



Student Engagement Policy

Rationale

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is committed to providing safe, secure and stimulating learning environments in all Victorian government schools.

Student engagement and wellbeing is one of the three key student outcomes that schools and networks are accountable for under the School and Network Accountability and Improvement Frameworks.

Students can reach their full educational potential only when they are happy, healthy and safe, and when there is a positive school culture to engage and support them in their learning.

Student engagement can be defined as three interrelated components: behavioural, emotional and cognitive.

- **Behavioural engagement** refers to students' participation in education, including the academic, social and extracurricular activities of the school.
- **Emotional engagement** encompasses students' emotional reactions in the classroom and in the school. It can be defined as students' sense of belonging or connectedness to the school.
- **Cognitive engagement** relates to students' investment in learning and their intrinsic motivation and self regulation.

In establishing and maintaining a positive school culture, Dandenong Valley School community believes student wellbeing is everyone's responsibility, is a high priority and that physical, social and emotional wellbeing underpins effective student learning and positive behaviour.

Aims:

- To create a positive school culture that is fair and respectful and which ensures that students feel valued and cared for, have meaningful opportunities to contribute to the school and can effectively engage with their learning.
- To recognise and respond to the diverse needs of students, accommodating different learning profiles and rates of learning and to intervene early to identify and respond to these needs.
- To promote an understanding of the link between student wellbeing and student learning outcomes.
- To acknowledge that staff, particularly teachers, are a vital source of support and determinants of student success.
- To develop student social competencies by embedding learning opportunities into their pedagogy, curriculum, behaviour management systems, expectations and structures.

Implementation:

- A school profile which reflects the diversity of the school community will be developed in conjunction with the school's strategic plan.
- A whole school Prevention Statement will be developed and implemented. This will include programs and strategies identified by the school community and put into practice to enhance student engagement and wellbeing.
- The rights and responsibilities of all members of the school community will be agreed to, clearly defined and displayed.
- Expectations shared by the Principal, teachers, school staff, students and parent's /carers shall be listed and displayed/ included in teacher, parent handbooks and included in the school newsletter.
- The DEECD publication 'Effective Schools are Engaging Schools. Student Engagement Policy Guidelines.' will be used as a reference for promoting student engagement, attendance and positive behaviours.

Evaluation:

- The policy will be reviewed to reflect the school Annual Implementation Plan and School Strategic plan
- The school will monitor student engagement and wellbeing through data such as that provided by parent and staff opinion surveys and incident reports. It will consider issues raised through these, and any other relevant information from the when undertaking a review of the school's policy, procedures and strategies.
- The school community will regularly review its student engagement policy and procedures as part of its cyclic policy and procedures review schedule.

SECTION 1

School Profile

- Dandenong Valley is a special developmental school serving the needs of students aged from pre-school (2.8 - 4.8) to 18 years, with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities and also physical, sensory, behavioural, medical and communication disabilities.
- Situated in the SE growth corridor, one of the fastest growing areas of Melbourne the school has a growing enrolment of approximately 180 (162.8 EFT) plus 22 Early Education students in 2010. Seventy percent of these students are male.
- The school caters for a population of 177 families (including Early Education families). Of these 15% have diverse racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds, 13% list English as a second language, 5.5 % are from migrant/refugee families and 48 families are in receipt of the Educational Maintenance allowance. One family lists themselves as being of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders decent. Student Family Occupation index number for 2010 is .5597.
- Currently there are no students in out-of-home care following Child Protection involvement and the school is not aware of any students who are gay, lesbian or bi sexual. We currently have no students deemed transient.
- The school has a designated transport zone which incorporates the local government areas of Casey, Greater Dandenong and Cardinia. Given the broad geographical area from which our students come and the door to door school transport, it is often difficult for families to have frequent informal contact with the school such as when dropping off or collecting students. However parents and carers are able and encouraged to make appointments to visit the staff and school, to participate in special class, department and whole school activities and to attend regular parent teacher meetings and workshops. Parental participation in special school activities in particular are generally well attended by families. Communication is also encouraged through students' communication diaries. Parent representatives for school council are made welcome - however obtaining these representatives can be a challenge.

Environment - Grounds and Facilities

- The school was purpose built in 1989 and comprised a brick core building of 6 classrooms, multipurpose room, laundry and administration area plus 2 relocatable buildings. Upgrades in 2004, the addition of extra portables and more recent upgrades sees the school with 20 classrooms, (6 core & 8 portables) a newly developed sensory room, resource room & paramedical offices in addition to established laundry and multipurpose rooms.
- Located between Fountain Gate Secondary College and Fountain Gate Primary School, it is well established within the Kevin Heinze Sensory Garden, attractive courtyards, a hydro therapy pool and exceptional playground facilities set out in junior and senior areas. The junior school playground has recently been developed and an outstanding horticultural area established.
- Further works under Building Education Revolution will see the development of a template multipurpose building able to cater for independent living programs, perceptual motor programs, conferences and an early education program.

Educational

- Dandenong Valley provides a broad range of individual programs for students with disabilities.
- A pre VELS curriculum aligned with the DEECD Working Towards level 1 of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards forms the basis for curriculum planning, assessment and reporting processes and procedures.
- Staff who implement this curriculum and other programs include 1 Early Education teacher, 1 specialist PMP teacher, 23 classroom teachers, 23 assistants, 3 challenging behaviour aides, 3 extra support assistants, integration aides, speech & language aids, a full time physiotherapist, 2 part time music therapists, a full time speech therapist and 2 full time occupational therapists, a part time psychologist as well as hydrotherapy staff including a manager/lifeguard and 2 part-time assistants. The staff size has continued to increase over past years. This has been in response to increased student numbers as a means of catering for diverse student needs in growing class sizes and to further improve implementation of programs aimed at improving student engagement and wellbeing in particular.
- Accreditation in Performance and Development Culture was achieved in 2007.
- The principles of learning and teaching (POLT) and our demonstration of these principles have been assessed and strategies put in place for continuous improvement. (see School Strategic Plan).
- In response to feedback and other data gleaned from parent and staff surveys, goals to improve Student Wellbeing and Engagement have been identified in the Strategic Plan and further defined in the school's Annual Implementation plan. The focus has been to improve student engagement and wellbeing through the implementation of programs which foster improved participation and enhance the development of the students' social skills and behaviours.

SECTION 2: WHOLE-SCHOOL PREVENTION

As stated in the School's Strategic and Annual Implementation Plans, Dandenong Valley School aims to improve student engagement and well being by implementing programs designed to promote students' participation, social skills and behaviours.

As well as monitoring class sizes, and staffing, particular focus is placed on improving student behaviour in the class and school. The following are key areas and some of the means by which this school endeavours to provide a positive school culture and to inculcate strategies through which student engagement may be supported and fostered on an ongoing basis.

Environment - Grounds & Facilities:

Provision of safe, supportive, stimulating learning environments accessible by all is clearly evident in the school's allocation of resources and its development of facilities. Some elements include:

- The establishment and maintenance of stimulating, purpose built playground areas.
- The establishment of a well resourced sensory room with documentation of resource materials and professional development provided to improve student participation.
- Well maintained and presented buildings and grounds.
- Active OH&S representatives and a committee which ensure a safe school, with well maintained facilities and with all compliance requirements met.
- Purpose built courtyards.

Cultures and Values:

The school works at establishing and maintaining shared values and attitudes which support the engagement of students and the maintenance of their well being through the following:

- Promoting and applying the School Values of Integrity, Respect and Responsibility to all interactions with members of the school and the wider communities.
- Promoting opportunities for parents and carers to be active participants in the school's decision making processes via the school council, through school surveys, and working parties.
- Promoting and implementing regular opportunities for parents/ carers to be directly involved in the development of their child's individual education plans through informal and formal Student Support Group meetings.
- Fostering communication by such means as student communication books, school newsletters, emails, phone calls as well as visits.
- Encouraging parent participation in special and some regular school programs.
- Ensuring the respect and value of all members of the school community is reflected in the school's approaches and policies. Parents/carers have opportunities to be involved in both the development and implementation of many school policies.
- Allocating and distributing acknowledgements and rewards for effort and excellence through praise, stickers, newsletters, certificates, Principal's awards etc.
- Ensuring all staff complete online professional development in Harassment and Equal Opportunity.
- Ensuring all staff complete performance plans and annual reviews.

Education:

All staff at Dandenong Valley School acknowledge and accommodate students as individual learners, identifying & catering for their specific needs, learning styles, interests & access requirements in all curriculum development, planning and implementation. This philosophy of responding to individual students is fundamental to implementing preventative and early intervention approaches which support student engagement and address barriers to student learning.

Some means by which this is achieved is by:

- Implementing the Principles of Learning and Teaching.
- Establishing individual learning goals for students through a team approach which includes parents, teachers, therapists and when possible students.
- Providing diverse programs including swimming, PMP, community access, walking, therapies, travel training and electives.
- Providing programs which support transition including supported employment, electives, interaction and community access.
- Providing augmentative communication systems including signing, pictographs, low and hi-tech communication devices.
- Providing meaningful & appropriate curriculum which incorporates reporting and assessment, planning and delivery.
- Implementing appropriate and varied teaching strategies.
- Implementing the You Can Do It Program.
- Providing extracurricular activities including a Drama Club and Choir in which students may choose to be involved.
- Creating and implementing opportunities for increased student participation in decision making including the establishment of the Student Representative Council and student participation in the Kids Conference.
- Providing opportunities for students to access local community venues and programs such as the local library, neighbouring school programs and community based recreation and leisure programs and facilities.

Health & Wellbeing-

The school supports student health and wellbeing and thereby supports their engagement with learning through actions, programs and policies including:

- Medical training to support the health of specific students.
- first aid training for all staff.
- Impairment specific visiting teachers.
- Walking programs.
- Go For Your Life initiative.
- Asthma, Epilepsy management plans.
- Achievement of the status of an Asthma Friendly school.
- Development of individual student's Behaviour Management plans.
- Establishment of behaviour management support groups.
- Implementation of student specific sensory programs.
- Sharing information to support student health/ wellbeing eg via newsletter.
- Support for after school care.
- Support for holiday programs.

Resources:

The engagement and wellbeing of students is also supported is through the provision of physical and human resources including:

- High staff to student ratio,
- Extra assistance and challenging behaviour aides.
- Broad range of teaching and learning resources.
- ICT resources including a high student to computer ratio, interactive plasma screens in each classroom, a variety of access peripherals and devices & a broad range of software.
- Therapists including speech therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and music therapists.
- Relevant professional development for all staff.
- Numerous volunteers.

SECTION 3: RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

The legal responsibilities under which the school acts include the following:

- The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006) which details the human rights expectations for all Victorians. The charter affirms that all people are born free and equal in dignity and rights. While the charter demands equality for all, it also emphasises the value of difference. The charter requires public authorities, including government schools and their employees to act compatibly with human rights and to consider them when making decisions and delivering services.
- The Disability Standards for Education 2005 which clarifies and makes more explicit the obligations of the schools and the rights of students under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992. These standards cover enrolment, participation, curriculum development, student support services, and harassment and victimisation.
- The Education and Training Reform Act 2006 which sets out the basic legal requirements for attendance ie in Victoria young people between the age of 6 and 16 years must be enrolled in a registered school or be registered for home schooling. It is also the obligation of the school, parents/carers and broader community to support students to maintain full attendance until year 12 or its equivalent. (in special type settings this seen as until and including age 18)

Based on these the following rights and responsibilities were determined by the school community to be in evidence and a priority for members of Dandenong Valley School. The rights and responsibilities are also reflected in the Codes of Conduct for the different bodies which make up our school community.

All members of the public and our school community have the right:

- To feel safe, supported and welcomed in our school.
- To be treated with respect and dignity
- To be free from all forms of discrimination

All members of our school community (staff, students, parents/carers) have the responsibility:

- To treat each other with dignity and respect at all times.
- To behave in accordance with the obligations of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 and Equal Opportunity Act 1995.
- To ensure that their actions and opinions do not have a detrimental affect any other member of the school community.

All parents/carers have the right to:

- Be confident that their children will be treated with respect, integrity and dignity.
- Be confident their children will be educated in safe supportive, learning environments.
- Open communication with their child's educational team.
- Be confident their children will have access to, and participate in a full relevant and challenging curriculum.
- Access to school areas and facilities. These shall not be restricted by physical disability and all means will be taken to facilitate access.

All parents/carers have a responsibility to:

- Develop positive, productive relationships with members of the school community.
- Actively support the implementation of their child's learning programs eg through provision of resources, ensuring student attendance, ensuring student punctuality, demonstrating respect for staff

All staff have the right to:

- *Apply discretion to the implementation of behavioural rules and subsequent consequences*
- *Support in the fulfilment of their educational duties.*
- *A work environment with clear expectations and established policies and procedures.*

All students have the right to:

- Learn and be social.
- Access to school areas and facilities. These shall not be restricted by physical disability and all means will be taken to facilitate access.
- Individualised learning programs

All students have the responsibility to:

- Be prepared to learn.
- Allow others to acquire the most benefit from learning experiences.

It is also to be noted that:

- Bullying (& cyber bullying) by or of any member of the school community will not be tolerated and steps will be taken according to DEECD Safe Schools are Effective Schools, the school's Anti Bullying policy and its Internet Codes of Conduct.
- The school, in its teaching and learning programs will acknowledge and value diversity and support this with appropriate curriculum, pedagogy and assessment practices.

Section 4: SHARED EXPECTATIONS

Dandenong Valley School community has established shared expectations which support the implementation of our school's values of integrity, respect and responsibility. These expectations also underpin student attendance, behaviour and engagement.

Expectations of the principal include that she:

- provide leadership to school staff, parents and students
- uphold every child's right to an appropriate education up to compulsory age
- ensure staff, students and the wider school community understand their expectations
- ensure staff and students have the resources and equipment to assist them in the process of teaching and learning
- ensure the curriculum of the school takes into account the needs and diversity of all students
- encourage the participation of parents
- ensure that policies and procedures developed and implemented within the school reflect the school's aspirations and comply with their legal, moral and DEECD obligations
- monitor behavioural issues, their impact and the impact of implemented strategies

Expectations of the leadership team (ie Principal class officers, leading teachers and department leaders) include that they:

- ensure that duty of care obligations to students are upheld by all
- ensure that equal opportunity rights and human rights legislation are upheld
- ensure that the school's teaching and learning programs and practices acknowledge, value and support diversity
- be proactive in the development, leadership and implementation of strategies which encourage preventative approaches to student behavioural issues including the provision of ongoing professional development

Expectations of staff may include that they:

- create engaging lessons and or programs
- provide enjoyable classrooms
- make sure every student has an equal opportunity to participate
- ask for student input into the curriculum and class environment
- listen to students and value their contribution
- listen to parents' insights into their child's learning
- provide a wide range of resources to engage students
- understand the needs of students and accommodate those needs
- provide support at any time of the school day
- are non-judgemental in their attitudes
- offer trust and confidentiality and
- provide understanding and caring

Expectations of students may include that they:

- participate
- respond
- enjoy being in class
- treat classmates and staff with respect and dignity
- value school resources
- attend regularly and
- support classmates and staff

Expectations of parents/carers include that they:

- provide support for their child attending the school
- cooperate with requests from the school
- promote positive educational outcomes for their child
- ensure their children are attending school
- communicate clearly with the school about the needs of their children
- understand the school's behavioural expectations and encourage a consistent approach
- provide all information relevant to the development of their child's learning programs

Attendance:

It is recognised that many students who attend Dandenong Valley School are reliant solely on parents/carers to enable their attendance. Parents and carers are expected to support their child's regular attendance. If the child is absent the parents/carers will contact the school bus service (if appropriate) and the school as soon as possible. If the child is to be absent for an

extended period, it is expected that contact will be made between the parents and school to discuss how the school may best support the child's learning programs. School staff will monitor student attendance and provide follow up to ensure student attendance is maximised.

While it is acknowledged that health issues of some students may at times impact on their punctuality, it is expected that overall parents demonstrate support for their child's education and respect for school staff by ensuring that students are punctual.

Many students who attend the school have health issues; they have individualised learning programs which take these into consideration, however it is expected that parents/carers do not send their child to school if that child is unwell and unable to participate in their individualised programs due eg to short term health problems. This behaviour impacts on the engagement, safety and wellbeing of others as well as the child themselves.

Behaviour:

Appropriate student behaviours are recognised both formally and informally by means that are most relevant to the individual student and the circumstance of the demonstrated behaviour.

This may include positive feedback, stickers, reports, certificates, praise, awards, newsletter items, recognition at assemblies, leadership opportunities and access to special activities.

Opportunities for formal recognition occur at all levels - class, department and whole school.

During the student's support group meetings, behavioural expectations are explored and defined. Student specific behavioural management plans may also be developed with members of the child's support group for ongoing or severe behaviours. The plans identify specific targeted behaviours, intervention strategies and agreed consequences. These plans are routinely reviewed.

The school's agreed response to inappropriate behaviours is that consequences be staged, relevant, applied fairly and consistently and encourage students to become aware of and take responsibility for their actions.

Some consequences may include but not be limited to changes to learning programs, apologies, reparation, implementation of new social scripts, teaching of specific appropriate behaviours, withdrawal of privileges, time out, discussions, contacting parents/carers.

5. SCHOOL ACTIONS/CONSEQUENCES.

Dandenong Valley School community (staff, parents/carers and school council members) recognise the importance of promoting student engagement and positive behaviours to maximise student learning and wellbeing.

A team approach incorporating teachers, therapists and parents/carers is also used to establish students' educational goals. These Individual Education Plans reflect the importance of identifying and addressing the engagement and behavioural priorities for each student specifically. This is substantiated and facilitated in the expectations detailed in the Dandenong Valley School Pre VEL's curriculum domains of Personal Learning and Interpersonal Development.

The school recognises the need to ensure strategies are in place to firstly prevent disengagement, but when occurring, to identify and intervene at a whole school and individual level as early as possible. (Refer to document Identified Staged Response Strategies and Actions).

In determining actions and consequences of inappropriate behaviours, the school takes the following into consideration:

- that emphasis is placed upon rewarding positive behaviours and attitudes.
- that a staged response will be implemented when shared expectations are not met.
- that the staged response should have a prevention/early intervention focus.
- that data is taken into account when determining actions and consequences.
- that all actions and consequences for inappropriate behaviour should have a clearly defined educational outcome.
- that behavioural plans will be developed in consultation with the Principal.

Given the profile of the student population some examples of appropriate behaviours by students could include:

- working towards and attaining individual behavioural goals
- working towards and attaining individual personal learning goals
- working towards and attaining individual interpersonal development goals
- attending to staff- looking or listening
- co-operating & participating
- responding
- turn taking & waiting
- following instructions
- using equipment and resources safely and responsibly

The means by which these behaviours may be acknowledged and encouraged have previously been listed but may include but not be limited to praise, reports, prizes, recognition at assemblies, in newsletters, and or through special privileges.

When students do not meet expectations deemed appropriate and reasonable for the child by the school community, consequences will be implemented.

Some actions may include but not be limited to: reviewing and clarifying expectations with the student and/ or class, changes to learning programs, apologies, reparation, implementation of new social scripts, teaching of specific appropriate behaviours, withdrawal of privileges, temporary withdrawal from programs, time out, discussions, provision of additional resources, contacting parents/carers, holding additional support group meetings and reviewing behavioural plans.

When a student exhibits ongoing behavioural issues, as part of a staged response, a range of strategies will be implemented. These will include holding student support group meetings, and may include temporary and brief periods of in school suspension, consultation with specialists including doctors and psychologists, and suspension. In extreme cases when the safety of students and staff are to be considered expulsion may be considered.

If suspension and or expulsion are to be considered the Procedures as listed by DEECD will be followed. Parents/ cares will be provided with all necessary information and steps will not be taken lightly.

Staged Response Checklist for Student Engagement

Stage 1 Prevention and early Intervention- creating a positive culture	
Suggested Strategies	School Actions
Define & teach school wide expectations for all.	Establishment and implementation of : School Values. Staff and Student Codes of Conduct School and Class Rules Modelling behavioural expectations Curriculum- eg Physical Personal & Social Learning You Can Do It Program Principles Of Learning and Teaching Anti Bullying, Anti discrimination, Equal Opportunity Professional Development
Establish relevant school wide prevention programs .	You can Do It Individual Education Plans Resource management processes- Provision of staff, facilities / equipment aimed at facilitating and supporting engagement. Class and Staffing processes. Positive Reinforcement provided multifaceted approach and forums. Student Profiles (personal & academic) Team Approach to Goal Setting. Student Representative Council Development of social competencies. Development of decision making. Provision of extracurricular activities. Transition programs Student Representative Council, Student Department Representative Team Teach Australia Parent support through specific parenting programs & workshops. Information dissemination through fliers, newsletters, communication books, meetings, and phone calls Provision of therapies: speech, occupational, music and physiotherapy.
Establish consistent school wide processes to identify students at risk of disengagement from learning.	Educational Needs Assessments Transition Processes. Program Support Group Meetings Team Approach to Goal Setting. Student Profiles (personal & academic) Behaviour management processes.
Establish consistent school wide processes and programs for early intervention.	Establishing and implementing programs and processes which foster student engagement: Student Profile Development Individual Program Planning Curriculum planning You can Do It Program Transition processes Program Budgeting Team Planning Music Playgroup Early Education Program Provision of resources for strategies for dealing with challenging behaviours.

Staged response checklist for Student Engagement

Stage 2: Intervention: a targeted response for individual students	
Suggested Strategies	School Actions
Establish an understanding of the life circumstances of the child/young person and how they feel.	Develop Student Profiles. Collect & collate information for student files & communication records. Maintain communication systems, including parent teacher meetings, phone contact, communication books. Review EMA & Census information Implement Principle one of POLT.
Establish data collection strategies.	Routine assessment & reporting. Student Assessment Folders Student files (May incorporate anecdotal records, checklists, behaviour diaries, star charts) Regular PSG Meetings Team Approach to Goal setting Communication Records
Develop the plan for improvement based on data and review regularly.	Team approach to behaviour management plan development. Maintain behaviour diary. Establish routine review periods.
Explicitly teach and/or build replacement behaviours.	Individual Education plan You can Do It plan Social competency activities , Utilise Transporter DVD Social Stories Social scripts Staff model appropriate behaviours
Determine strategies for the monitoring and measurement of student progress.	Establish behavioural plan incorporating review & assessment plans Assess students at beginning & throughout year to monitor improvement. Identify key engagement & behavioural indicators.
Establish inclusive and consistent classroom strategies.	Behaviour management plans- shared with all staff Reward systems- class & school (eg YCDI stickers) Communicate strategies to all staff involved with student. Display plan.
Establish out of class support strategies.	Utilise psychologist and other specialists as deemed appropriate. Refer to outside agencies. Sharing Behaviour Management Plan information Yard duty processes and arrangements including key tags with information on specific student needs & strategies, students identified for additional support & timetabling and regular information sharing at staff meetings.
Establish a student support group.	Parent support group. Buddy system - seniors helping to engage others. Big Brother Big sister Program