



Student agency: identifying and taking action

- **Thinking about 'Agency'**
- **Casso-Be-Wary Student Action Team:**
Sydney Road Community School, Brunswick, Vic
- **Breaking the poverty cycle:**
St Catherine's Primary School, Moorabbin, Vic
- **Professor Art Pearl 1922-2018:**
In memorium and appreciation
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- Deepening relationships between youth research and practice:
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Cover:

Action Groups at the 13th VicSRC Congress 2018:
Equality and Equity. Photo by VicSRC; see pp 17-23

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.



Connect:

ABN: 98 174 663 341

Connect is edited and published by: Roger Holdsworth
(with support from the Youth Research Centre, The University of Melbourne)

12 Brooke Street, Northcote 3070 Victoria Australia

Phone: (03) 9489 9052; Web: www.asprinworld.com/connect

Contact e-mail: r.holdsworth@unimelb.edu.au

This Issue:

After what seems like a long
Amid-year break, *Connect* is
back from travels and conferences.



During that time, I attended (and spoke at) the *Amplifying Student Voice and Partnerships* conference/seminar in Burlington, Vermont, USA in late June. I then spent time travelling in Europe - including attending music festivals and presenting at a music-related conference in Ostrava, Czech Republic. (This was particularly related to the *Global Village* radio program I present on **PBS 106.7 FM** in Melbourne. If you want more details, there's a link to our travel blog on the asprinworld.com site.)

In this issue, there's an article from **Helen Beattie** and **Martha Rich** about the Burlington conference ... and hopes for its continuation in the USA and **possibly Australia** in 2019.

While away, we were saddened to hear of the passing of Professor Emeritus **Art Pearl**. *Connect* had only just re-published a blog posting from Art about democracy in the last issue - in association with his 96th birthday. I noted then how Art's ideas and talks during his visits to Australia in the 1970s and beyond - and in particular, at Brunswick Girls' (later East) High School in Melbourne, where I was teaching - underpinned my ideas ... and the establishment of this journal. His ideas laid the foundation for the *Cross-Age Tutoring Program* that I began at that school, for students' participation as community journalists in the 5-language inter-school community newspaper *Ascolta* (and later its radio program), and many other initiatives. *Connect* began in order to share what we were learning in and from those initiatives. Art frequently stressed the importance of **reflecting** on what we were doing, and of **sharing** our stories with others; after all, he said, *"if it hasn't been written about, it hasn't happened!"*

In this issue, **Jim Williamson** and **Bob Semmens** contribute reflections and appreciations of Art's work. We're also reprinting two short transcripts of talks that Art gave in the early 1980s.

The issue starts with a reflection on one of the terms being used increasingly widely: **student/learner agency**. Over the last two years, I've been thinking about the language we use ... and the concepts behind these terms: **voice, agency, participation, leadership** and so on. So this short piece continues to tease out meanings, possibilities, limitations and concerns. I shared it with a few people, who kindly got back to me with comments ... some of which might appear in this version (though all blame is mine). But it encourages me that there is enough substance there to encourage further discussion. **What do you think?**

As we go to press, the **VicSRC Student Voice Awards** highlight practices in some Victorian schools; we're privileged to be totally up-to-date with news from the last few days! The context for these Awards is also the report of their 13th **Congress** in 2018 - including the areas for education action highlighted by student delegates.

Next Issue ...

The final issue of *Connect* for 2018 marks 39 years of our publication. As always I'm looking forward to hearing your stories, and providing a platform for us to share examples of participatory classroom and school practices. **That's one way in which we can be sure they actually happened!**

Roger Holdsworth

Next Issue: #234: December 2018

Deadline for material: end of November, 2018

Thinking about 'Agency'

We talk about **Student Agency** in the context of improving or amplifying **student voice, agency and participation**. These are all ways in which students become more self-directed learners and, just as importantly, are recognised as active citizens, enabled to make individual and collective changes in their education and wider world.

We have noted in previous discussions (eg *'Terms and Intentions'* in **Connect** 223, February 2017; pp 18-21; and *'Student Voice, Agency and Participation'* in **Connect** 229, February 2018: pp 22-25) how these three terms encompass the **intentions** of our work - and how they describe the ways in which students work in partnership with adults to make change:

Student Voice: *where students provide information, express views and advocate around education and other matters - in order to change what others (eg teachers) do.*

Student Agency: *where students take action about their education and other matters of interest - in ways that change their roles as students ... but also in order to make changes in those issues.*

Student Participation: *where students share in decision-making with others (either directly or through representatives) about education and other matters - in ways that, together with others, change how education happens.*

Student Agency

It is clear that there are two aspects to the intentions in each of these areas. This becomes perhaps most apparent when we think about what **'student agency'** might mean, and why it is important.

Traditional definitions of 'agency' usually refer to it as something like **'the capability and willingness to take action'**. In thinking about increasing agency, then the aspect that we generally first focus on is about the growth of personal capabilities. Building agency:

- increases a student's engagement (or re-engagement) in education;
- increases motivation and commitment, and
- directly improves that student's learning outcomes.

It is the area that has been most researched, with that research over many years indicating that active participation in learning - in working on issues that the learner sees as real and important - has a direct link to improved outcomes. (The research also points to broader positive outcomes of participation - around health, wellbeing, mortality etc ... and not just for students.)

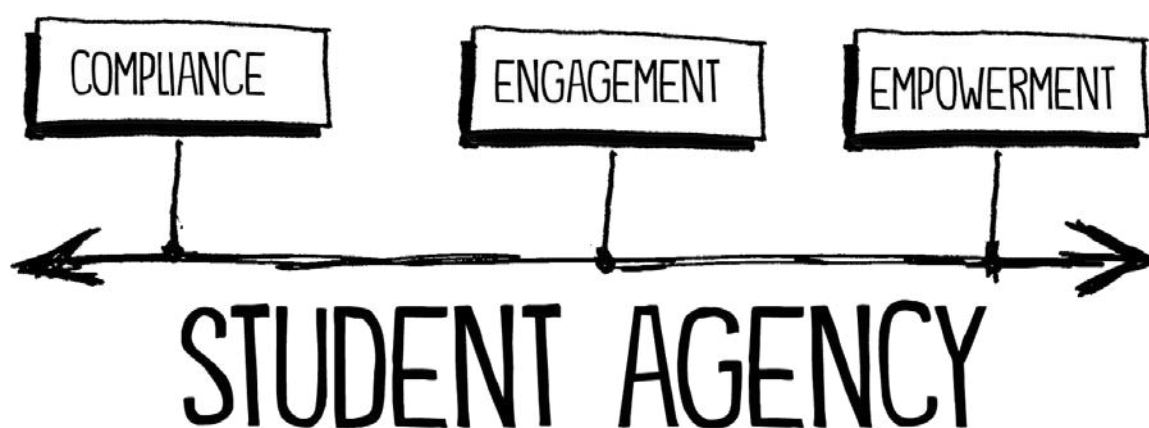
More than 'Skill' and 'Will'

Learner agency must have the intention and hope of **actually making a difference** to something. It must be **about** something; one can't just talk about building 'agency' in abstract.

When we talk about students having agency and taking action, this action must be **about** something they are passionate about, where students believe that they **can** make a difference - and where they actually **can** do this as part of their studies. Otherwise - if it is all a 'simulation' or a 'charade' (just about the abstract development of their 'skill' and 'will') - then any hope of achieving positive outcomes will be undercut and betrayed. Students' agency will be betrayed!

There are examples of such approaches to agency in this issue of **Connect**. Here you'll read of students passionate about overcoming poverty, and about saving the cassowary's environment. The stories show how students built their involvement from an interest (individual or collective) to a passion about the issues; they show how they were able to explore and act on this passion as part of their learning ... as part of their curriculum.

The actions that students take - their agency (as individuals, but more importantly, working with others) - ensure that students grow as citizens committed to their continued agency, but also really can change the world. These aspects - the 'skill/will' and the 'real outcomes' - are integrally related.



	<i>Student dimension</i>	<i>Structural dimension</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>
Student Voice	Increased capability and willingness of students to form views, advocate, argue	Increased capability and willingness of others (eg teachers) to hear, listen to and act in response to students' voices	Changes to adult practices in order to improve outcomes for all
Student Agency	Increased capability and willingness of students to plan and take action	Increased capability and willingness of schools (and other organisations) to address students' 'real world' issues and concerns	Changes to policies, practices, actions and activities in order to improve the world we live in
Student Participation	Increased capability and willingness of students to make shared decisions with others	Increased capability and willingness of systems to include students in shared decision-making	Changes to system decisions and practices in order to improve outcomes for all - students and others; eg better decisions

More than a learning technology

And so, in all areas of *'student voice'*, *'student agency'* and *'student participation'*, the enhancement of student learning through such approaches must be paralleled by the possibility of actual structural change.

The amplification of **student voice** - **students' empowerment to speak** - is important for all students; but so is the response to voices by others. As well as amplifying students' voices, we must pay attention to increasing the capability and willingness of adults to hear, to listen seriously, and to be willing to change (or engage in respectful dialogue).

Learning about student agency - **students' empowerment to act** - is important for all students; but so is the creation of the circumstances (school time and support) that enable their actions to be pursued and really lead to change.

Participation in decision-making - **students' empowerment to decide** - is important for all students; but so is the willingness of others, organisations and systems to accept students as valued partners in those decisions.

The most basic way in which we can see that both the personal growth and structural aspects are valued, is if they are central to the curriculum approaches of the school.

As well as asking how we **amplify student voices**, we need to ask how we (as teachers etc) actually **listen and respond** within classrooms. And as well as asking how we build **student decision-making skills**, we need to ask how our classroom and school structures enable that respectful, shared decision-making to happen.

And as well as asking how we build **students' agency**, we need to ask how our classrooms and schools **enable students to pursue and act on issues of concern and interest**.

Our classrooms can and should be places in which learning makes **sense** to students, is seen by students as **purposeful** (ie directed towards achieving some end or outcome) and that achieves something - is **productive**. There are numerous possible examples: learning that involves serious research, in which students teach others, produce media, produce socially useful resources, create social change and so on.

For almost 40 years, *Connect* has documented a range of approaches in which students have **roles of real value** - in which learning is directed to and goes hand in hand with its application and engagement within the 'real world' of today ... not *deferred* for use by students in a future that may or may not exist.

Values

But all of that is embedded in **values**: the values inherent in what **voices** say, what **action** is taken, what **decisions** are made.

Dr Michael Fielding has noted (*Connect* 197, October 2012: pp 10-15):

What these emerging concerns point to is a series of underlying questions, not just about the successes and difficulties of student voice in the second decade of the 21st century, but also about fundamental purposes. For example: What is all this activity for? Whose interests does it serve? Is student voice a neutral technology or an inevitable expression of a set

of values and assumptions, not just about teaching and learning, but about the kind of society we wish to live in? My own view is that student voice is inevitably and properly saturated by values; it cannot be neutral and to suggest otherwise is either a profound mistake or a convenient subterfuge.

And Professor Art Pearl (see elsewhere in this issue) confronted listeners in various talks in Australia, with the assertion that, without attention to values, organisations such as the Hitler Youth could still be regarded as a 'youth participation movement'.

Students' voices, actions and decisions can exclude, discriminate, oppress and so on - as can adults'. Or they can be about inclusion, respect, justice (personal and social), and so on.

In rushing to embrace **student voice, agency and participation** (or **leadership**), are we in danger of focusing on one aspect only: the improvement in the capabilities of and outcomes for those individual students who get to speak, act and decide? Are we in danger of adopting such approaches as another 'technology' to be **done to** students?

We must see each of these areas as opportunities for **our** reflection and learning - at individual, organisational and systemic levels. In recognising students as **advocates**, as **actors**, as **partners**, we recognise our own need to change and grow ... to benefit all of us.

Student voice, agency and participation are essential for students - but that's not enough!

Roger Holdsworth
October 2018

Casso-Be-Wary Student Action Team

Students at Sydney Road Community School (SRCS) have a long history of working, as part of their curriculum, in **Student Action Teams (SATs)** around issues of personal and community concerns.

In these teams, students bring something that they are passionate about to the school, research it, and then develop and implement plans to try to make a difference to the world in this area. (*See more details about SATs at <https://bit.ly/2REBDdb7>*)

Sydney Road Community School is a small, fully Government funded public secondary school in Brunswick in Melbourne. This school of 115 students has a long history (since 1972) of progressive, student-centred education. Three of its students, Will, Tara and Owen, recently described its approaches:

"We are able to offer more individualised learning compared to many other high schools. With programs such as our re-engagement classes – safe spaces for students who find going to school difficult – and the inclusion of our therapy dog, Sydney, SRCS makes sure that every student's needs are met – no matter the circumstances. Along with this, we also provide flexibility for students who may be disadvantaged, have specific learning needs or are facing difficult home situations.

"However, despite our size, we still offer students common pathways including both VCE and VCAL. This means that throughout all secondary school years students can receive the help they may require.

"Our school's small size puts us in a very unique position when it comes to how the school is run. Teachers are able to work closely, and often one-on-one, with students to make sure that they are getting the best education possible. At our school, the majority of spaces are shared. Teachers have no offices and there is no staff room, meaning that they are always available if needed and the idea that everyone is equal is typical of our strong culture."

Student Voice and **Student Action** are at the centre of how the school works. Late last year, three of the students, Georgia, Gene and Medea, addressed a group of teachers and principals at the **Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership** about student voice and the impact student feedback has had on their teachers and classes.

The students spoke articulately about their position within the school, the respectful way in which they were treated and the ways in which they were consulted on aspects of teaching and learning. They explained how this was an incentive to come to school and a motivating factor to put in their maximum effort.

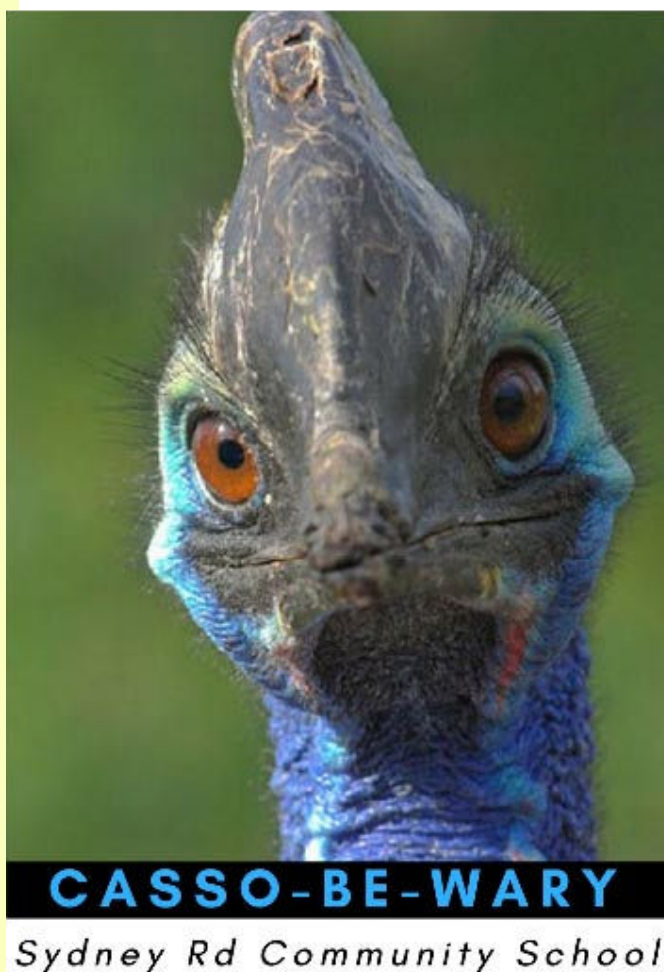
There are several **Student Action Teams** operating within the school – around **Community Environment**, **Animal Wellbeing** and so on (as well as a **Parent Action Team**). These can form and change according to needs and interests, and the **Student Action Teams** are recognised as part of the curriculum.

Animal Wellbeing Student Action Team

Recently, the SRCS **Animal Wellbeing Student Action Team** has been working to support the initiatives of **Rainforest Rescue**. The project began when the **Animal Wellbeing Team** was researching how to best look after the school's resident chickens.

In a student-led class discussion, students went from identifying chooks being connected with dinosaurs (dinosaurs being a science focus for the juniors from earlier in the year) to then a senior student bringing the students' focus to cassowaries being '*chicken-like but from the dinosaur era*' ... and from there – the group's imagination **boomed**. They unanimously deciding they wanted to learn more about the humble cassowary.

As the teacher involved, I could see this leap from chickens to cassowaries as an example of 'levels' of focus, in which a project's context has 'Levels/Scales': **local** (school based); **regional** (external to school but within Australia); **global** (international and beyond). We were able to go to the



'regional' level of engagement - interstate with **Rainforest Rescue** being based in Queensland - and also engage with 'local' community supports outside of the school in Brunswick.

As a teacher, it was like wildfire to watch the spread of enthusiasm and trust within the group and it was just a magical concept that really engaged the students.

The students discovered that the cassowary - an amazing Australian bird that evolved in dinosaur times - is becoming endangered as its natural environment is being threatened. The group also heard about the development of a **Cassowary Habitat Support Fund**, which is trying to raise funds to buy back part of the Daintree Rainforest to conserve this habitat.

The group was immediately interested. Alongside this obvious need, the students recognised that they also needed to educate people about the cassowary, and change assumptions that they were dangerous and harmful. Students decided to run a community event to inform and educate the school community and to raise funds (through a raffle) to contribute towards the habitat purchase. A target of \$100 to \$150 was anticipated - which would buy up to 30 square metres of rainforest. The day was finally run on 3rd September this year.

The group had to go through a lot of planning and organising to make the event happen. The students liaised with community members, writing letters to local businesses including Brunswick Woolworths and Bustop Shoe Repair

on Victoria Street to organise raffle prizes. They wrote to School Council and completed the documentation necessary for school approval of the event. They sought and got advice from the school office staff on where to research the most up-to-date information on how to run a raffle event legally and to be compliant with regulations - which one of the students successfully managed.

Here are two accounts from students who were involved in the **Student Action Team**, showing what they did and what was achieved:



The idea to raise money for **Rainforest Rescue** came from one of our students, Owen Munday, who is very passionate about these brilliant birds and determined to show everyone that they are not the violent or deadly animals that people assume they are. The planning that went into this event was focused on the **Rainforest Rescue** organisation and what it is they have done and continue to do for our dear cassowaries.

One obstacle that came up during the planning phase was acquiring the permission to use **Rainforest Rescue's** name and logo in our advertising and overall event. To overcome this obstacle I sent multiple emails to the site provided contacts and eventually got sent the paperwork for permission. After filling it all out with the help of our event organiser and wonderful teacher **Emily Dalkin**, I sent it back and within

a few business days we were granted permission.

Working in a **Student Action Team** is great; there is a lot of communication and professional organisation skills to be acquired that will be very useful in future careers.

Our goal in the beginning was to raise \$100 to \$150 for **Rainforest Rescue** and we were all in the mindset that we might barely achieve that. After the event and a few very generous donations we ended making over \$500 which was mind blowing and such a massive prideful moment for our group, it made us all very happy and gave us the motivation and confidence to do another event, this time for our school chickens, in the future. I believe our group did a wonderful job on the entire event and I can't think of any way for us to improve.

Kailee



The **Casso-b-wary** event was held on the 3rd of September from 5pm until 6pm. It was a successful event with a great turnout and lots of raffle tickets sold. The Hall was full with a diverse range of people, including staff, students, family and friends. Angelo from Melbourne Zoo was our special guest speaker - who is an expert on birds. The event included a raffle, student artwork for sale and Angelo's presentation about cassowaries.

Our student project was a success on many levels. We reached and exceeded our project objective of raising \$100 to \$150 for **Rainforest Rescue**

who work towards protecting the Daintree Rainforest (the endangered cassowaries' habitat).

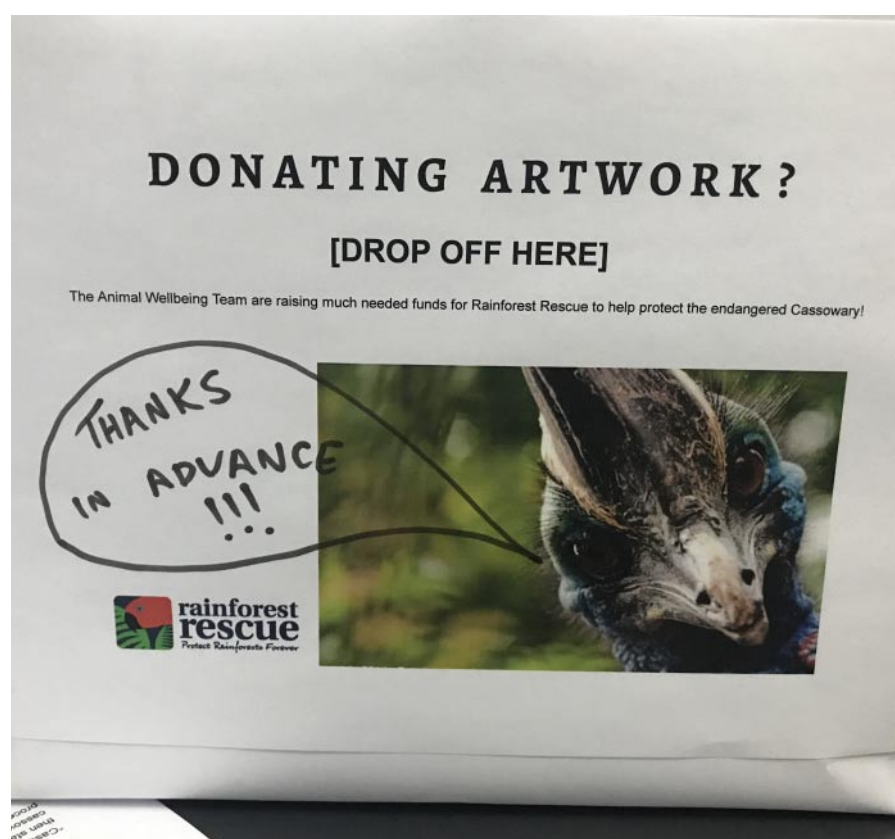
I contributed to the project by helping make cardboard cassowaries, assisting with team decision-making through democratic processes and collaborating on ideas, as well as being a positive and encouraging teammate. I find working in the **Animal Wellbeing Team** (within the **Student Action Team** framework) enjoyable and empowering, because I engage in as well as contribute to teamwork and I am inspired by my peers.

Asher

Reflections

Through this process, we saw the group joyfully brainstorming, working and communicating as a team, researching and consolidating ideas (including voting - the embodiment of democratic processes ... very much the Humanities Civics/Citizenship curriculum focus and embedded practice here at SRCS), writing a proposal to the **Student Representative Council** for seed funding, planning and marketing the event, delegating tasks, setting and meeting deadlines, and conducting an evaluation and celebration after the success of the event.

From a teacher's perspective, I could see the skill development occurring





throughout the process, particularly in the ways in which decisions and actions became connected. For example, the group voted on and agreed to a research phase to see what threats the cassowaries currently faced and what supports already existed. As a first step, they decided on a group viewing of a documentary that focussed on cassowaries in Queensland that were impacted by Cyclone Yasi in 2011. They then discovered **Rainforest Rescue** and contacted their office via email to cement a collaboration.

We were able to build textured conversations into class-time about **'sustainability', 'conservation' and 'ethical decision-making'**, as well as **'legacy of action'** – to be able to look back when they're older and see a map of Australia with the mighty Daintree and know they made an impact to help conserve the sacred rainforest for the benefit of an endangered species. These were wonderful conversations for the students to engage in, with real world application.

I was also inspired by the way in which the multi-age forum of the school's SATs structure worked, with students from across Years 7 to 12. Senior students used their prior knowledges to help fuel the vision of endless project possibilities for junior level or new students. For example, through the research, a senior student offered the suggestion to make a site-visit to the Zoo or Healesville to see a cassowary in real-life. Then the 'education and awareness building' came about when another student suggested we locate a keeper or expert to come talk to the students about cassowaries. Sticking with our Community ethos, this then broadened to the idea of an event that would create an opportunity for

all parts of the school community to access the unique knowledges on offer. And this led to Angelo, a long-term zoo-keeper from Melbourne Zoo, saying yes to visiting our school and sharing his expertise and experiences in caring for cassowaries, in conjunction with a raffle to raise funds for **Rainforest Rescue**.

As teachers, we could see a massive shift in student self-efficacy in project development, community networking and ability to raise revenue. For a community group from a school that has no financial fees/costs, this was a massive initiative. We finished up raising over \$500, and exceeding the target was a real measure of the support and belief that students developed. It takes a true community to do this.

But as important for us as the achievement of our practical goals was, it also showed how a student-led and student-driven **Student Action Team** approach can meet multiple curriculum goals in the areas of:

- **Critical/Creative Thinking Capability**
- **Personal/Social Capability:** collaboration and self-management
- **Ethical Capability**
- Links to **Entrepreneurial Characteristics** in the **Business/Economics** umbrella of **Humanities**
- **Budgeting:** financial mathematics
- **Literacy:** proposal writing outcomes

The approach can be very powerful, not just for a mammoth fundraising effort, but for community networking, developing transferable skills in project-



Students are the centre of everything we do at our school.

We are renowned for the close, respectful, supportive connections between students and staff and for our efforts to create a sense of belonging and success in every student.

With the exception of compulsory VCE exams, we do not have competitive assessment or competitive ranking of students and avoid these practices unless they are mandated.

Our school has a tradition of excellence in equality, diversity, individuality, community and student safety.

SRCS is committed to the idea of accessible education for all, which means that we have no fees, no book lists, no uniforms and the cost of camps, excursions and senior subject materials are kept to a minimum.

School Statement

management and teamwork, and inspiring fellow students, parents/carers, staff at the school.

It really reminded us of the Margaret Mead quote: **"Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have."**

Contact:

For more information, contact:

Emily Dalkin
emilydalkin@sydneyrdcs.vic.edu.au

or see the school's blog entry at:
<https://bit.ly/2INBi1X>

Breaking the poverty cycle

Poverty is an issue worldwide. What can a student's passion for change achieve?

On April 20, 2013, the Board of Executive Directors of the World Bank (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/World Bank, 2013) adopted two ambitious goals: end global extreme poverty, and promote shared prosperity in every country in a sustainable way. These goals imply a reduction in the poverty headcount ratio from 10.7 percent globally in 2013 to 3.0 percent by 2030 and fostering the growth in the income or the consumption expenditure of the poorest 40% of the population (the bottom 40) in each country. These two goals are part of a wider international development agenda and are related to United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals 1 and 10 (United Nations, 2018).

Holly Watters, a Year 6 student from **St. Catherine's Primary School** in Moorabbin, Victoria was unaware of this global action but felt deeply for the marginalised women and children in Cambodia. She read about their plight one evening whilst out at dinner with her family. Cute monkeys adorned the counter where she stood as her parents paid for the meal. There, Holly read the passion of Veronica Sherman's call to action.

Happily Made is social enterprise, established by Veronica Sherman in 2010.

Its vision is to give marginalised women in Cambodia a job, a source of income and, as a result, a brighter future for their children. These women learn to knit cute little monkeys with magnetic hands. The income from the sale of the monkeys provides their families with income and supports their child's education.

Holly immediately purchased a monkey and brought it to school. She wanted to make a change that impacted the lives of others. As she explained the story, it was very clear she had a deep seated desire to help these women and make a difference. "The simple act of buying a monkey helps to break the poverty cycle," explained Holly, who was eager to enable the growth of a thriving community. Her awareness of the plight of these women was raised through her engagement into the inquiry process of our classroom lessons. The Victorian curriculum encompasses '**Capabilities**' in **Intercultural and Ethical** domains, and within Catholicism, it is imbued with the **Principles of Catholic Social Teaching (CST)**.

The **Principles of Catholic Social Teaching** sum up the teachings of the Church on social justice issues (Wright, 2017). They promote a vision of a just society that is grounded in the Bible and



in the wisdom gathered from experience by the Christian community as it has responded to social justice issues through history. The social teachings are made up of three different elements: principles for reflection, criteria for judgement, and guidelines for action.

Holly's journey through these three different elements was evidenced in her passion to bring the plight of the Cambodian women to the awareness of our school community and her drive to make a change for their betterment.

The doctrine of the common good in **CST** emphasises that we are connected with other people. It asks the question: what are the consequences for those living in poorer countries? Research has shown us that poverty begets poverty (Pagani, 2007). In this, it can be seen that the world's poorest people are those who, while they were children, were excluded from opportunities to break out of the cycle of poverty. The philosophy of **Happily Made** explores the concept that people don't need our aid or our charity, as this does not catalyse change. **People need our business in order to break the vicious cycle of poverty.**



Picture courtesy www.happilymade.com.au



The initial idea was brought to the school's **Student Representative Council (SRC)** team. St Catherine's Primary School SRC team is comprised of representatives from each class from Years 1 through to 6 and enables our student voices to be heard.

The SRC team rallied together and supported Holly through their class presentation of the idea. The action was called **'Monkey Business'**. Veronica herself agreed to come to the school and share her story personally with the students. To hear Veronica's story first-hand was affirming of the work Holly had done to promote the initiative and support change. Veronica was overwhelmed by Holly's ability to articulate the message to our school community and her passion to support women she had never met. With pride in her eyes, Veronica dubbed Holly Australia's first **'Monkey Ambassador'** at our school assembly.

The women in Cambodia were so grateful for Holly's support that they sent a video message of thanks, a heartfelt gesture to a young girl so far away, that has been the voice of their people.

It is good to note that the latest figures show that globally, labour productivity has increased and the unemployment rate has decreased (United Nations, 2018). However, more progress is needed to increase employment opportunities, especially for young people.

Veronica Sherman of *Happily Made* and Holly Watters of *St Catherine's Primary School* will hold a stall together at the St Catherine's Christmas Carols and Market Night on Thursday 29th November. Monkeys will be available for sale. Let us all work together to ensure sustained and inclusive economic growth for all.

Sandra Surace
Head of Community, Wellbeing
& Capabilities; SRC Coordinator
St Catherine's PS, Moorabbin
ssurace@scmoorabbin.catholic.edu.au



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Picture courtesy: *Leader Newspaper*,
September 19, 2018: p.5

Follow-up ...

One girl's vision leads to Pride of Australia nomination

Sapphire Khdor designed *Warmer Nights, Brighter Days* after a social justice lesson that led her to think about children in her community who were less fortunate than herself. See her story in *Connect* 231-232, June-August 2018, pp 8-9 for further details.

St Vincent de Paul continues to share stories of joy with our school community from their experiences with the children during the distribution of the 85 filled backpacks across local south-eastern suburbs. Sapphire's one voice was raised by a team of many to achieve the vision she had in mind.

It is important to consider that good leadership is not just about the face of the one but the work of the many. Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy (2004) noted that collective efficacy beliefs "directly affect the diligence and resolve with which groups choose to pursue their goals" (p. 8). One girl's vision becomes alive when the community spirit and the collective is supported in its action.



Through this work, and her work as **1 in 15 Indigenous Literacy Foundation Ambassador** across Australia, Sapphire has now been nominated for the **Pride of Australia Award** with her story reported on Channel 7 news on Saturday 29th September (see the report at: <https://bit.ly/2ElpWOv>). The **Pride of Australia Medal** is one of *News Corporation Australia's* most important community endeavours, playing a fundamental role as a vehicle to celebrate and acknowledge the remarkable contribution and achievements of members of the Australian community.

We are all very proud of what Sapphire has been able to achieve for others, of her teamwork, collaboration and leadership. Sapphire's story demonstrates how a single child's vision can be brought to life if we listen, support and join together to make a difference in our world.



References:

Goddard, R., Hoy, W., & Woolfolk Hoy, A. (2004). Collective efficacy beliefs: Theoretical developments, empirical evidence, and future directions. *American Educational Research Association*, 33(3), 3-13.

Sandra Surace
Community and Wellbeing Leader
SRC Coordinator
St Catherine's Primary School
Moorabbin
ssurace@scmoorabbin.catholic.edu.au



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

www.asprinworld.com/student_action_teams

Some further examples of student-led action and agency:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oROsbaxWH0M>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQi3jmNzRts>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ydTim51Jf7U>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yV4xhP8l5fs>

Professor Art Pearl: 1922-2018

The well known and loved American Professor of Education, **Art Pearl**, who was born in the Bronx, and was a trail blazer of logic and evidenced based education in the United States and Australia, passed away on 5 July.

It is extremely timely to recall the amazing contribution of Art when there is renewed focus on learning goals, not just learning outcomes, and to recall just how many leading Victorian and Australian educators were heavily influenced by his strong advocacy of inclusive curriculum, and having high expectations of all students.

Many of us first got to know Art when he spent a full term advising staff, students and parents at the then Sunshine High School in 1979 on the importance of an explicit set of educational goals covering economic, social, cultural and environmental opportunity and the fundamental importance of literacy and numeracy.

He assisted the school to develop positive and engaging classroom learning programs and strategies to advance the goals, and emphasised the importance of assessing and evaluating teacher impact on student learning. He used to say: *"if you don't assess and monitor student learning progress, someone else will"*.

His advocacy of enlightened educational goals, learning first teaching strategies, and building youth competence and capability was well ahead of its time, and in many ways has become the template for much contemporary classroom and school practice. An effective classroom, he argued, should provide security for young people to test out ideas and demonstrate competence.

Apart from working extensively with an incredibly young and vibrant staff of over 100 and more than 1000 students drawn from all over the world at Sunshine High, he spent another three months working with Northlands Secondary College, including its strong indigenous community, and there were many tears when he left. He also developed an extensive portfolio of co-operative

learning projects within the university and teacher training sectors. This included a close association with the legendary **Dr Tony Knight** at La Trobe University who inspired many school based curriculum reform activists and programs, the productive times he spent at the **Youth Research Centre** at the University of Melbourne, and working with the highly respected educators **David Jones** and **Lawry Mahon** at Victoria University.

His many admirers in Victoria and Australia, including the former Premier

the **Hon Joan Kirner** (dec) and the **Hon Lynne Kosky** (dec), were influenced by his great and practical books including *The Atrocity of Education*, which pointed out the limitation of deficit-based education, and his joint project with **Tony Knight**, *The Democratic Classroom*. The co-authored *Value of Youth* is an outstandingly positive account of how to build student and youth capability, and still stands as one of the best templates for all adults who work with young people in the service sector.

He encouraged all those who work with young people to assist them to make sense of the world, but also change it and to believe in themselves as "intellectual and professional leaders". He advocated that students should be producers of knowledge not just consumers, and that



Art Pearl at Sunshine High School, 1979

schools needed to cross institutional barriers to enable young people to succeed in their sense making activities. In this, he encouraged young people to enjoy the adventure, have fun, and always do this in good humour.

Art often highlighted the importance of learning by doing, not just thinking, and this could clearly be traced back to his job as a long shore-man on the docks of San Francisco after World War 2. Following a serious work based injury he returned to study, completed his 'piled high and deep' (PhD), and rose to become the Dean of Education at the University of Oregon and teach at the University of Santa Cruz in California. He also ran for the job as Governor of Oregon in 1970

and on losing he quipped, "**Oregon lost**". Unsurprisingly, he also wrote a devastating critique of Richard Nixon's ascent to power in his book **Landslide**, and was one of the architects of the new careers for marginal youth during his time as the Director of New York State's Division for Youth under Nelson Rockefeller.

If you had to locate the amazing life and contribution of **Art Pearl** in a particular education tradition it would be within the social democratic one which values what young people bring to the school, and emphasises the fundamental responsibility of teachers to encourage them to leave our precious planet in a better state. He was never

in favour of just preparing for life, but robustly participating in it.

Art is survived by his sister Evie, sons Delevan and Daniel, and daughters Esther and Rachel and many grandchildren. We all got to know and love Art and his family, including his marvellous wife **Mary Pearl** (dec). It seems like yesterday that I was enjoying a wonderful day out with Art, Mary, Rachel and Ester at the Healesville Zoo and a very rowdy bunch of Americans descended from a bus nearby. On my remarking how loud they were, he retorted: "**They're not Americans, they're Texans**".

Prepared by: **Jim Williamson**,
with assistance from **Bob Semmens**,
Prue Gill and **David Jones**

Art Pearl: A personal appreciation

This is a personal story but I am sure there are many other Australians who can tell similar stories of the important role that Art played in their lives – mentor, challenger, inspiration, humorist and friend over the half century that he was a regular visitor to Australia, particularly the State of Victoria and its capital, Melbourne.

As a teacher educator, I had heard of Art's involvement, in 1976, in the establishment of the 9-10-11 program at Sunshine High School in the heart of Melbourne's industrial western suburbs. The program was innovative, cross-age and revolutionary for some, in that it involved students, parents and teachers in addressing issues of importance to students. There was connection and relevance to the students' lives in the community. They made discoveries through research and then made recommendations to community leaders about ways that the community might be a better place for all the people who lived there.

Others who were closely involved have detailed their experience elsewhere. From what I heard at the time, I was keen to meet Art but a bit hesitant to make contact with such an amazing person.

So, it was not until Art had made more visits, almost on an annual basis because he liked Australia so much, that I made my move. To my surprise he had heard of me but even more surprising was his opening question: "**Why haven't you got a PhD?**" While I fumbled around for an answer, Art said: "**Get one. I will be back next year and I want to read your**

proposal". I have been for ever grateful for his confidence in my ability and this is consistent with Art's confidence in the ability of all his students as shown in his policy on assessing student work – according to Art, there are only two marks available: '**A**' and '**Not A Yet**'.

Art made a difference wherever he went and usually his visits were of several weeks or months, including three months at Northland Secondary College where students had a reputation for enjoying the nearby shopping mall much more than school. Yet there were tears on Art's last day at the school.

Then there were Art's contributions to teacher training at several universities around Melbourne: La Trobe, where his former Eugene student **Tony Knight** was his host; at Melbourne University where he was welcomed by **Roger Woock**, formerly of Calgary and New York, and several other staff associated with the **Youth Research Centre** at Melbourne University; and at Victoria University, teaching with his friends **Lawry Mahon** and **Dave Jones** in their community-based teacher training program which involved students of diverse ethnic backgrounds. In summary, all of Art's teaching at schools, universities and

conferences in Melbourne were of course on the importance of State involvement in education for nurturing democracy. Students were challenged to debate with logic and evidence. He assured them that change would happen incrementally but that today's victories may have to be fought again tomorrow, such is the nature of the society we live in.

At Victoria University, Art became a good friend of the Chancellor, **Supreme Court Judge Frank Vincent**. The two men had a few things in common, apart from their desire to create ways for disadvantaged students to graduate from University. Frank's father was a wharfie (long shoreman) on the Melbourne docks and Art had been a long shoreman in San Francisco.

This bond was particularly in evidence at a conference on juvenile delinquency research in Chong Qing, China in 1996. One day, our Chinese hosts decided to hire a bus and take us to the top of a nearby mountain to see a 1,000 year old irrigation system. On the return trip, the bus driver seemed to be in a terrible hurry and the bus was hurtling down the winding road. Most of us were sheltering behind the seat in front of us. At one point an English criminologist declared that the white line was purely normative. There were several near misses but we arrived at our destination unscathed, physically at least. Throughout the ordeal Art and Frank were sitting together in the front seat singing 'wobbly' songs from the 1930s International Workers era, including

several verses from *'Hallelujah I'm a Bum'* which they sang with gusto. When asked afterwards how he could manage to sing in the face of such potential danger, Art replied: *"Well there was nothing else we could do."*

Two days later we were taken on another excursion, this time to another mountain to see a Buddhist temple. A chair lift took us to the top and, after viewing the temple, we were invited to walk down the other side to a waiting bus. It should take us only a few minutes. Well, it took some of us nearly three hours and several stops at tea-houses on the way. Art was clearly not enjoying the pain in his calf muscles and we wanted to hire a chair carried by four local lads. Art was far from amused by that suggestion. There was no way he was going to accept slave labour, even though he later admitted he thought he was going to die on that walk.

I could go on with many other anecdotes that demonstrate Art's

commitment to democracy which he lived, spoke and wrote about in volumes. Two of my favourites are: *The Atrocity of Education* and *New Careers for the Poor. The Atrocity* because it was one of his early publications that stirred me and others to think more critically about what we were teaching, how we were teaching, why and what sort of society did we want to live in. *New Careers* inspired me to think about the implications for my field of special interest, prison education, and how participation might offer hope of connection to a more productive and secure life in the community upon release.

Full of enthusiasm about the new strength of my vision for education in corrections, I once introduced Art at a conference on the subject with the words: *"Art prized my mind open"*, to which Art quipped: *"Yes, so far that his brains nearly fell out."* This is typical of the speed with which Art brought

humour into his dialogue but nevertheless was probably truer than Art would have intended at the time.

Art continues to influence my thinking and my work through his democracy blog: *Art Pearl Against the World* (see <http://ow.ly/3buJ30fvyJd>) and he was keen to get feedback and suggestions for additional material right up until the end of his life. As a result of a conversation at his 96th birthday celebration last April I have recently changed my approach to working with men in a domestic violence program. A cooperative teaching and learning style does seem to challenge and engage men more respectfully than a program that is imposed on them.

But what affected me most from that final conversation were Art's words as I left: *"Thank you Bob for being my friend"*. What amazing humility!

Bob Semmens
rasemmens@gmail.com

Dimensions of success

It's basically not difficult to get young people to participate - they participate all the time. The difficulty is in **sustaining** that participation.

There are nine things that I think are crucial in making a group work, and that explain in so many cases why we fail, particularly in what are called Student Representative Councils. And they're going to fail unless we start looking at some of the dimensions necessary for them to succeed. I talk about nine of these dimensions, because they tell me whether I've got a group or I don't have a group.

Security

One is, do the young people feel secure there - does everybody feel secure working in that group? Often they don't. An SRC is often characterised by students feeling very insecure - when they're one of a very few young people in an adult dominated Council and they feel overwhelmed. I've got to organise the group in a way that everybody feels secure. I suspect that most Student Councils have to be broken down into smaller groups and, on a rule of thumb, students are not going to feel secure in those unless they have equal numbers. A School Council which has

a handful of student representatives on a totally adult dominated system is not going to work - it's designed not to work.

Comfort

The second is: is it organised in a setting where people feel reasonably comfortable? Is the setting austere? Are the chairs uncomfortable? Is the physical environment foreboding? If that's there, you're going to have trouble - you're putting in a whole bunch of unnecessary impediments to making it work.

There are a lot of ways you can make it comfortable. You can start it with some cultural activity where young people can feel part of it. There are lots of ways in which the introduction - even the way in which coffee is done - can help facilitate people's ease or dis-ease in that setting.

Understanding ...

The third (and this, in many ways, is the most important): are the young people sufficiently briefed and oriented that

they understand all the things that are taking place?

Often there are whole rules of operation that they're never informed of, and every time they want to say something, some parliamentarian tells them they're out of order and that becomes an effective way of making sure that they're left out of it. Or they're not having sufficient background on any of the issues that are being discussed so that they really can't give an informed vote. And that can be done in any group, that I as a leader keep all the important information, and I'm playing a game.

What I ought to be doing is making sure that **you** have got all the information. That's the importance of "Why do I have to know that?" and "Have I got all the information to make a decision?" as questions that students should be encouraged to ask. "Have you really given me all the information? And if I haven't

... and Competence

All young people are competent. Youth participation is organised around their competence. All are not competent enough, but that's true for **all** of us. So youth participation is based on competence with the intention of becoming more competent.

Useful

Do I have a useful role? To put it more importantly: do I have an essential role? What happens if I'm not there? Can the meeting go on if I'm not there? If we organise youth participation without any one body in there, it's not an ideal youth participation. If we can function without **any** youth there, it's a **terrible** youth participation. So it's organised so that **everyone** has a vital role.

Hope

Is it organised with a history of hope? Do we see that what we're doing is leading to a solution of those bigger problems that hang over us whether we like them or not? The whole issue of hopelessness that has so much dominated all of culture for the last almost 50 years (but certainly predominant in the last 20 years) is one that youth participation actively works against. These are solvable problems - as we nibble away at them, we are solving them. And we see a relationship between our nibbles and the big picture.

Excitement and Creativity

Is there excitement built into it? Is there spontaneity, or is it so routinised and so organised that people just feel themselves unable to do anything or create anything? Does it have both spontaneity and opportunities for creativity? A lot of very effective, so-called 'youth participation' is organised to deny spontaneity. Most of organised sport in America, most bands and things of that nature, denies young people any opportunity for creativity or spontaneity. They're taking away from them the opportunity of any control over their lives under the guise of 'youth participation'. They give them a chance to be acknowledged as competent, a chance to be useful, to feel that they

belong, to have some hope ('cause they were winning), to have knowledge about their activities, to feel somewhat comfortable (but not very secure) - but they denied them the essence of personal growth that should come out of that.

Growth

Personal growth has two elements to it - that I have the right to invent and I have the right to be able to do something differently. The onus of me telling you that you can't do it that way is that I have to make overwhelming cases that that will endanger the project - which I can't do, in 99.9% of the cases. All I can tell you is: Gee, that makes me feel a little uncomfortable. And I've got to deal with that problem.

And how do I know if I'm doing this? I ask students. I just give them a little check list from 1 to 10 on each of those when it's over and say: "Let's see how well we did all of this", and then we look at it. If we then find that, say, even 20% felt uncomfortable, then let's analyse how we can do better than that next shot around, so we reduce it to 15% - always struggling to make it possible that everyone has that. If most of the people feel on any one of those dimensions that they're not getting it, then it's up to us to say: "Hey, we'd better look at our participation model here. What are we doing wrong? Let's entertain a proposal of how we do this better."



There's also a 3-part *youtube* video of a talk that **Art Pearl** gave in 2012 (at age 90) at Victoria University (Footscray, Australia) on the **7 Fundamental Principles of Democracy**; see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fByKH844mm8> ; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TxIABwPw40M&t=20s> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FKOB13422Q&t=360s>

On leadership

One difficulty that many people get into is the non-recognition of the importance of leadership.

Young people will not participate in the continuous on-going activity without strong leadership. Strong leadership is not one that is unwilling to challenge young people - you always have to challenge! You have to propose. You don't get together and say, in any group of young people: "What do we do now?" or "What should we do?" and not expect it to be a disaster. You propose something. And that's an invitation for a counter-proposal.

When young people come up with a counter-proposal, there are certain rules. One is that you go along with that counter-proposal if there isn't overwhelming evidence that it could be a serious disaster - I mean that people would get killed or that buildings would be destroyed - things of that nature. If it's only going to be a small disaster, they should be allowed to do it and then reflect on it and analyse it. The one thing to get out of your vocabulary is "I told you so" and put into your vocabulary "What do we learn from that?" and "How do we now do it better?"

Every single youth participation activity is one which is organised for learning. To use the Freire model of praxis, you devise something you think will work. You then try to make a reasonable guess at what you expect will happen. You set a time, so that you're going to evaluate at a certain time. You then look at what happened. It didn't do what you expected - there's a discrepancy. You do an analysis of that discrepancy. You ask: "How do we do that better?", not "What did we do wrong?" You always emphasise the things that we accomplished (and even in the worst of them, we did *something* good) and then we talk about how we improve

upon them. And it's with that continuous support, you raise issues, and when you see things aren't going well - if the system of youth participation operates as a really oppressive system and it's really being used for the lowest level of political power for some of the young people to take advantage of other young people, to exploit, manipulate, oppress, for whatever ego or other factors (there may even be economic reasons) - you intercede. You say: "I don't like what I see is going on here. Let's see what we can do about it."

The other thing that you have to understand in every effective youth participation where you play that role of challenging and suggesting, you open yourself up to criticism. And you have to accept that. Students will call you a lot of things: they'll call you a phony - "here you want us to participate and you're doing all the proposing" and you have to be able to defend that. They will also get angry with you if you choose, for example, to point out that they're manipulating and exploiting people in that group and you don't like it. And you have to accept that.

If you do that, you're going to get youth participation. But you're always pushing and you're backing off - you're pushing and you're backing off.

Proposing or Dominating?

Domination requires you to have some titular power - you have to have some power to dominate. Young people will respond quite well to proposals, as long as you don't have all the votes. The issue of domination has always been that you control the votes, legally or illegally, or that

This is an excerpt from a talk given by **Art Pearl** at the Phillip Institute of Technology, Coburg Campus, Victoria on **November 18th 1982**. It was first printed in ***Connect*** 19, February 1983, and then reprinted in ***Connect*** 69, June 1991.

your position has so much power and status in it that they have no ability to function.

Young people may accuse you of that. That's something that only comes about when they're not yet prepared to defend their own arguments. All you say is: "OK, what have you got to propose that's better? This is a proposal - it's an invitation to a counter-proposal. You propose something better." But sitting around doing nothing isn't youth participation.

Young people aren't fragile. They don't melt in the rain and they're perfectly willing to contend with you as long as you don't pull rank. The issue is rank. Once you start saying: "Wait a second, I'm the boss here and we're going to do it my way", that's when you start dominating.

If you say: "Hey you can do it, but I've got to tell you now that I think it's going to have some problems. We'll look at it when it's over - and you go along with it ... You don't say: "I told you so", but say: "OK, now what did we learn from that?"

Power in youth participation isn't a zero-sum game in which I give up mine, if you gain power. We **both** grow in power to the extent that we negotiate and participate as equals. I have far more power in doing what I want to do, rather than running around being a cop or guard. You have far more power because we changed the name of the game.

And I'm not there to fight you. It's not my job. I'm here to help, and you're here to reject that help if you don't think it's helpful.

Don't be afraid to lead, but be very afraid to pull rank.





***More students, more staff, more stakeholders,
more technology and more sustainability ...
the 13th VicSRC Congress in 2018 just kept on growing!***

Bursting at the seams with ideas, innovations and enthusiasm, the **VicSRC Congress 2018** was the biggest yet! It brought together almost 200 students from around the state to spark conversations and collaborations on the toughest issues in education today.

Congress 2018 was attended by:

- 197 delegates representing 85 schools,
- the Minister for Education and Acting Premier the Honourable James Merlino, and
- more than 75 stakeholders from across the community and education sectors.

Run by students, for students and attended by the Minister for Education, the VicSRC Congress brings students together from all across the state to debate, decide and act on the issues that really matter to their education.

In 2018, we kept things loose. Maintaining our 2017, choose-your-own-adventure format, in which delegates pitched ideas for the major workshop streams and then voted for the top twelve issues to discuss, the delegates were empowered to shape Congress in real time. We built capacity and let students' passions and interests lead the way.

Through interactive workshops and solutions-focused debate, student delegates determined the VicSRC policy agenda for the coming year, and appointed the Student Executive team that will implement it.

In 2018, Congress featured:

- innovative solutions to the top twelve issues in education as defined by students,
- election of the 2018-2019 Student Executive, and
- the launch of the Student Voice Hub.

**This was Congress in
the year of student voice.**



Passion and professionalism

My first ever Congress was in 2017, and I was amazed at how Meager students from across Victoria were to make change in their education system. The VicSRC Congress is an annual event where students from Years 7 to 12 from all across Victoria unite as one to make an influential impact, not just within schools, but on a state level!

Students gather from Bendigo to Sunshine to Myrtleford to Mildura to Casterton to Gippsland and it is by far an unmissable event, and an amazing atmosphere to be surrounded by. Congress is where staff, volunteers and the 15 Executive members help organise a three-day event accompanied by 200+ students from over 60 schools and where these students present their twelve action team proposals in front of key stakeholders and the honorable Minister Merlino.

At Congress, it doesn't matter if you are from private schools, public schools, TAFE, catholic schools, government schools or anything else; all student voices matter. By working together, we

can all make change that will impact Victoria for good!

In my first year at Congress, I was elected onto the Executive Team and, within a year, I have gained a lot of skills and abilities, have made amazing friendships, and have had the privilege of being a part of the Exec team and helping to make change with the rest of the students of Victoria.

This year, by keeping the similar style of an un-conference-like feel, we helped students pick issues and topics that are generally important to them. Throughout Congress, you could see the passion and the level of professionalism from every delegate. It's an amazing feeling to see students joyous about

making changes in our education system that are important to them!

As my last year as a delegate, it was very clear that the students who attended Congress came willing and eager to speak and act upon issues in education that concerned them today. When delegates raise important issues, they will find solutions by working together to make a success for all schools!

I would like to give a big thanks to the volunteers, staff, the amazing Executive team and the Ormond College staff for making Congress 2018 happen and making it such a huge success!!

It has been an absolute pleasure to help serve such a great cause, because students' voices matter!!

Angelique Corke-Cox
Sunshine Secondary College
VicSRC Congress Coordinator 2018

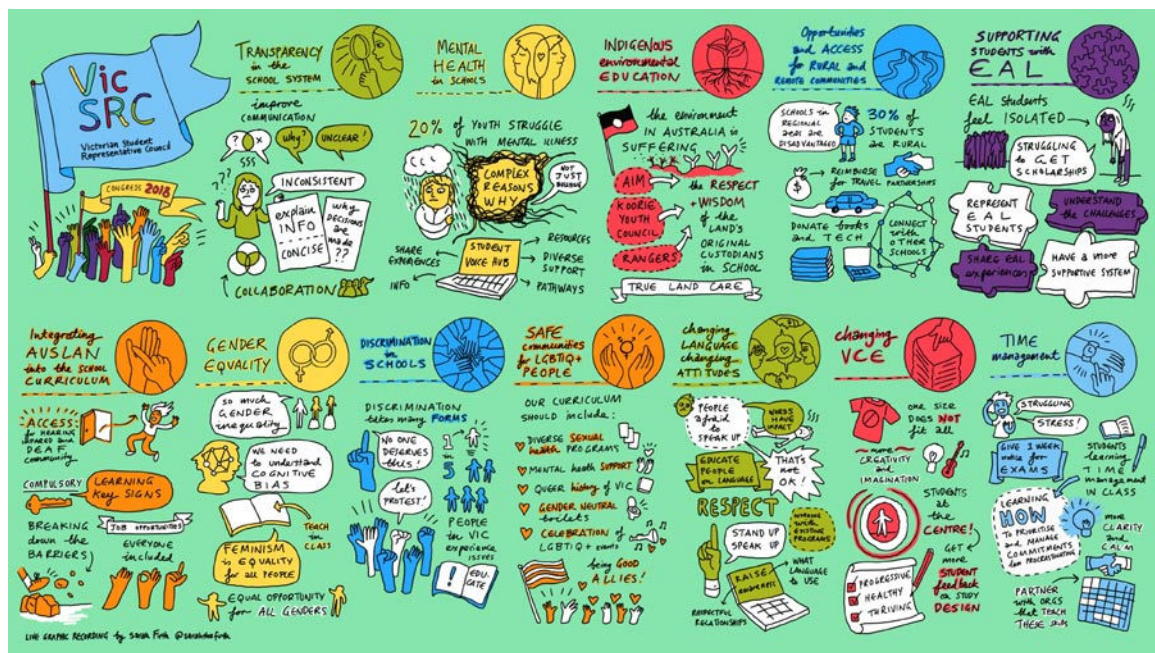


More details in the 2018 Congress Report: <https://vicsrc.qwilr.com/Congress-2018-report-TIWljFdbSees>

Congress 2018 Priority Issues

The following 12 issues were identified by delegates to Congress 2018 as priority issues for education in Victoria. They were then discussed and debated over three days and reports presented to the final session of Congress, where all delegates further prioritised their top six for action in 2018-19.

This summary outlines the issues and presents some possible actions.



For a better resolution of this graphic, see the 2018 VicSRC website: <https://bit.ly/2BeHQ9t>

Priority Issues:

Transparency in the School System

The Issue

There is a fundamental lack of communication, comprehension and collaboration between the different levels of the education system. This makes it difficult for students to know how to get involved in decision making both at their school and at higher levels.

The Solutions

- Decisions made at the school level by School Councils could be fed back to the SRC and communicated to the wider student body.
- The Department of Education could maintain a page on their website explaining in student-friendly language how students can be involved in decision making at both school and state levels.
- Local MPs could meet with SRC teams in their local area to talk about education and school issues once a year.

Opportunities and Access for Rural and Remote Communities

The Issue

Students living in rural and regional Victoria are at a disadvantage; not only are they often lacking resources like technology, as well as the teachers and means to offer extracurricular classes, but students are often unaware of opportunities on offer.

The Solutions

- The VicSRC could facilitate partnerships between rural and metropolitan schools to ensure opportunities are communicated and that rural and regional students have support when coming into metropolitan areas.
- The VicSRC could seek partnerships with Rural Youth Ambassadors, YACVic Rural and other rural youth bodies to further support their efforts to address access disparity.
- The VicSRC could lobby for more state government funding specifically to cover travel and accommodation costs for rural and regional students accessing opportunities outside their local area.





#weR1: Discrimination in Schools

The Issue

Discrimination affects everyone and happens even in places where people should feel safe, like schools. Discrimination has a wider impact on school and community culture, and impacts a variety of other issues - particularly student mental health and inclusion.

The Solutions

- A program could be developed to educate perpetrators and support students and groups that are targeted.
- Teachers, students and other young people as a whole could be educated about the cause and effects of discrimination.
- A widespread communications campaign could be developed including posters, videos and ways for people to express their experiences of discrimination in a safe space.



Gender Equality in Schools

The Issue

Gender inequality in educational settings affects all students, particularly when they are afforded different facilities and opportunities based on their gender. This discrimination contributes to ongoing stigma that can affect students all their lives.

The Solutions

- Gender equality could be included in the curriculum from an early age, for example, making gender identity and equality a topic in health classes and including texts addressing these issues in English classes.
- Professional development could be offered to teachers to encourage conversation around gender equality, consideration of gendered language and potential implicit bias.
- Education nights, conferences or seminars involving students, parents and teachers could be arranged to further encourage these conversations.



Transforming VCE

The Issue

The current VCE curriculum does not prepare students for the real world. It also leaves no room for mistakes and causes a huge amount of stress and anxiety. It is a one size fits all approach to education designed to create an impossible 'perfect' student.

The Solutions

- VCE exam related questions could be added to the *Attitudes to School* annual survey to capture student feeling and ideas around this issue.
- A policy could be enacted to ensure chief assessors consult with VCE students post-examination.
- A diverse group of students could be represented on the VCE board to ensure there are multiple perspectives involved in curriculum creation.

“Student voice isn’t only about students voicing their opinions and advocating for change. Its profound impact is breaking social barriers and letting everyone see that we are capable to be overseers of our own education.”

VicSRC Executive Student 2018-2019

Changing Language, Changing Attitudes

The Issue

People often ignorantly use words that describe minority groups or identities negatively or as insults. This happens because the people using them aren't aware of the detrimental effect it has on the minority groups they are targeting due to a lack of exposure or education.

The Solutions

- Questions could be included in the annual *Attitudes to School* survey to gather information about common contexts in which discriminatory language is used.
- A review of the current curriculum could be conducted to improve initiatives around discrimination, specifically around the use of language.
- Partnerships could be established with organisations already working against discrimination to campaign specifically against discriminatory language.

"I want to engage my SRC a lot more. I want us to make more active changes in the community."

Congress 2018 delegate



Mental Health in Schools

The Issue

School communities, parents and guardians often lack the skills necessary to provide preventative or consistent support for students' mental health. There is a general confusion and lack of knowledge as well as a lack of accessibility or even awareness around what resources are available.

The Solutions

- The VicSRC could co-facilitate parent forums and information sessions around mental health with individual schools.
- The VicSRC could advocate for more mental health information and support for parents, carers and guardians.
- The VicSRC could collaborate with students, diverse stakeholders and the Department of Education to pitch a more proactive and preventative approach to mental health in schools.



Other Important Issues:

Supporting Students with English as Another Language

The Issue

Students with English as another language may experience isolation and alienation from the Australian student experience as student opportunities are not always inclusive and these students are not always consulted to ensure they will be supported to participate along with the larger student body.

The Solution

- Guidelines could be issued to ensure that EAL students are included in student consultations and not excluded by language barriers.
- EAL support in schools could be reformed to function more as a general assistance program across all areas, adapting to students' needs rather than generalising for all EAL students.
- Student opportunities could be audited to ensure they are accessible to EAL students.



Integrating AUSLAN into the School Curriculum

The Issue

Hearing teachers and students are often unable to communicate with hearing impaired or Deaf students, which creates a divide in education between the hearing community and the Deaf community. This also excludes Deaf and hearing impaired students from many student opportunities.

The Solutions

- Policy could be changed to include AUSLAN lessons in both primary and secondary curricula.
- There could be sector investment and development in institutions that can offer AUSLAN extension as a co-curricula activity.
- Further opportunities could be created for these students to work on their AUSLAN in environments with Deaf and hearing impaired students.



Safe Communities for LGBTIQ+ People

The Issue

Schools currently lack facilities and events that exclusively cater to LGBTIQ+ students. There is limited opportunity to learn about queer cultural history and receive diverse sexual health education or access mental health professionals who provide an explicitly safe space for LGBTIQ+ students.

The Solutions

- The VicSRC could provide assistance for students campaigning for their schools to offer all gender or gender neutral toilets.
- The VicSRC could work with existing groups to provide resources to schools and encourage them to celebrate their queer community with events like Pride Month and IDAHOBIT day.
- The VicSRC could campaign for guidelines to ensure that schools can offer specialised LGBTIQ+ counselors.



"I would like to help build my school's representative council into an organisation that will make change for the school and community now and deep into the future."

Congress 2018 delegate



Indigenous Environmental Education

The Issue

Our environment is rapidly deteriorating and there is a lack of consensus and consistency on the best care practices that can be taught to students; this ignores the traditional practices and extensive historical and contemporary relationship Indigenous Australians have to the land.

The Solutions

- The VicSRC could partner with organisations like AIME and the Indigenous Rangers to put schools in touch with their local Indigenous communities and create programs about their area.
- The Department of Education could provide grants to increase Indigenous environmental education through these partnerships.
- Pre-colonial history could be incorporated into the humanities curriculum along with practical aspects of this knowledge, all workshopped with Indigenous communities.



Time Management

The Issue

Education, particularly the VCE curriculum, currently works on a 'what, not how' model that causes stress and sleep deprivation to students. There are currently so many demands on students' time - along with distractions and avenues for procrastination - that students are struggling to manage their time.

The Solutions

- The VicSRC could provide a guide of best practice for schools including things like giving notice before tests, exams, SACS and resources for teaching time management.
- The VicSRC could partner with experts in the field to deliver seminars giving younger students the time management skills they will need as they get older.
- The VicSRC could campaign for a change in the curriculum to include time management skills specifically pitched at students.



VicSRC Student Voice Awards

The Victorian Student Representative Council's **Student Voice Awards** celebrate best practice in student voice, leadership and student-led action in Victoria. These Awards were announced and celebrated at the NAB Arena on 18th October.



And the winners are ...

Group Action Award

The **Group Action Award** recognises a group of students speaking up, making change and amplifying the voice of others in their school community.

Winner: Robinvale College SRC

In 2017, the Robinvale SRC underwent a complete restructure, with interested students from each year level working together to design the group's guidelines, goals, vision, and mission statement. The SRC surveyed the student population and identified bullying as the students' top issue of concern, with other related issues such as feeling unsafe, racism and student-teacher relationships also highlighted.

The group then addressed their teachers at a staff meeting, before splitting into small student-teacher groups, and working together to brainstorm some tangible and realistic solutions. Following this workshop, changes have now been implemented at Robinvale College, which have resulted in a real cultural shift within their school environment.



Runners-Up:

Wavelength at Braybrook College

PPS Quality Leaders at Plenty Parklands Primary School

Teacher of the Year Award

The **Teacher of the Year Award** recognises a teacher who makes sure students are heard through mentoring, empowering or simply listening.

Winner: Oliver Lovell from Sunshine College

Ollie Lovell is now in his third year at Sunshine College. At Sunshine, Ollie is the SRC Co-ordinator, Head of Senior Mathematics, and a Learning Specialist. Outside of school, Ollie runs the *Education Research Reading Room* podcast and enjoys supporting not-for-profits working with disadvantaged young people through *Social Venture Partners Melbourne*.



Runners-Up:

Isaac Ryan from Suzanne Cory High School

Meiki Apted from Swinburne Senior Secondary College

Youth Leadership Award

The **Newsboys Foundation Youth Leadership Award** is awarded to a graduating Year 12 student who displays leadership in their school or community. The three finalists will receive bursaries to fund leadership development.



Winner:

Whitney Eadon from Bendigo Senior Secondary College

Whitney Eadon is currently studying Year 12 at Bendigo Senior Secondary College and was elected President of the Student Council, which has enabled her to develop her leadership skills through leading and managing a team of 35 people. She is extremely passionate about creating an inclusive environment and ensuring all young people have a voice in their community.

Whitney is a young social advocate working towards promoting human rights, gender equality and quality education for all. Whitney has been able to represent and advocate for student voice and social justice at the United Nations and to the Minister of Education.

Runners-Up:

Tiffany Yang from Mount Waverly Secondary College

Ned De Grandi from St Josephs College, Geelong

SRC of the Year

The **SRC of the Year Awards** 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!



Primary:

Winner: Clifton Springs Primary School

Clifton Springs Primary School SRC consists of students from Years 3 to 6 who love their role as student leaders. They attend School Council meetings, meet with their own classes, along with mentor classes from P-2.

The SRC is committed to improving student voice in classrooms and to provide teachers with feedback on their teaching. Surveys, suggestion boxes, feedback station and an app called *Plickers* have helped them to achieve this.

Runners-Up:

Castlemaine Primary School

Parkmore Primary School

Secondary

Winner: Nossal High School

With student voice being central to the ethos of the school since its inception, **Nossal High School's** SRC has enjoyed a productive and blissful time of student advocacy. Enjoying many iterations before reaching its current state, the SRC is divided up into a General Assembly and an Executive Cabinet.

Its main concerns are areas of student wellbeing, philanthropic causes, and ensuring a transparent and fair platform for student democracy is enshrined in Nossal for the many years to come.

Runners-Up:

Portland Secondary College

Forest Hill College



A New VicSRC Executive for 2018-19

The following students were elected by delegates to Congress as their representatives - the **Executive of the VicSRC** - for the 2018-2019 year:



Bethany | Ashley | Laura | Mia | Zaituna
Mitchell | Bri | John-Paul | Tafara | Aaran
Liaquat | Julia | Wren | Michelle
(absent from photo: Alyssa)

More details can be found at:
<http://www.vicsrc.org.au/aboutus/exec-team>

Teach the Teacher

Teach the Teacher is a student-led professional development program run by the VicSRC to encourage student-teacher collaboration and problem-solving.

We have three models to suit every school's needs:

- **Ignite** is a bespoke program for schools with a low SES community, diverse student population or alternative learning setting.
- **Empower** is designed for schools with an active student voice practice and student leadership structure.
- **Sustain** is a refresher course for schools that have previously participated in the program.

Over the past two years, 100 schools across Victoria have participated in **Teach the Teacher**, bringing student voice to staff rooms through student devised and

delivered professional development sessions.

In 2018 the VicSRC applied to the first ever international spotlight round of the Finnish education aggregator **HundrED**. **HundrED** brings together impactful and scalable education ideas around the globe. This year they have partnered with **EduChange** to highlight programs making change in Victoria.

Teach the Teacher was chosen as one of the ten feature innovations and now features on the **HundrED** website. VicSRC Student Executives also attended the *spotlight* launch at the **EduChange** conference earlier this month to meet

other innovators and speak on the importance of student voice.

We're excited to be taking **Teach the Teacher** global and are working to make it accessible and replicable internationally to spread student voice around the globe.

TEACH THE TEACHER



Creating positive communities
through student-led conversation

<http://teachtheteacher.org.au/>



Young and free?

A young student remained seated during the national anthem at a school assembly. **Harper Nielsen**, who is nine years old, was protesting out of respect to the Indigenous population.

It's upsetting to hear that Harper's protest was considered controversial and to see her punished for her actions, as all students' voices should be heard, no matter the circumstances or age. Her actions should be praised not punished.

Harper raises a point that something so well known as our national anthem may be actually unjust and offensive to the traditional owners of the land. Birri Gubba Aboriginal community elder Sam Watson congratulated Harper, saying she is "wise and courageous" for rightfully noting that the nation is not "young and free".

The support of the Aboriginal community makes evident that the national anthem is disrespectful and doesn't rightfully represent the true history and traditions of Aborigines but rather that of white Australia.

Stephanie Bedo, at news.com.au, responded to Harper's actions. Bedo understands the bravery. At Bedo's primary school assemblies, she too would sit as "Jehovah's Witnesses don't stand for the national anthem", and doesn't believe there is anything wrong with not standing for an anthem.

However, Harper's anthem disapproval hasn't been the first.

Deborah Cheetham refused an honourable opportunity to sing the national anthem at the AFL Grand Final in 2015, saying she simply can no longer sing the words: 'we are young and free'.

In May 2017, Supreme Court Judge Peter Vickery, who has previously worked as international human rights lawyer, said to the Project: "Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders people find the words: 'For we are young and free' hurtful and offensive, and find it difficult – if not impossible – to stand or sing the anthem with these words". Vickery has also written an alternative **Advance Australia Fair** anthem that mentions dreamtime stories and Uluru, however it was rejected by then PM, Mr Turnbull.

Christopher Kelen's article: 'How fair is fair? The colour of justice in Australia's official anthem', argues that the word 'fair', is specifically about the civilisation of white man.

The words 'we are young and free' hold no truth. Around 70,000 years of Indigenous cultures have been traced in Australia. Yet the lyrics refer Australia as being young considering Federation was only 116 years ago, and we are 229 years into colonisation.

The national anthem has already undergone change from 'God Save the Queen' to 'Advance Australia Fair', and even then 'Advance Australia Fair' has already undergone multiple changes for societal values have changed. And today it still is causing issues, because Australia is still developing into a country of equality.

However Harper's age has caused an uproar. Senator Pauline Hanson rants on *facebook*, claiming Harper has to be "brainwashed" and is in need of more punishment. But it shouldn't matter whether she is young or old, she should have the right to be heard. It's upsetting to hear that people believe that expressing your beliefs is only valid once you reach a certain age

I'm delighted to see Harper demonstrating student voice and not being afraid to speak up when she sees something as unjust. I believe the intentions of Harper's action are righteous and demonstrate that we will continue to grow into a country of equality.

Beth
VicSRC Executive



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

A new digital platform for student voice in the modern age, the **Student Voice Hub** was launched earlier this year at the VicSRC 2018 Congress by the Victorian Minister for Education.

Conceived of, designed and populated by students, schools and community organisations, the **Student Voice Hub** is a primary point for collaboration and communication.

The Student Voice Hub is live!

Students and schools are able to sign up to access vital resources, discussion boards and a community blog packed full of news – *for* students, *by* students. Featuring student voice resources, student-driven news and discussion forums, the **Student Voice Hub** is an ever evolving centre for conversations, problem-solving and student voice!

**Students can join for free right now
and join the conversation!**

Want to get involved?

You can:

- **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! (coming soon)**
Register teachers, 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!

You can also follow the **Student Voice Hub** on social media at *twitter | facebook | instagram!*

<https://studentvoicehub.org.au/>

Staff changes at the VicSRC

Micah Maglaya

joined the VicSRC in July 2018 as the **Student Engagement Assistant**.

She has been involved with many youth advocacy and school engagement programs over the years, and has developed an unrelenting passion to empower young people and provide platforms where their voices can be heard. Micah holds a Bachelor of Arts in Politics and International Studies, and has been actively involved as a volunteer in her community to promote youth advocacy, such as being a former youth councillor at the Knox Youth Council.

When not drinking tea, you'll find Micah writing screenplays (or just writing in general), and spending time with her friends and family!



Annie Rowland

joined the VicSRC team in August 2018, in the role of **Projects Coordinator**. Annie will be responsible for coordinating and facilitating our *Teach the Teacher* and *Student Voice Workshops* across Victoria.

Annie is a Youth Worker and has over two decades of experience working with young people across metropolitan and rural Victoria in a number of rich and rewarding roles in both community and education settings. Annie is a passionate advocate for young people's mental health and wellbeing and is committed to raising the youth/student voice across all available arenas.

When not in the office with a coffee in hand, Annie can be found enjoying live music, in the good company of family and friends, or she will have her nose in a good book!



Hayley Allen

joined the VicSRC team in August 2018 as the **Teacher Facilitator**.

Hayley has been coordinating programs and projects for young people for the past four years. She has a Bachelor of International Relations and has facilitated a range of programs from model UN to train the trainer. Hayley is passionate about youth participation and engagement, and believes everything could greatly benefit from the input of young people.

Hayley can usually be found reading a good book, hanging out with her cat or being a cool Aunt to her three nieces.



Are you a VicSRC Member School?

Membership discounts

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

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

www.vicsrc.org.au/get-involved/school-membership



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

www.vicsrc.org.au/joinin/maillinglist



The **VicSRC** receives funding support from the **Victorian Department of Education and Training** and **Catholic Education Melbourne**.

It is auspiced by and based at the **Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic)**.

It can be reached there on 03 **9267 3744** or, for the cost of a local call from outside Melbourne, on **1300 727 176**; or by email: **eo@vicsrc.org.au**



Amplifying Youth Voice and Partnership International Seminar

"Amplifying Youth Voice and Partnership"

was the theme of an international seminar convened in late June, at the University of Vermont in the northeastern USA. The aim was to gather experts from practice, research, and policy realms to create "a rich learning and sharing community" that could build a collective vision and stronger networks across geography and generations.

While the 75 invited participants represented widely varied fields and experiences, they shared a deep belief that young people must play an essential role in their own learning and in transforming education itself. Over three days of structured dialogues, presentations, work sessions, and informal

discussions, they explored the seminar's charge: to *"consider the pressing questions of amplifying youth voice and the development of the youth-adult partnership paradigm."*

The work took its shape on the first day from two keynote addresses.

The first was personal testimony from **Jemar Lee**, a youth voice activist, educational entrepreneur, and learner at the Iowa BIG high school program in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. As an active member of Education Reimagined's *SparkHouse*, a national community of young leaders from learner-centred environments, he has become a national spokesperson for student-centred learning. Jemar's talk

recounted his own powerful experience navigating his education. His story provided a vivid demonstration of the impact young people can have on their own learning and on the process of educational transformation.

"I will take away inspiration from the youth voices that I am very grateful to have heard."

"We all come from different walks of life, but we all ended up here. Doing is as important as planning."

The other introductory keynote featured **Roger Holdsworth**, well-known to *Connect* readers as the journal's publisher for nearly four decades. As an ardent advocate and life-long activist for student-centred school transformation, Roger offered a conceptual framework for the seminar's opening day, inviting participants to reflect on their uses of language and the power of terminology to shape both thinking and action.



Drawing on his essays *'Terms and Conditions'* [*Connect* 223, February 2017, pages 18-21: <https://bit.ly/2PaQLel>] and *'Student Voice, Agency and Participation'* [*Connect* 229: February 2018, pages 22-25: <https://bit.ly/2E12uLK>], he outlined distinctions among three key terms:

- **'Student voice':** refers most directly to the processes by which students provide feedback and advice to increase the effectiveness of teaching practices;
- **'Student agency':** refers most directly to the actions taken by students to improve their educational outcomes, such as engagement, learning, wellbeing;
- **'Student participation':** refers most directly to the processes of partnerships in decision-making between students and others that improve outcomes for all.

This framework helped shape all subsequent discussion at the seminar, providing a common language for the exploration of voice, agency, and participation/partnership that followed.

"I will take away new clarity about our intentions for the work we do and the language we use in doing it; we need to be careful about the terms we use, especially in helping build public understanding and support for transformation."

On the seminar's second day, participants heard from **Sam Chaltain**, an American author, speech writer, film producer, and school designer. He's currently a partner at **180 Studio**, a global design collaborative that explores the future of learning. He describes himself as someone who spends *"most of my waking hours in schools of the present that are working to recalibrate themselves into schools of the future."* [<https://bit.ly/2HS1s1v>]

Sam's seminar keynote challenged participants to make multiple imaginative leaps, toward new metaphors for education in a world that's changing rapidly and radically. Those changes include new patterns in global citizenship,



looming collapse of the planetary environment, and the approach of the technological singularity—that point, most commonly predicted to occur around 2040, when artificial intelligence surpasses human intellectual capacity. Instead of fearing that extreme shift, Sam argued, we could prepare for it, and even embrace it by shifting our own metaphoric thinking. We could move *"away from the notion of a singular path [for each young person], and towards a much more elastic understanding of how each person can add value to the world...how might we reimagine the spaces in which learning occurs so that the movement and flow of human bodies is closer to the improvisatory choreography of a murmuration of starlings than the tightly orchestrated machinery of a factory assembly line?"*

With questions like this, the second day moved to a new level. If Roger Holdsworth's framework grounded the seminar's thinking in clear terminology, Sam Chaltain's imagery lifted it to a sky full of *"something emergent, inextricable, and alive."*

"I will take away the challenge and opportunity for us to make the technological singularity a leap forward in our work, and the experience of everyone on the planet - to take care of each other the planet and ourselves."

Background

The Vermont seminar has its roots in the **Cambridge University Student Voice Seminars** that began in 2011 in honour of **Dr. Jean Rudduck**, a pioneer and ardent advocate for elevating the role of students in school redesign. Organised by **Dr. Alison Cook-Sather** of Bryn Mawr College, with Cambridge colleagues **Helen Demetriou**, **Julia Flutter** and **Bethan Morgan**, the annual conference evolved over five years as vital learning community. One of its aims was *"to create a space within which no one has to explain 'student voice' or 'student-teacher partnership'"*—a place where the commitment to those things needn't be defended, but was instead shared and expanded. The Cambridge Seminars provided important continuity for university students, scholars, practitioners, and policy makers working to be partners in teaching and learning. One significant outcome was a new peer review journal, the ***International Journal of Student Voice (IJSV)***, spearheaded by **Dr. Dana Mitra** at Penn State University. [IJSV.psu.edu]

When sponsorship at Cambridge ended, a coalition in the United States sought a way to support the seminar's continuity. In 2016, the conference moved to the University of Vermont, co-sponsored by Penn State University and **UP for Learning**, a Vermont non-profit organisation focused on youth-adult partnership development. This year's gathering, the third in the Vermont series, carried many of the original themes forward, providing a place for people to share their dedication to elevating student voice and youth-adult partnership.

"I take away a treasured network of passionate, knowledgeable, and caring people who give me hope and renew my commitment to this work!"

The 2018 seminar also differed from preceding gatherings in two important ways. One was a commitment to ensure significant participation by young people. While university students had been valued participants in the Cambridge seminars, that series did not include pre-university young people. The Vermont seminars sought to include young people from secondary schools as well as undergraduate and graduate students, with the aim of practising youth-adult partnership actively in the seminar deliberations.

While those who attended in the first two years were enthusiastic and eloquent participants, their numbers were small. In the spirit of the *IJSV*'s banner slogan, *"nothing about us without us,"* young people recommended strongly that more secondary students be recruited for the 2018 gathering, and they committed to working on that goal themselves.

As a result, a new co-sponsoring partner emerged to help plan the 2018 seminar: a movement for learner-centred educational transformation in America called **Education Reimagined**. Its initiatives include the online journal *Pioneering* [<https://bit.ly/2Qum5pe>] and *SparkHouse*, the national community of young leaders that began convening in 2016 [<https://bit.ly/2Rq1L9E>].

This group, along with continuing US seminar partners *Big Picture Learning*, *Griptape*, *Eagle Rock School* in Colorado and *UP for Learning* in Vermont, helped ensure robust youth representation at the 2018 seminar. Nearly a third of participants were young people, delivering *"the dynamic and exciting youth contingent"* the conference invitation had promised.

In addition, for the first time, a youth-adult team facilitated the three-day event: a recent Vermont high school graduate and a retired educator with 45 years' experience shared planning, management, and all facilitation in seamless collaboration. Youth co-leader **Clara Lew-Smith**, pointed to the unusual nature of the seminar: *"Even though students are the primary recipients and focus of education, it is rare that we get let into a space where we can talk about it and its purpose at a higher level."* Her partner **Martha Rich** said: *"It took me four decades to realise that students could be my colleagues. This experience is clear evidence that it's not only possible, but incredibly powerful."*

"I take away a sense of empowerment and a stronger commitment to an equity of voices... Students should be part of more conferences."



The other major difference between the 2018 seminar and the earlier conferences was a notable decline in its international character. Roger Holdsworth travelled from Melbourne to hoist the international flag with his keynote, and two other participants came from nearby Ontario, Canada. Otherwise, all participants were residents of the United States, in marked contrast to the Cambridge series and even the first Vermont gathering, which had included participants from eight nations. Prospective attendees cited barriers to international travel such as expense, time constraints, and varied academic calendars. Even within the United States, travel to the relatively remote Vermont location proved challenging for some.

Future Planning

In response, 2018 seminar participants began planning alternative venues for future years. It had already been determined that Vermont would be the host site for only three years. One option would be multiple gatherings taking place simultaneously around the globe.

At present, at least one working group has moved ahead. Plans are well underway for a seminar to be held in **Philadelphia, USA** between **May 28-30, 2019**, with collaboration from **UP for Learning, Arcadia University, Villanova University, Temple University, the University of Pennsylvania, and Pennsylvania State University**. All share a commitment to advance the community devoted to **Amplifying Student Voice and Partnership** and it is certain that next year will see the ninth annual gathering. (See next page.)

Enthusiasm was strong on the seminar's last day, when participants used the *Open Space* format and structured dialogue formats such as *Consultancy* to explore issues and questions in small groups. **Levi Brooks**, a student from Colorado's Eagle Rock School, concluded one session by declaring: *"I just want to say that I love everyone here...everyone here has really helped me and made me feel like I was at home."* **Marc Fernandes**, a youth development consultant in New York City, summed it up this way: *"It is not often youth, teachers, school administrators, community practitioners and higher educators come together to honestly confront issues of power and participation in education. This international seminar has successfully managed to bring all of these voices to the centre to re-envision a holistic framework of what it means to be educated and a lifelong learner. Through youth-adult partnership practice, true representation and equity can be achieved within our educational systems."*

Helen Beattie (helen@upforlearning.org)
and **Martha Rich** (martha.rich@thet.net)
UP for Learning



"There are a lot of people who are passionate about amplifying student/youth voice and by listening to students and empowering them (and sometimes even stepping out of their way) we can change the world, country, community and schools."

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON STUDENT VOICE Deepening Relationships Between Youth Research & Practice

MAY 28–30, 2019 | UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA



This international seminar, Student Voice: Deepening Relationship between Youth Research and Practice, will convene experts from education, research and policy realms from around the world to consider the pressing questions of the inclusion of student voice and the development of the youth-adult research paradigm.

Location: University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, USA.

Hosted by the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education.

CONTACT: Dana Mitra at dana@psu.edu

Who is invited?

- **STUDENTS** taking a leadership role on state, national, or international levels to further the role of youth in learning and school decision-making.
- Field-based **PRACTITIONERS** with a mission to elevate youth voice and partnership in learning and school redesign efforts.
- Youth voice/youth-adult partnership **RESEARCHERS**.
- **EDUCATIONAL LEADERS** committed to integrating student voice into the teacher education process.
- **POLICY ADVOCATES & FUNDERS** with a mission to elevate youth-adult partnership in school redesign efforts on a large scale.

Trailblazers: *A student-driven education magazine*

In the fall of 2016, the organisation **Education Reimagined** hosted the first gathering of **SparkHouse**. The event was designed for learners from around the US to discuss learner-centred education. While attending this event, I realised just how many young learners have amazing stories about how transformative education affects their past, present, and future image of themselves.

As a frequent blogger, I was already aware of the power of young learners sharing stories of their education to wider audiences; therefore, I could only imagine the impact that a collection of these stories shared together in a single medium could have. Thus I suggested that the **SparkHouse** members from my school would take up the challenge of creating a student-driven e-magazine about transformative education written and developed by young learners from around the world. Two years later, this magazine is now known as **Trailblazers**.

Trailblazers currently has two publications per year, one around mid-December and one around mid-June - the end of a typical US semester. The purpose of **Trailblazers** is to create a platform for young learners around the world to be able to share their stories and opinions on transformative education in a collective format. While there are already a few student bloggers and education podcast that feature young learner voices, the intent of this magazine, as opposed to other resources, is to have a single professional-looking outlet to be able to share different learner voices side-by-side. Though, because we believe strongly in supporting all learner initiatives to transform the education system, we like to give shoutouts to these other resources as well within our magazine.

So far there have been three issues of **Trailblazers** which can be found at: <https://bit.ly/2OD2CFo>. The magazine is currently run by a team of four high schoolers at Mount Vernon Presbyterian School and mentored by

myself and my fellow co-founder Abigail Emerson, who respectively attend Georgia Institute of Technology and the University of North Carolina. A founding principle of **Trailblazers** is that the magazine is driven by young learners; thus, Abigail and I are taking more of a backseat role now that we've graduated, but will continue to serve as mentors to the production of each issue and the ever-rotating high school team, as members graduate out.

Our production team's responsibilities are divided into two primary areas of focus: communication and design. I head the communications side as Editor-in-Chief, along with our Outreach and Communications

Associate and Managing Editor. Our work includes connecting with 'spotlight learners' - who write an article or create a piece of artwork for the magazine - and coaching them through the writing and editing process. Abigail, as Publisher, heads the design team as Publisher, along with our Graphic Designer and Director of Media. Their primary function is to work on the layout and overall look of the magazine, as well as our soon-to-be-released website and social media accounts. Every production team member strengthens both their communication and design skills through their work on **Trailblazers** and as we grow, our goal is to further develop other skills and create more networking opportunities through attending conferences and workshops related to transformative education.

The **Trailblazers** 2018-2019 Production Team is Anya Smith-Roman (Editor-in-Chief), Abigail Emerson (Publisher), Anna Kate Pickering (Managing Editor), Kylie Smith-Wolfe (Graphic Designer), Anna Weber (Outreach and Communications Associate) and Jack Riekema (Director of Media).

In the past, the events our production team members have attended have been the primary way we connect with new learners to contribute to the magazine, though sometimes we will specifically reach out to young learners we've seen on education social media networks or connect with schools doing transformative work as ways to recruit spotlight learners.

If you, or someone you know, would like to learn more about **Trailblazers** and maybe even contribute to a future issue, reach out to me via asmithroman@gmail.com so we can share your story!

We are young learners with big voices, paving new paths; these are our stories.

(Anya met Connect at the Amplifying Student Voice and Partnerships Seminar in June.)



SCHOOL COUNCIL FORUMS

Free Event

The School Governance Network is hosting four forums for members of school councils and school communities. The forums are free to attend and will be held in metropolitan Melbourne and regional and rural Victoria.

Each forum will be two hours in length and provide a great opportunity to share ideas, insights and good practice in school governance and partnerships.

The forums are supported by the Department of Education and Training.

All members of school councils and school communities are welcome to attend.

FORUM 1: FAWKNER

When: Tuesday 23 October, 6-8pm

Where: John Fawkner College,
51 Jukes Road, Fawkner

FORUM 3: DANDENONG

When: Thursday 1 November, 6.30 – 8.30 pm

Where: Dandenong High School,
Jacaranda Centre, 54 David Street,
Dandenong

FORUM 2: WANGARATTA

When: Monday 29 October, 5-7pm

Where: Appin Park Primary School,
149 Appin Street, Wangaratta

*Includes a presentation from Phil Brown
(EO of the Country Education Partnership).*

FORUM 4: GEELONG

When: Thursday 15 November, 6.30 – 8.30 pm

Where: Western Heights College,
37-61 Vines Road, Hamlyn Heights



FORUM OUTLINE

Coffee and tea on arrival

Introduction – **NICHOLAS ABBEY** (Acting CEO, School Governance Network) and **TIM DIGHTON** (Executive Director, Group Planning, Coordination and Operations Division, Department of Education and Training Victoria)

Facilitator – **PATRICK MORIARTY**
(Executive Director, Institute of Community Directors Australia)

Presentations from – **PARENTS VICTORIA**, the **VICTORIAN STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL** (VicSRC) or the **COUNTRY EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP** (depending on the forum)

Interactive session – good practices in school governance and partnerships (facilitated by **NICHOLAS ABBEY** and **PATRICK MORIARTY**)

Small/whole group discussions – themes include:

- Sharing ideas and insights in school governance and partnerships
- School councils: What's working well? What can be improved and how?
- How to support the participation of students, parents and community members
- How to build networks of school councils and other school council stakeholders
- How councils can support each other

Closing remarks and next practical steps

Refreshments and networking

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO RSVP

RSVP: E-mail Nicholas Abbey at admin@sgn.org.au or phone 0402 152 634.

Numbers are limited; so please register early. If you are unable to get to one of these locations, you may be able to participate via video conferencing. Contact Nicholas Abbey to discuss.

BY TAKING PART IN A FORUM, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Share ideas, insights and good practice
- Contribute to a shared checklist about the 'how' of building better governance
- Discuss forming local, regional and on-line networks of school council members
- Explore how school councils help to link school, home and the community in supporting student learning, engagement and achievement
- Make practical suggestions to the School Governance Network and Department of Education and Training about school governance and partnerships.

More details at: <https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/school-forum-flyer>

Amplify: A student voice practice guide

As *Connect* announced in the June issue, a practice guide for schools about **student voice, agency and leadership** called '**Amplify**' has been produced by the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET).

Copies have been distributed to schools, and print copies are now out of stock, pending a reprint. However, *Amplify* is still available on-line as a Word document or a PDF from <https://bit.ly/2y4JGrX>.

Amplify represents an opportunity to reflect on the current status of student voice, agency and leadership

in classrooms, and to identify improvement opportunities and implementation ideas. It brings to the fore the central role that student voice, agency and leadership have in improving student outcomes.



'Student Councils and Beyond' On-Line! FREE!

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

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

www.asprinworld.com/connect



Connect on facebook

Connect has a presence on *facebook*. Find us at:

<http://ow.ly/L6UvW>

We've been posting some news and links there since June 2013, to complement and extend what you see in the on-line version of *Connect*. It would be great if you could go there and 'like' us, and also watch there for news of each *Connect*'s availability on-line - for FREE.



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.



Connect Publications: Order Form

Tax Invoice: ABN: 98 174 663 341

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



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Connect On-Line Subscription (all 6 issues annually e-mailed to you **FREE**):

Simply supply your e-mail address (below or by e-mail) and name and phone number (in case of bounces).
There is no cost; however donations to support **Connect's** work are appreciated and acknowledged.

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... copies	<i>Reaching High</i> (without DVD)	\$20	\$15*	\$
... copies	<i>Switched On to Learning</i> (maximum of 10 copies per order)	\$ 6	\$ 5*	\$
... copies	<i>Democracy Starts Here</i>	\$ 6	\$ 5*	\$

Publications available from Connect:

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... copies	<i>Foxfire 25 Years</i>	\$20	\$10*	\$
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... copies	<i>Foxfire 9</i> (1 available) \$	\$10	\$ 5*	\$
... copies	<i>Students and Work</i> (maximum of 10 copies per order)	\$ 6	\$ 5*	\$
... copies	<i>SRC Pamphlets Set</i> (2 sets available) \$	\$ 6	\$ 5*	\$

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

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

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ASPRINworld: the Connect website!

www.asprinworld.com/connect

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

**Connect is also archived
and available electronically:**

research.acer.edu.au/connect

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

www.informit.com.au

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



Articles from *Connect* are also discoverable through *EBSCOhost* research databases.

www.asprinworld.com/connect
&
research.acer.edu.au/connect

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:

Amplify: Empowering students through voice, agency and leadership (DET, Vic) May 2018

Research Developments (ACER, Camberwell, Vic) August, October 2018

TLN Journal: Additional Needs (Teacher Learning Network, Abbotsford, Vic) Vol 25 Issue No 2; 2018

VicSRC e-News (VicSRC, Melbourne, Vic) September/October 2018

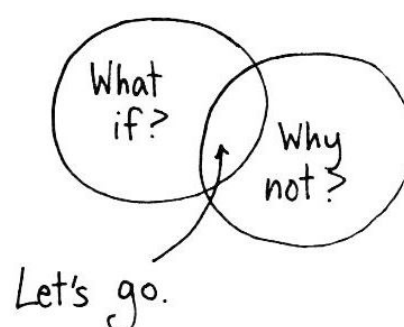
VicSRC Student Voice Awards (VicSRC, Melbourne, Vic) Program; October 2018

13th Annual VicSRC Congress Report (VicSRC, Melbourne, Vic) October 2018

International:

Democracy & Education (Portland, OR, USA) Vol 26 Issue 2; October 2018

UP for Learning (Vermont, USA) Summer 2018 Update



Donate to support Connect

Connect now has no income except donations and sales of literature (previous page). By supporting *Connect* with donations, you keep us going. Even though we are now solely on-line, there are still costs associated with publication. To make a donation to the work of *Connect*, use the form in this issue or contact us for bank account details in order to make an electronic transfer of funds.

Free subscription
and materials
Catalogue:
see page 38

Connect On-Line!

All issues of **Connect** from 1979 to the present (that's now almost **39 years!**) are freely available on-line! Thanks to the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), all the issues of **Connect** have been scanned or up-loaded into the ACER's Research Repository: **ACEReSearch**.

You can find these issues of **Connect** at:

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

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

Connect has a commitment to the sharing of ideas, stories, approaches and resources about active student participation. We are totally supported by donations - see page 39!



Let us know

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

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

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

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



38+ years ...
1979 to 2018 ...
www.asprinworld.com/connect

