



Pride

In most schools, a curriculum day means a day off for students. At Darul Ulum College of Victoria, members of the Student Representative Council (SRC) attend their own professional learning workshops at the school, learning more about their roles and responsibilities.

In most schools, a parent-teacher interview day also means a day off for students. At Darul Ulum College, SRC members welcome parents to the school, interact with parents, direct them to classrooms and provide refreshments.

These are just two examples of how the establishment of an SRC has changed attitudes and outlooks at the school.

'The idea was born in 2010,' said the school's Senior Coordinator and Teacher in Charge of SRC, Mohammed Azim. 'There had been, for too long, a sense of student disengagement, of the students not feeling they belonged to the school. They didn't really have roles to play in the running of the school.'

Mr Azim's proposal that the boys' campus have an SRC was initially met with caution. It would be quite a cultural shift for the school. In 2010, 10 boys were chosen to be in a pilot mentoring program, as part of a strategy to address bullying.

This first step paved the way for an official SRC to be established in 2011. From 65 nominations, 15 Year 7 to Year 10 boys were elected to form the SRC. A new era for the school had begun. In 2012, there were 25 SRC members from years 7 to 12. Of the school's 300 boys, 120 nominated for the 2013 SRC. Thirty were elected in late 2012, including – for the first time – students from years 5 and 6.

'Everybody wants to join. It has become very competitive,' said Mr Azim, who has championed the benefits of 'student voice' over the course of an award-winning 25 year teaching career, including 10 years at Darul Ulum College. He is now assisted by Mr Faiyaz Khan, who looks after the SRC members' wellbeing.

The SRC is very active at Darul Ulum College of Victoria. It has coordinated and hosted leadership days at the school, World Teachers Day, a graffiti art workshop featuring an overseas artist, clean up campaigns, anti-bullying initiatives, cybersafety sessions for senior students and their parents, anger management sessions, and a Year 6 transition program.

Darul Ulum College of Victoria is a Prep to Year 12 coeducational Islamic school in Fawkner with 860 students.

Challenge: To better engage the 300 students of the boys' campus.

Action: Establish a boys' Student Representative Council (SRC).

Results: Increased pride in the school, leading to 120 of the boys nominating for 30 positions for the 2013 SRC.

We go on excursions to leadership conferences and leadership camps, which I really enjoy.

– Rami Dennaoui, Year 7 Student



SRC members are also active members of College's sub-committees, working with staff to plan sports days, camps, Eid celebrations (a Muslim holiday to celebrate the end of Ramadan or to commemorate the completion of the Hajj pilgrimage), the annual school quiz, school beautification and first aid (two of the 2012 SRC members have completed First Aid training).

In 2012, the SRC turned an empty canteen room into a careers room. It also started 'Saturday Sessions', where past students help current students with their schoolwork.

While establishing the SRC, Mr Azim and the College were advised by an Independent Schools Victoria SSNP Advisor Craig Dunstan. 'The students have become more active in the decision-making processes of the school. They are revelling in the chance to show leadership,' said Mr Dunstan. 'Also, teachers believe there has been a shift in how students treat and see each other within the school.'

Mousab Aboueid, a Year 10 SRC member, once had behaviour issues. 'I was the leader of my pack,' he said. Mr Azim, though, could sense a different type of leadership within Mousab. 'He is one of the hidden gems of the SRC program. He used to be rowdy and often in trouble. Now he is like a mediator, calling for calm.'

Ahmad Mohamad, a pioneering member of the SRC and head of the 2012 SRC, said that the College has less bullying now. 'It's a much friendlier environment.' Ahmad, a quietly-spoken Year 12 student, said that his involvement in the SRC has helped him with public speaking and leadership skills at and beyond school.

Rami Dennaoui, Year 7 student, enjoys the responsibilities of being on the SRC and the rewards that come with those responsibilities. 'We go on excursions to leadership conferences and leadership camps, which I really enjoy.' The conferences and camps were made possible through grants from the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship.

Student Representative Councils have been a part of many schools for many years. At Darul Ulum College of Victoria, however, it is still a relatively a new concept, a concept that has quickly proven to be quite beneficial.

'We are hopeful we will achieve even more in the coming years,' said Mr Azim.