Road safety good practice policy guide for Victorian schools

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The purpose of this guide is to support schools to embed a culture of road safety and to help inform the development of policy and practice using a safe system approach.

Vision: Safe trips, active communities, healthy schools

Road Safety Education Victoria's vision is to embed a strong culture of road safety within schools, helping to create communities where children and young people are not at risk of death or serious injury in the simple act of travelling to school, local shops or visiting friends and family. This can be achieved by implementing a whole school community approach to road safety; improving outcomes for students, promoting active travel, and improving air quality by reducing congestion around schools.

Rationale: Road crashes are the leading cause of death in Australia for children aged 1–14 years

An alarming number of children and young people continue to be hurt and killed on Victoria's roads. These serious injuries and deaths are preventable.

Children and young people are active, but also vulnerable, users of the road system – as pedestrians, cyclists, passengers in vehicles and, later, as novice drivers. As children reach adolescence, their likelihood of being involved in a road crash substantially increases.

Victoria's Safe System approach emphasises safer speeds, safer vehicles, safer roads, and safer road users.

This approach recognises that all aspects of the Safe System need to be activated to protect children and young people, including safe road environments and appropriate speed limits especially around schools and early childhood services.

Whole school community approach and how school leaders can influence better road safety outcomes

Strong leadership is pivotal to the success of building a sustainable model that supports road safety outcomes by seeking active participation of the entire school community.

The whole school community model recognises that road safety is not limited to a single subject or area, but should permeate throughout the school environment and culture. The model also ensures that road safety education is delivered at all stages of learning – from early years to upper secondary – and considers the developmental needs of students.

Diagram: Whole school approach to Road safety, with Evaluation. Segments: School culture and environment; Leadership and commitment; Professional learning; Teaching and learning; Families and communities; Support for staff and students.

Road safety is a shared responsibility

Government bodies, transport authorities, schools, parents, caregivers, and the wider community all play critical roles in creating a safe environment.

Each stakeholder brings valuable perspectives, resources, and expertise to the table, enabling a holistic and effective approach to road safety which includes:

- fostering collective accountability and promoting collaboration and knowledge sharing
- leveraging resources to address road safety challenges more effectively
- sharing best practice, insights and experiences to allow continuous improvement.

School communities have a unique opportunity to contribute to Victoria's vision of eliminating road deaths and injuries among children and young people through: policy; practice; education; interventions that reinforce safe behaviours; and community partnerships that shape the environment beyond the school gate.

Using an evidence-informed approach to road safety

Victoria, like all global leaders in road safety, has adopted a Safe System approach to road safety.

This approach aims to eliminate lives lost and considers the interaction between roads, vehicles, speed and road users. The core principles underlying this approach are:

- people make mistakes
- our bodies have a limited tolerance to crash forces
- safety is a shared responsibility.

Road Safety Education Victoria is working to raise awareness and take-up of road safety approaches and programs that credible international and Australian research have shown to have positive, lasting effects and avoid those that don't have conclusive evidence or have been shown to have negative outcomes.

A summary of what the research shows works and what doesn't is listed below.

What works	What doesn't
A comprehensive approach Road safety curriculum content needs to be provided on a regular basis over a child's school life to reinforce existing concepts and introduce new skills as they develop.	**Information-based programs** Injury prevention programs that primarily focus on providing information or knowledge to students about health behaviours have had little success in achieving positive behavioural change.
Interactive programs Interactive programs that generate an exchange of ideas and experiences can provide a catalyst for change and opportunities to practice new skills.	**One-day or one-off events** One-day or one-off events can only be of value if they are integrated with a longer-term multifaceted approach.
Focus on the social competency of students This can increase the competency of students to act in safe ways when presented with choices to engage in risky behaviour.	**Fear-based campaigns** In general, fear appeals (i.e. exposure to stories and images of road trauma in an attempt to promote a self-protective action) do not lead to positive behavioural change.
Whole school approach and capacity building A whole school approach engages and builds the capacity of all members of the school community as well as seeking to create a healthy and safe environment.	**Driving simulators** Driving simulators cannot adequately reproduce all the experiences of driving a real motor vehicle on a real road in real traffic.
School engagement and connectedness Research shows that good levels of school connectedness can be a protective factor for risk-taking behaviours.	**Off-road driving skills programs** Evaluations of these programs have all concluded that they had little or no positive effect on the road safety behaviour of students. Some may even have a negative effect.

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Road safety policy and practice

A comprehensive road safety policy is a key component of the whole school community approach to road safety. It is recommended that all Victorian schools develop a policy that is tailored to the specific needs of their school community.

The **Road Safety Education and Safe Travel Action Tracker** can be used as an easy and reflective tool to help identify road and transport safety gaps and to set goals for improving the safety, health and wellbeing outcomes for the whole school community.

Actions for schools

- **Commit to taking a whole school approach to road safety.**
- **Establish expectations and provide a clear framework for staff and students using the road safety policy template.**
- **Use the Road Safety Education and Safe Travel Action Tracker to reflect on current practices and identify gaps.**

Actions for others

Government, with support of community

- **Provide ongoing education and resources to schools to support implementation and sustained practices at a school level.**
- **Provide professional development to school leaders and staff to further embed road safety practice into policy and practice.**

Teaching and learning

Good practice road safety education uses a predominantly preventative model promoting safe travel and targeting risk factors appropriate to each learning stage. This allows students to develop a comprehensive understanding of their health, safety and wellbeing in the context of travel and transport, whether as drivers, passengers, pedestrians, cyclists or users of public transport.

Road safety relates to a number of learning areas within the Victorian Curriculum, from Health and Physical Education to Numeracy, Science and Humanities. It also aligns with the priorities of health, wellbeing and sustainability in schools.

The Scope and Sequence document maps the opportunities for road safety education with where they fit with the Victorian Curriculum and learning stages.

Action for schools

- **Support teachers and staff with professional development to deliver the highest quality road safety education.**
- **Encourage the use of a range of teaching and learning strategies to improve student outcomes.**

Action for others

Government, with support of community

- **Provide ongoing education and resources to teachers, including pre-service teachers, to support implementation of road safety education.**

Support and resources

The Road Safety Education Victoria partnership is committed to ensuring schools have access to free, evidence-informed resources that are aligned to the Victorian Curriculum and relevant to our transport environment.

- The **Road Safety Education Victoria website** links teachers to programs, resources and lesson plans.
- **Road to Zero at Melbourne Museum** offers free excursions to its immersive road safety exhibition showcasing the latest in multi-sensory interactive technologies and curriculum-linked programs to encourage students to think about how they can be part of the solution to make everyone safer on the roads.
- **Road Smart Interactive** is a free and facilitated incursion that is designed to reflect contemporary, best-practice approaches to road safety education. Using the latest immersive technology, students are taken through a series of experiences to understand how they can play a role in eliminating road deaths and serious injuries.
- **Professional development sessions** for teachers and school leaders to improve understanding of the Safe System methodology and how road safety can be implemented in the classroom in an engaging and meaningful way.
- The **Bike Ed program** gives children and adults the opportunity to learn about safe riding behaviours, road rules and riding in a shared environment.
- **Consultations with School Engagement Officers** are available to discuss specific road safety needs, issues and activities or resources available.

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Action for schools

- Source and promote evidence-informed curriculum materials to support learning.

Action for others

Government, with support of community

- Provide up-to-date, relevant and meaningful resources to schools and communities.
- Ensure equity of access to programs and resources.

Community needs assessment

Schools are culturally and socially diverse communities, each with their own distinct composition and associated challenges. To build responsive and appropriate educational opportunities for all learners, educators need to understand how the unique abilities, skills and experiences of their students impact their relationship with road safety.

Action for schools

- Actively engage with families and students to understand the scope of experience in their community.
- Where possible, tailor road safety programs to the developmental stages and cultural needs of the students.

Action for others

Government, with support of community

- Provide access to resources that are:
  - available in a range of languages
  - culturally sensitive and appropriate
  - consider physical disability and neurodivergence
  - developmentally appropriate.

Engagement and community partnership

Schools play an important role and often act as the conduit for information between individuals and the community, relaying societal expectations and standards. Schools are uniquely positioned to influence attitudes and behaviour beyond the school gate, providing a trusted platform for communication and engagement. Further to this, schools can partner with both local and state government agencies to improve safety and wellbeing outcomes.

Action for schools

- Improve and extend communications with staff, students and families regarding road safety messaging and practices.
- School leaders partner with local council to influence decisions regarding the safety of the school neighbourhood, such as speed setting, infrastructure improvements and health and wellbeing planning.

Student advocacy and leadership

Activating student voice is a powerful method of strengthening student leadership, engagement and participation in improving road safety. Children and young people can and should be key contributors to the design, delivery and evaluation of road safety initiatives within their schools and broader communities.

Action for schools

- Seek opportunities to activate student voice.
- Actively engage with families and students to understand the scope of experience in their community.

Action for others

Government, with support of community

- Seek opportunities to engage meaningfully with schools, students and families.
- Nurture and leverage relationships between schools and local and state governments.