van Velsen CEO WISA Wellbeing in Schools Australia

Work smarter not harder. In this workshop participants will be provided with a checklist and a step by step process to guide and ensure your school has the school wellbeing essentials in place to keep students safe and improve whole school wellbeing. Evidence will be provided on how improved school wellbeing enhances academic, social and educational outcomes.

WHO	School Leaders, School Counsellors and Wellbeing Coordinators, Teachers, Educational Support Staff, Parents/Carers
WHEN	Friday 17 August 2018 Registrations from 8am Conference start time 8.45
WHERE	Burswood on Swan 1 Camfield Drive Burswood WA 6100

COST	$295 Single Registration - Excluding GST $540 School Team of 2 - Excluding GST $990 School Team of 4 - Excluding GST
	Price also includes conference resource pack and refreshments upon arrival, morning tea and lunch.

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OR to register manually contact Linsey Hart 0421 343 137 or email linsey_hart@bigpond.com

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

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

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

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www.asprinworld.com/connect
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Local and International Publications Received

Connect receives many publications directly or indirectly relevant to youth and student participation. We can't lend or sell these, but if you want to look at or use them, contact us and we'll work something out.

Australian:

Complex Connections: Meaningful youth participation for mental health promotion (Philippa Collin, Kitty Rahilly, Justine Stephens-Reicher, Michelle Blanchard, Helen Herrman & Jane Burns) National Youth Sector Conference: *Interrupting Transmission*, 2011

Research Developments (ACER, Camberwell, Vic) June 2018

Respectful Relationships and Student Engagement: Getting Started (Respectful Relationships, DET, Vic) 2018

Singapore's educational policy through the prism of student voice: recasting students as co-agents of educational change and 'disrupting' the status quo? (M Akshir Ab Kadir, Faculty of Education, Monash University, Clayton, Vic) *Journal of Education Policy*, May 2018

Students as Researchers for Child Safety: Teacher Resource (Catholic Education Melbourne, East Melbourne, Vic) 2018

TLN Journal: Literacy and Numeracy Games (Teacher Learning Network, Abbotsford, Vic) Vol 25 Issue No 1; 2018

International:

Look who's talking: factors for considering the facilitation of very young children's voices (Kate Wall, Claire Cassidy, Lorna Arnott, Elaine Hall, Mhairi Beaton, Caralyn Blaisdell, Mallika Kanyal, Gerard McKernan, Dana Mitra, Ingrid Pramling, Carol Robinson; University of Strathclyde, UK etc) Conference paper, AERA 2018

The Future of Education and Skills: Education 2030 (OECD, Paris, France) 2018

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