

Sexuality education is compulsory in Victorian schools. While VELs provides the curriculum framework, practice is informed by the documents listed below. Here we summarise each one, but please follow the links to the source documents to learn more.

For assistance in developing a comprehensive sexuality education program in your school, contact FPV. P/ 03 9257 0133 E/ registra@fpv.org.au

Talking Sexual Health

Developed by the Australian Government, this national framework document is built on the key principles of diversity, social justice and the provision of supportive environments to improve the sexual health of young people.

It was endorsed by all Australian states and territories and subsequently supported by a professional development program, classroom teaching resources and a parents' booklet.

Focussing on STI/HIV prevention within the social world of young people, the classroom resource has been widely used at years 9 and 10 throughout Victoria.

A National Framework for Health Promoting Schools 2000-2003

Informed by the values and principles of the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion, the National Framework for Health Promoting Schools provides a framework for the way the health and education sectors can work together to build health literacy.

It endorses a whole-school approach to sexuality education, defining health promoting schools as schools which have a comprehensive and coordinated approach to learning by linking curriculum with the whole school environment and the community. In Victoria this national framework is spelt out in *Catching On*.

Health promotion priorities for Victoria 2007-12

This document identifies sexual and reproductive health as a Victorian health promotion priority for the first time. It also identifies young people as a target population and school sexuality education as a protective factor, arguing for:

a whole-of-school approach to sexuality education in schools (supported by relevant policies, including professional development for teachers).

Victorian Sexually Transmissible Infections Strategy 2006-2009

Because young people spend considerable time at school, this strategy argues for school-based STI prevention education. It affirms a whole-of-school approach to sexuality education involving a partnership with parents, local health service providers and local groups and requiring a commitment to professional learning for all members of the school community.

Because the scope and quality of sexuality education varies considerably, it states the need for:

- ongoing support and encouragement for schools to develop their programs
- resources to cover reproductive health and fertility protection; address the needs of students with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; lay a strong foundation for sexuality education at the primary school level; provide a practical model for the delivery of whole-of-school, comprehensive sexuality education
- pre-service education and ongoing professional learning programs to address the expertise and personal comfort of teachers
- a continued coordinated approach by the Department of Human Services and the Department of Education and Training.

Victorian Essential Learning Standards

The Victorian Essential Learning Standards, adopted in 2005, make sexuality education a compulsory component of the health education curriculum from Prep to Year 10. Sexuality education is explicitly included throughout the Health and Physical Education and Interpersonal Development domains, with teachers also encouraged to adopt an integrated approach, teaching sexuality education across the curriculum.

For example, through the Health and Physical Education domain, students will explore issues such as puberty, reproductive systems, sexual development and maturation, and sexual health issues such as community attitudes and laws, contraception, safer sex and STI prevention.

In Interpersonal Development, they will explore a range of issues pertinent to establishing healthy and respectful relationships and develop the skills and strategies to manage positive social relationships and understand, manage and resolve conflict.

In Science, in the Interdisciplinary domain, they will develop an understanding of themselves as organisms made of cells and systems; explore the relationship between system failure and disease; and explore the role of DNA and genes in patterns of inheritance. Topics such as these lend themselves to a discussion of sexual health and sexuality.

Catching-On Everywhere: Sexuality education program development for Victorian schools

Part 1 Part 2

Funded jointly by DHS and DEECD, this resource assists primary and secondary schools in developing and maintaining a comprehensive sexuality education program.

It reaffirms the need for 'comprehensive, whole-school sexuality education that provides consistent and accurate information to all young Victorians from an early age', and identifies the following three integral aspects of a whole-school approach:

- Curriculum, learning and teaching
 - comprehensive sexuality education is included in the curriculum
 - student achievement is assessed and reported against the curriculum standards
 - government and other appropriate external teaching and learning resources are readily available and utilised
- Community links, partnerships and services
 - schools promote a shared responsibility with the local community and parents
 - schools use external providers to complement their comprehensive, whole-school approach
 - schools network with other schools for teacher support and resource sharing
- School organisation, ethos and environment
 - policy, responses to critical incidents and student discipline procedures are reflected in learning and teaching
 - compliance with relevant legislation (e.g. equal opportunity) and policy (e.g. government health policy) is reflected in student learning
 - student wellbeing support and prevention programs inform student learning and teaching
 - staff role-modelling supports learning
 - displayed material supports learning
 - professional learning is available for school staff
 - staff input is sought.

Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide

The Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide asserts sexuality education is a shared responsibility between school-based programs, the local health and welfare community and parents. It reaffirms that it is compulsory for Prep to Year 10 and argues best practice is delivered through a whole-school approach that:

- teaches young people how to develop respectful relationships and how to minimise or eliminate the risk of potentially adverse consequences
- ensures young people can make responsible and safe choices
- assesses and reports on student achievement
- reflects a comprehensive evidence-based approach that focuses on prevention
- provides a curriculum context recognising the social world in which young people make decisions about their health, including sexual health
- addresses sex-related issues of social concern in its learning and teaching
- acknowledges young people as sexual beings
- provides policies and programs that acknowledge and cater for diversity of all students
- addresses the professional learning and peer support needs of teachers and school staff members responsible for developing and delivering the program
- provides professional learning to the school community in general.