WAIDE
Youth Advisory Council (YAC)

Kathryn Monaco (Ed & Dev Psychologist)
Steve Watson (Principal)
WA Institute for Deaf Education
2012
Why YAC?
“Creating opportunities and mechanisms for children and young people to be engaged in service design and delivery is vital.”

Michelle Scott, Commissioner for Children and Young People Western Australia, 2011
Theory

- Professor Mark T Greenberg
- Professor Andy Cornes
- Doctor Maria Remine
- Doctor Linda Byrnes
WA Context

- 2 Deaf Schools (Primary and Secondary both co-located) (53)
- Hubs (Primary and Secondary) (15)
- Visiting Teacher Service mainstream setting (1800+)
- All programs and services are inclusive of oral and signing students.
What does this mean?

Close to 1,000 students in local mainstream settings who are not regularly connected with other similar peers.

WAIDE objective:

Increase youth sense of connection with others and awareness of self identity
What is YAC?
“It’s a community of Deafblind, Deaf and hard of hearing teenagers who come together.”

“We are a group of seven teenagers who have decided to put ourselves together and help other people like ourselves.”

YAC members
“The YAC gives everyone a say and be more independent on what we do.”

“The YAC gets the word out to others.”

YAC members
- Council who represents youth concerns related to their hearing loss in the area of: service delivery and mental health
  - Metropolitan
  - Aged 12 to 18
  - Deaf
  - Hard of hearing
  - DeafBlind
“YAC members are leaders in their community.”

YAC member

- Problem solve
- Courageous
- Help others
- Responsible
- Caring
- Open minded
Portfolio’s

- Identified focus areas

- Members elected themselves to be responsible for the following four areas:
  - Social
  - Education
  - Public Awareness
  - Finance

- Each member has a Portfolio that they are responsible for
Who is on the YAC?
“We [YAC members] receive a service, we are all deaf, we share the same feelings towards hearing loss and experiences in the community.”

“We all have a hearing loss in some way or another. We are all willing to be part of YAC, we have a desire to make things better for ourselves and together.”

YAC members
- 7 members
  - culturally Deaf, cochlear, unilateral, hearing aid users
- Aged between 12 and 15
- Members elect a Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and Secretary
- Facilitator (Kathryn Monaco, WAIDE)
- Leadership consultant
- 2 Interpreters
- Principal (Steve Watson)
“Confidence, decision making, creative ideas and the way I live with my cochlear.”

“Knowing what it feels like to be Deaf.”

YAC members
Terms of reference

- Communication with YAC members
  - Letters, emails and text

- Communication with YAC and with others
  - Aussie Deaf Kids October 2012 newsletter

- Attendance

- The members defined leadership responsibilities

- Work outside meeting time

- Voting process

- Leadership role is held for 2 terms
Typical meeting

- Leadership activity
- Meeting opened by Chairperson
- Discuss forthcoming activity/workshop
- Dinner - Secretary
- Continue with discussion/workshop
- Meeting closed by Chairperson
- Leadership activity
Activities

- Rope
- Finger snap
- Balloon
- Human letters
- Improvisation with objects
- Miming (emotions and rhymes)
- Building bridge
- Human tangle
Focus Questions:

- Do you have a disability?
- How would you describe hearing loss/Deafness?
- Do you think you have something unique because of your hearing loss?
- What obstacles do you have or have you experienced due to your hearing loss?
- How would you describe yourself?
Do you have a disability?

- Yes
- Of course
- No
- Yes we technically have a disability, but we do not need 24 hour assistance
How would you describe hearing loss/Deafness?

- Frustrating
- Scary sometimes
- Relaxing
- Nice
- Enjoyment
- Funny – whistling of hearing aids annoys others
- Embarrassing
- Difficulty
- Fun at times
- I feel equally as normal as everyone else but definitely different
Do you think you have something unique because of your hearing?

- Yes
- Artistic
- Can’t hear in class = draw
- Braille and Gymnastics
- Because of my deafness, I can read fast and efficiently
- I am very unique. I have my own way of doing things because my hearing affects me sometimes
What obstacles do you have or have you experienced due to your hearing loss?

- Missing information and sometimes people don’t take into consideration I have a hearing problem
- People like to bully me
- Miss bits of conversation when my friends are talking
- Makes me feel abnormal sometimes
What obstacles do you have or have you experienced due to your hearing loss?

- People frustrated and say ‘never mind’
- Missing class information and other important things
- Not being able to hear people
- People getting frustrated because you can’t hear them
- Go to movies but they are not captioned
How would you describe yourself?

- Good swimmer
- Independent
- Efficient
- Good musician and artist
- Very good reader
- Good basketball
How would you describe yourself?

- Enthusiast
- Good memory
- Braille
- Write Poetry
- Fast typer
What is YAC’s future?
“We want to expand with our actions and words by bringing community together…more specially the deaf so they don’t feel alone.”

“We have begun to organise activities and fun things to do that will hopefully take place in the near future, which will enable us to show others what and who we are and that we mean something.”

YAC members
“I would encourage them [other services] to find as many teenagers in their state who are hard of hearing or can’t hear or have vision and deafness to get kids together to support each other and other people. This builds kids confidence with one another and other people they don’t know and establishes our self awareness.”

YAC member
“Services for young people who require support and assistance, like a note take but also practice on how to get around problems. Like solutions on how to deal with problems when you can’t hear. Like bringing people together to talk so we can be closer with others with similarities.”

YAC member
2013

- Quiz Night Term 1
- Travel to Eastern States to encourage services to establish a YAC with the aim of establishing a national network of Youth Advisory Councils
- WAIDE organisational plan
WAIDE Governance

- WAIDE and VES are programs within the School of Special Educational Needs/Sensory (SENS)

- SENS Council established in accordance with the Education Act

- WAIDE and VES will continue to operate advisory committees

- The YAC’s voice feeds into the WAIDE’s advisory committees and then to the SENS Council
Thoughts about YAC?
Indicators of progress

- Participation
- Attendance
- Parental engagement
- Responses to leadership activities
- Responses to focus questions
“I am at this school and there is no one at my level so the YAC is good for me. When I go to school I’m the only one, like the odd one out. But when I go to YAC I’m more positive and confident as I feel more accepted, so I’m not alone. When you go to YAC it’s like a distraction from how you see yourself compared to others. It’s been interesting getting to know what other people are dealing with in comparison to what I deal with.”

“Its an awesome thing and it change people’s lives. It’s really good thing to have done.”

YAC members
“Its fantastic. Kids are doing this...He is happy to come.”

“There has been a big improvement in her...a lot more confidence in groups...and it has done a lot for me.”

“It supports her identity.”

Parents
“There is no place or group my daughter wants to be more with than the YAC group. This has been an amazing experience for my daughter who has gone from not knowing any peers with a hearing condition similar to hers to now belonging and feeling understood by those who face similar issues. She loves coming to YAC and looks forward to each meeting with such enthusiasm, it gives her ‘super powers’ to put it in her words!”

Parent
“My confidence has increased and made me more responsible...I have made new friends and have understood other peoples disability...I am able to perform because people make me feel better about myself. I belong there, I feel normal.”

YAC member
Thank you
Check us out….

www.waide.wa.edu.au

Kathryn Monaco
Kathryn.Monaco@education.wa.edu.au

Steve Watson
Steve.Watson@education.wa.edu.au