



Policy Platform

VicSRC Victorian Student
Representative Council



WELLBEING

Let's connect



About the VicSRC

VicSRC Vision

A world where all students have access to education that is student-led, student-driven and student-focused.

VicSRC Mission

The VicSRC is the peak body representing school-aged students in Victoria. We strive for a world where all learners have access to education that is student-led, student-driven and student-focussed. We exist to empower all student voices to be valued in every aspect of education. The VicSRC is auspiced by the Youth Affairs Council Victoria and funded through the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET). The VicSRC provides resources, events, teacher professional development, and support to principals, teachers and students.

Want to know more?

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A more detailed version of this Platform with in-depth discussion and references is available from the VicSRC.



Some terms explained

Student Voice

To us, 'student voice' means having meaningful opportunities to participate in decision-making processes that affect us and our schools.

Student Leadership

We define student leadership as:

- Students leading learning: we direct our learning with guidance and support from teachers and others.
- Students leading decision making: we participate in decisions about our school and education.

Taking us seriously

We want to be taken seriously, not just listened to. We have a right to be heard. When we participate in shaping our learning we do better: we engage more, are supported to develop as individuals and are better prepared for the world beyond school. Our schools do better too; teaching improves and school is a respectful, supportive place.

Student voice takes many forms

Student voice can mean any group of students formed to represent student views in a school. Such groups can be called SRCs, student forums, student councils, student leadership councils or something else. In them we can meet to discuss, debate and decide our views on education.

Student voice can also refer to the ways we direct our own learning in the classroom and across the school.



Goals

1. All schools give students a voice in shaping their education, preparing them for a changing world.
2. Students meaningfully participate in policy and program development processes.
3. Students are involved in school decision making at all levels.
4. All students have a broad range of choices of what and how to learn and these options are equally valued.
5. All students have access to high-quality teaching, facilities and resources.
6. Every student feels safe and respected at school.
7. All students have ready access to the support they need, including mental health services.
8. Schools and their students work together with their communities.
9. Every school works towards a more sustainable future.

The Future of Learning



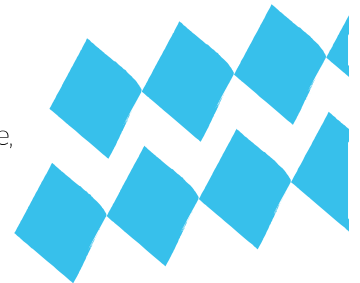
All schools ensure students have a strong voice in shaping their education, preparing them for a changing world.

Why this matters

We need an education that prepares us for a changing world. In the future, jobs will be harder to find and we may need to change jobs often or juggle multiple pieces of work at the same time. If we are to succeed in this kind of world we will need to be good problem solvers, good communicators, tech savvy and able to cope with change. We will do best after we leave school if we are engaged in our learning and are resilient, self-motivated learners. Schools need to create learning environments that make this happen.

We will be best prepared for the future if we are supported to be leaders in shaping our learning and when learning is focused on us, rather than delivering set information. This happens best when we learn together with teachers, rather than teachers simply giving information to their class. Our schools need to be places in which students are the central concern, so that all students can participate successfully in the school.

We have important insights and ideas to share to help shape the future of learning and teaching in our school. When all students have a genuine opportunity to share their voice, our schools are stronger.



Targets

- All schools have formal ways for their students to review their teaching and learning to help it improve.
- We can choose topics to study that interest and inspire us.
- All schools adopt 'student-centred' approaches that enable students to be active partners in their own learning and active contributors to decision-making within the school.
- Learning goes beyond the classroom and we can see how each activity is useful and relevant to our lives.
- Schools support and train students as 'technology leaders' within their school helping them develop real-world skills.

"We need to ensure that we students are included in the governing of our schools because what we students learn, think and do now, will affect generations to come." Student

Student Voice in Policy and Program Development

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Students meaningfully participate in policy and program development processes.

Why this matters

For students to influence the way education is delivered in Victoria we need to participate in decision-making about education policy and programs. If we only have opportunities to participate in decision-making about our schools, we miss out on giving input into important decisions that affect the ways education is provided.

It is important that education policy and program development is based on a strong understanding of the needs and experiences of students. If government hears our voices, education policy and programs will better meet our needs and aspirations.

When governments listen to us, they show the community and schools that our voice matters. The Victorian Government's support for the VicSRC shows that student voice is important and helps to support student participation across the State.

Targets

- The Victorian State Government continues to listen to the voices of students when developing policy and programs that affect them.
- That the Victorian State Government continues to support the work of the VicSRC as a key platform for student participation.
- That the Victorian Government listens to students about a range of issues that affect their lives, not just education.
- That when students are invited to participate in policy or program decision-making processes they are supported through:
 - » ensuring they are not the 'sole voice' and a minimum of two young people are invited
 - » timelines allow and enable young people to consult more widely to ensure that diverse student voice are heard
 - » removing barriers to participation for young people and creating safe spaces for participation, (further information about what this means can be found at the YERP online resource yerp.org.au).

"It's vital that we have students, policy makers and educational professionals at the decision-making table TOGETHER to create a well-rounded education system where students can feel empowered and thrive in the best way possible."

Student

Student Voice in School Decision Making



Students are involved in school decision-making at all levels.

Why this matters

We have a right to be heard. Schools are communities and in a community, everyone should have a chance to contribute their ideas.

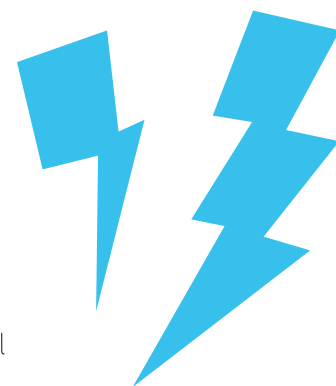
'Student voice' means more than just listening to us. It means we are participating in all of the different decision-making systems in our school, including the school council. There should be a broad range of interesting ways for us to get involved as well as the SRC. We should be supported to discuss, debate and decide on our input into decisions and we should be challenged to represent the diverse experiences, views and needs of students. 'Student voice' is not heard if only those students elected as representatives are being heard.

When we participate in decision making we develop important skills and we improve our school. We are more engaged in our learning, we learn to consider the experience of others (including teachers) and gain insights into school systems, we experience genuine decision-making linked to responsibility. Our schools gain more insight into students' experiences and perspectives are better able to cater for our diverse needs and interests.

Targets

- Every school has a properly funded Student Representative Council or similar body with a trained teacher adviser who is allocated adequate time allowance, senior teacher remuneration and recognition for their skills.
- All schools have more than one student on their school council and all other committees.
- Every school supports students to develop leadership skills and knowledge through funding their training and succession planning.
- Creation of an online platform offering research and guidance on supporting student voice.
- All teacher-training has a focus on student voice and personalised learning.
- That effective support of student voice be something teaching staff and principals are assessed against in performance review processes.
- Every school has a range of ways for students to be involved in decision making such as consultations, focus groups and surveys so that informal leaders are created as well as those elected to the SRC. These must include targeted measures to engage diverse students.

"Every student has their own opinions, each worth considering." Student



Curriculum and Learning

Students have a broad range of choices of what and how to learn and all are equally valued.



Why this matters

When we are involved in making decisions about our learning, we are more likely to stay at school and to do better. We also perform better at school when we are able to choose pathways, subjects and tasks that are meaningful and relevant to us. This kind of student-centred learning, which focuses on our needs rather than delivering set knowledge, helps us become more confident, adaptable, effective learners.



This can be achieved by involving us in curriculum planning, reviews, and adjusting learning programs in response to student feedback. In particular, programs like Teach the Teacher help teachers refine their teaching to cater for diverse learning styles and needs. In this way teaching and learning both benefit.

All academic and vocational pathways including VET, VCAL and VCE are important and should be equally valued as useful qualifications in preparation for life beyond school.

Targets

- Schools consult their SRC about ways to get broad student input into curriculum planning and assessment.
- Schools create student action teams, or other similar initiatives such as students as researchers through which students can explore matters related to curriculum content, learning and teaching approaches, and school organisation.
- There are multiple student members of every school's curriculum committee and in curriculum review processes.
- All schools develop formal processes that value student voice in gaining and implementing student feedback on curriculum, learning and teaching and assessment.
- All schools actively consider student feedback and responses (eg through student attitude surveys) in their reflection on school performance, and invite and support the involvement of students and their organisations in such reflection.



"I believe that it's important for all students to have an option and opinion towards their education as we all have different skills and unique attributes... we must encourage those unique skills to grow and develop into something of a career or further education for the student." Student

"What I've seen is that when students have a say and direct participation in making decisions about their learning and subject choices they are much more likely to be engaged, focused and encouraged to learn." Student

School Funding and Resourcing

5

All students have access to high-quality teaching, facilities and resources.

Why this matters

All young people should receive a high quality education. This happens best with good facilities and quality teaching. When schools have enough funding to provide high quality facilities and to support teachers properly, our learning benefits, we take pride in our school and expect more of ourselves and each other.

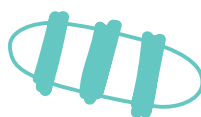
At present not all schools have high quality facilities or can attract, support and keep quality teachers. Students in disadvantaged areas are less likely to have access to the best facilities and teachers than students in well-off areas and in private schools.

The best way to ensure every student has good facilities and good teachers is needs-based funding, where schools receive funding according to the state of their existing facilities and the needs of their students. In this way, those that need more help receive it.

Targets

- A needs-based model is used to determine school funding.
- Students are involved in allocating resources to schools through student forums, school councils, finance subcommittees and the state-wide School Policy and Funding Advisory Council.
- There is increased transparency and openness around funding to make sure that funding is fair, transparent and easy to understand for students and the community.
- Schools and education are viewed as an investment, not an expense. This should be a bi-partisan issue and not a political football.

"Maximising learning space ensures that students are gaining a diverse range of learning techniques setting them up for the future." Student



A Culture of Respect



All students feel safe and respected at school.

Why this matters

It is important to us to have respectful relationships between students and teachers that are built upon mutual trust, respect and support. We learn better when teachers know our specific needs and interests and work with our strengths. They then expect more and we work harder to meet those expectations.

Strong relationships between school staff and students are also important to our wellbeing. When we have at least one adult who we trust and who knows us well, we are more likely to report bullying or other issues and teachers are more likely to spot when we are having difficulties.

In a culture of respect, we can all focus on learning. This is when all students and staff know that they are safe at school and that rules and expectations are fair and effective. In addition, when schools have strong, positive, inclusive values, including respecting and involving parents and carers and valuing cultural diversity, our wellbeing is improved and we have better mental health.

We learn best in a culture of respect that consults students about teaching and learning. Two-way feedback, offered in a safe and non-judgmental setting such as the Teach the Teacher program, can have huge benefits for teachers and teaching.

Targets

All schools are involved with the Teach the Teacher program.

- SRCs are consulted about expectations, behaviour, respect and their roles in this area.
- All students are involved in programs that enhance their understanding of respectful relationships.
- Student representatives are trained and supported to intervene positively and respectfully around issues of behaviour amongst students.
- Students are involved in enhancing respect and inclusion in their school through, for example, student action teams.

"A culture of respect, equality and trust is integral so supporting the best environment for learning and educational outcomes in schools. Recognizing that students have the maturity to make their own informed decisions or to learn from their mistakes should be respected in a school community, as it would be respected in any other setting. If this is established then student teacher bonds, trust and a healthier culture will all follow and the benefits will be felt across the whole school." Student

Student Wellbeing



All students have ready access to support, including mental health services, according to need.

Why this matters

We believe student wellbeing is a key responsibility of schools. Because we spend a large amount of time there, schools have an important role in supporting our wellbeing. Student support services and student welfare coordinators play a very important role in schools and should be well funded.

We learn best when our social and emotional development is supported. Wellbeing support should be offered to all students, not just those who are in difficulty. Prevention programs and assistance offered at school can help us manage ourselves and our relationships, develop skills for life, get back on track if we need to and avoid problems later in life.

Students who have a disability or who are experiencing difficulties need extra support. There are still gaps in the services offered to these students and more funding is required.

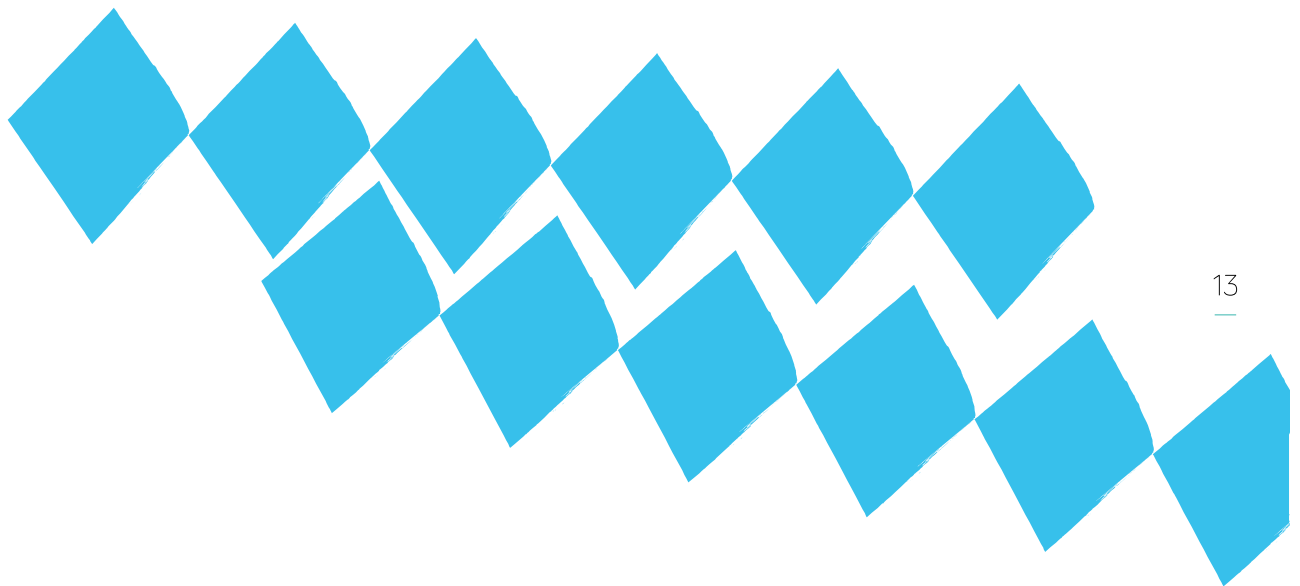
We can play an active role in supporting the wellbeing of our friends and peers at school. Often when we are having a tough-time, we look to friends for support. We can be supported to be even better at helping each other out if we are provided with training and support to do this really well and safely. This training should be something we actively participate in and help to shape rather than information just given to us. It should also ensure we know when we need the support of adults – to get support for our friends or ourselves.

Targets

- All schools have enough student support and wellbeing services such as welfare coordinators, health professionals and counsellors to meet the needs of all students.
- Stronger ability to provide support that prevents students from being vulnerable and assist them early when they need support. This can be done well through connecting youth focussed services to schools and expanding this support such as through the placement of youth workers in schools.
- Students have access to programs about mental health, drug and alcohol misuse and abuse, gambling addiction, and other relevant wellbeing issues.
- Students are provided with quality training and support to strengthen their knowledge and skills in how to be supportive of friends with mental health concerns.
- All Victorian students continue to have access to programs and resources to support gender diversity, sexual diversity and intersex topics.

- All school welfare and wellbeing staff are trained to work in positive, constructive and non-judgmental ways with students who share information about their sexual orientation and gender.
- Wellbeing strategies such as mindfulness are included in the curriculum.
- A culture of confidentiality and trust in schools so students know sensitive information told to staff will not be shared inappropriately.

“Student wellbeing is important as stress is a huge factor of a student’s school life and having someone that will support you through it would be an advantage to elevate stress.” Student



Collaboration and Partnerships: working together



Schools and their students work together with their communities.

We already play important roles in our communities and families. While we will take up new leadership roles in the future, many of us are leaders within our schools and communities today and have responsibilities in our families and communities as carers, supporters or as employees. Through our schools we can find new opportunities to play leadership roles in our communities in a range of interesting ways.

When we are more involved in our community, everybody benefits. We benefit when our schools and communities work together, sharing responsibility for our learning. When this happens, we are also better understood by the community and recognised as important members of society. Schools can benefit too from the resources communities have to offer. Communities also benefit – we have unique perspectives on what the strengths and challenges of our communities are and we have skills to draw on to share those ideas and create change.

In addition, being involved in our community helps our personal development by helping us feel part of our community, shaping our sense of identity and culture and teaching us new skills. Strong links between community and school can also make an important difference for those of us at risk of leaving school. Partnerships between workplaces and schools can also give us skills we can use in the workplace.

As well as working with the community, schools can work together to benefit students. Pooling resources can help provide specialist teaching or activities, help overcome geographic or social isolation, support innovation, facilitate learning across age brackets and enable sharing of good practice.

It is important to us to have the chance to meet students from different schools, such as at the VicSRC Regional Conference.

Targets

- Teachers and students are provided with information and resources to help us collaborate effectively with community groups and with other schools.
- Schools build partnerships with local organisations that enable us to work on projects in the local community and that bring community groups into the school.
- We are involved in deciding how our school will engage with the local community and we then create actions from this involvement (such as developing community resources or community based research) as part of the curriculum.
- We have the opportunities to be a part of student action teams that work on issues that interest us in the wider community.

- We are supported to work collaboratively with students from other schools and these opportunities are expanded.
- Our school work includes projects for the local media, researching within the local community and/or other things of benefit to our community.

“Working together in the community helps both students and adults to better understand one another and their needs. I love being able to work with my school and community as it helps to strengthen these relationships.” Student



Sustainability

Every school works towards a more sustainable future.

Sustainability is important to us. As leaders of today and tomorrow, we want to shape the world in which we live.

Schools can help alleviate the major environmental challenges Australia faces including pollution, species loss, climate change and land degradation.

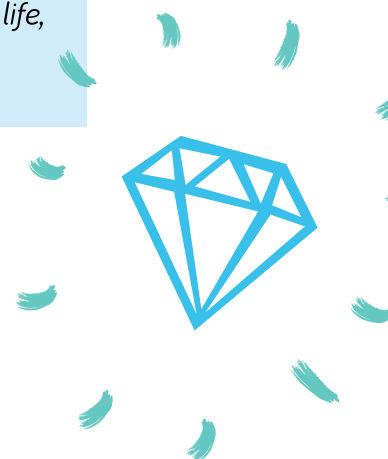
We learn better in sustainable schools. Learning about a real-world issue, such as sustainability, helps us feel that our education is relevant and connected to life beyond school. Also, sustainable schools often have better connections with their community, parents and carers, which has strong benefits for learning. Finally, sustainable schools save money on running costs to spend on teaching and learning.

Sustainable schools help create an environmentally responsible society. Involving us in sustainability projects helps us learn about practices that are often then adopted by our families.

Targets

- Expand and develop the 5 Star Leadership program that helps schools become more sustainable.
- All schools have a sustainability plan that the whole school community knows about and is working on.
- All teachers have professional development on environmental education.
- Schools ask their SRCs to work on sustainability projects, committees and initiatives.
- Schools create student-led and student-partnered sustainability and environmental committees and groups to lead action in these areas.

"My school has a beautiful view of the Strzlecki ranges and surrounding bushland, so it is important to help schools work towards a more sustainable future in order to keep these natural wonders. Apart from helping schools save on utilities that can be spent on programs for young people, making a sustainable future by teaching students about sustainability helps them develop good practices in life, and helps them become good global citizens." Student







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