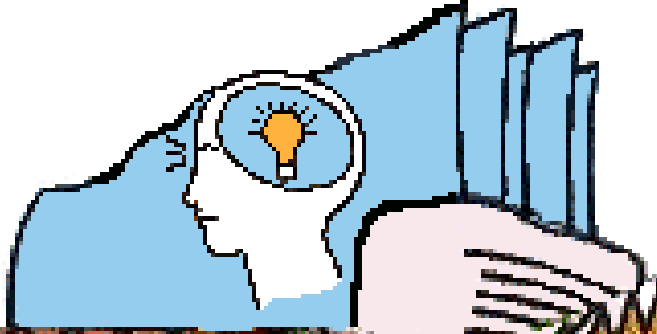




Second Strike

**Resource Kits for Student
Representative Councils**



The Magic Bag of Limitless Ideas



*“Some of the best ideas are
recycled.”*

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Acknowledgements:

First and foremost, thanks go to the students of Student Representative Councils, Student Unions, Student Parliaments, Junior Student Councils, Student Forums and all the other names student representative groups go by. If it were not for your brilliant creativity and your willingness to share your ideas and stories, this kit would be considerably thinner.

Secondly, thanks are due to all students AND Teacher Advisers involved with SRCs around Australia. Yours is possibly the hardest job in the school and we deeply appreciate that commitment.

Thirdly our thanks go to schools who are willing to try new things. These are schools that make being on an SRC a fun thing because they do not construct meaningless barriers. These are the test grounds for SRC ideas, which more timid schools then take on as their own.

Last but by no means least, our thanks go to Prudence Meggitt, who has spent hours of time editing these kits, and has taught us how to use a comma properly.

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The Gauntlet Thrown Down:

Second Strike has been a supporter of Student Representative Councils, particularly democratic SRCs, since we began in 1999. All these years training, supporting and working with SRCs across the country has left us with a mountain of ideas and information about how SRCs could and should be run. This series of kits is built upon the backs of thousands of students and thousands of ideas.

We are passionate about genuine student participation, which has been defined by the participants at the 6th **National Student Participation Conference (NASPAC VI)** held in Melbourne 2002. They determined that involving individuals who just happened to also be students was insufficient to call a project 'student participation'. There had to be a connection with the school structure in some way. Participation does not mean simply 'being involved'. It means that the young people involved have an important and respected role in determining the organisation, direction and decision making of the activity or program.

This is the attitude we approach SRCs with and we want you to adopt it too.

If you're not prepared to take SRCs seriously, then put down this kit; it is not for you.

SRCs are not a tool for the school to toy with. They must be independent, active and **student owned and run**. It is the job of the school to see they stay that way.

Therefore the SRC Teacher Adviser should not be imposing ideas arbitrarily, no matter how helpful he or she thinks it may be. We're the first to admit that the process can be painfully slow and frustrating. In fact, sometimes the SRC does not work! This should be recognised not as a failing of the SRC or of democracy, but a human problem exaggerated by the school environment.

Essentially what we are saying here is that students are asked to operate a student council, often without firstly being told clearly what that is. They work without any training and in a school culture where the SRC is often seen as a joke or a token apparatus. The rest of the school is run with top down control while SRCs are trying to work democratically. This doesn't even take into account the fact that student reps are often completely unrewarded and even teased for their work. They also have a whole host of other activities and pressures competing for their attention, which often appear more urgent or more fun.

Now that you know, try supporting that!

If you have come to the point of saying that maybe democracy is not practical in this situation, get out of SRCs NOW! SRCs don't *just work*, they are one of the hardest things in the school to get going and keep going because a democratic SRC is trying to operate inside a basically autocratic school system. SRCs are only up against such great odds, however, because of how powerful they can be!

Understanding Your Ideas

It is very easy to end up with a huge pile of ideas and not have a clue what to do with them. Or to have some great ideas come forward and not to recognise them for their real worth.

First, think about *why* you feel the need to get new ideas.

Are you not happy with the way the SRC's current projects are progressing? If so, the answer may not be to come up with new ideas, but to take a serious look at what is making you dissatisfied with the current plans.

Or...

Are you bored? Is the SRC not doing anything? Or maybe it is, but it's the same stuff year after year. Maybe there's a feeling of frustration, of being trapped in a cycle. "This is not representation, this just going through the motions."

Or...

Have the events you've been tackling lacked some sort of spice?

The second question is what. *What* are you going to do with the ideas once you have them? Action is often easy to say but quite hard to do.

Some points to consider:

- 1 SRC meetings are NOT the place to be trying to come up with new ideas. The sentence: "So, has anyone got any ideas for us to do?" should never be uttered. Meetings are for discussion and decision making, not brainstorming. This is not to rule-out any new ideas that happen spur of the moment –*IF* they are relevant to the topic being discussed. Anything else should be raised in General Business at the end part of the meeting. For more on meetings, see the Second Strike SRC Resource Kit "Meeting Procedure".
- 2 When presenting an idea to a meeting of the SRC, the idea should be well thought out before hand and presented accordingly whenever possible.
- 3 Ideas are the lifeblood of SRCs. The most important element in creating ideas is having an atmosphere encouraging creativity surrounding the SRC. To

facilitate this, all ideas should be supported, even if for obvious reasons they will not work. Thank people for their contributions in many different ways. Gently explain why certain ideas may need to be rethought or what barriers are faced. More on this in the section, **Promoting Creativity.**

- 4 Every idea is a potential goldmine. The second you hear an idea in the wind, that prospector's nose of yours should start to twitch! Start digging, this could be a big one.

This is tricky for most people, we have all become too cynical and too safe in our work. Crazy ideas are seen as risky or just stupid. This is a fatal mistake for an SRC. Spend the time exploring ideas to see where they lead. If, at the end of the journey, they haven't taken you anywhere – then that's fine too! You've lost nothing, and you've gained an experience in exploring ideas. This will do nothing but help you in future adventures.

Interpretation

Ideas are not always open and easy to read at a glance, in fact usually they are hidden and obscure. The greatest ideas of our time (and the best SRC ideas) were not just immediately stumbled upon. No bolt of lightning struck a brain, though possibly that was the beginning. They are the result of hard work; after the lightning strike the idea evolves and grows until it is a finished product. It is rarely born that way.

As some examples:

“Once a student came up to me and said, ‘I want the SRC to fire all the teachers!’ Of course we had no power to do that, but I got to thinking that perhaps this comment comes from some frustration or problem that we can do something about. I discussed the comment with the student again and with a few other students. In the end the SRC decided to launch a project encouraging teachers to take on suggestions about teaching method from the students. We thought this was a pretty radical project, but it turned out that the teachers loved it. One teacher said to me, ‘We never get to find out what actually works – students just don't talk to us. This is great!’ And the students were happy that they were being listened to.”

Second Strike's TOP 10

We couldn't help but have a few favourite ideas. We've condensed our list down to our top ten.

10

Make an area of the school yard your pet project. New seating, new trees, a haven for students. A restful place where year 12s might want to study in their breaks or grade 6 might spend their lunchtimes at.

Put the name 'SRC' on everything.

There should be no obligation to the students using the area whatsoever. This is your gift to them. They pay money into your fundraisers, now you are going to use some of that money just for them. Give it to the students freely and they will be more likely to treat it with respect.

This area should not be near a teachers' staffroom as that will be seen as an ambush. Maybe take the worst area of the school as your project and do something productive with it.

9

One enterprising SRC saw the TV show Seinfeld reach almost cult status and decided to cash in on it.

Hiring a Big Screen projector they opened up the school hall to the students and screened the final episode of Seinfeld live. Entry had to be free in order to comply with copyright laws, but the popcorn cost 50c a bag.

In particular, this SRC said the school lacked any spirit of community: they came to school then left as soon as possible. This gave them a reason to be together and just enjoy each others company but still be aware that it was the school that linked them... and maybe that wasn't so bad.

8

Training!!!

An SRC that has had some level of training is three times as likely to rate their year as a success.

The greater the level of training, the greater the success.

Training can be run by the experienced members of the SRC or you can get outside professionals to assist. (see **further resources** section of this kit)

Training should be:

- *Practical
- *Hands on
- *Discussion based
- *Discovery based (there's no wrong answers)
- *Give individual skills as well as SRC skills
- *It should leave you with a real plan

SRC Perks of the Job

Spend a brainstorm or two just having ideas about the SRC. How could it be improved for its members? How could you get more out of it personally and as a group? Forget the mission statement for a while, forget the student body, what would help you do your job better? What would make you feel great about the SRC?

- ✦ SRC Badges
- ✦ SRC Certificates at end of year
- ✦ An SRC office
- ✦ SRC notice board
- ✦ SRC training days
- ✦ SRC camp
- ✦ SRC luncheons
- ✦ SRC Members' Photos on the wall
- ✦ Caricatures of SRC representatives
- ✦ SRC special stitching on blazer pockets
- ✦ Lunch provided at
- ✦ SRC meetings
- ✦ SRC mid-year/end of year celebration/ excursion
- ✦ SRC storage locker
- ✦ SRC logo
- ✦ SRC suggestion box
- ✦ Specific SRC colours
- ✦ SRC resources kept in library or SRC office
- ✦ SRC newsletter/newspaper
- ✦ Column or even a page in the school newsletter
- ✦ Thank you gifts for each representative at the end of the year
- ✦ SRC theme song (you don't have to write one if that sounds lame, you could pick a well known song that you feel sums up the spirit of the SRC and use that)
- ✦ SRC mascot
- ✦ SRC mascot suit (like Dorothy the Dinosaur)
- ✦ SRC comic strip
- ✦ SRC members get a subsidised trip to the movies for two
- ✦ SRC quotes page for funny/silly quotes by members
- ✦ SRC web page
- ✦ SRC based games
- ✦ SRC members competition
- ✦ SRC members folder with SRC logo and pictures on cover (make sure this is a nice professional looking folder)
- ✦ SRC mission statement
- ✦ SRC constitution
- ✦ SRC Banner
- ✦ SRC Flag
- ✦ Are there some rules that the SRC can be exempt from? Such as particular out-of-bounds areas are not restricted for the SRC?
- ✦ Guest speakers for student leaders only
- ✦ SRC representatives get to go to out of school conferences and forums
- ✦ SRC T-Shirts
- ✦ SRC members to develop nicknames
- ✦ SRC letterheads and personalised stationary
- ✦ SRC pigeon hole
- ✦ SRC posters just about the SRC, not about an event
- ✦ SRC owned BBQ

Many of these ideas revolve around developing the image and identity of the SRC. This is central to having happy and enthusiastic SRC reps. If students can identify themselves with the SRC and see it has a strong identity that they own, there will be a lot of dedication to the SRC.



Perhaps the SRC could develop it's own traditions or ceremonies?
One SRC in Trinidad opens each meeting by pouring a glass of water for the person on their left.

Some SRCs recite their oath of office before each meeting.
One SRC simply has a line that was said at the closing of each meeting by their SRC president 8 years ago, they make it an unspoken rule that the chairperson always closes the meeting this way: "Let's build it."

Maybe a ceremonial object that needs to be present before the meeting can start, like Parliament?