



Introducing the **Victorian** Essential Learning Standards

Physical, Personal and Social Learning

Discipline-based Learning

Interdisciplinary Learning

Interdisciplinary Learning



Introducing the VICTORIAN ESSENTIAL LEARNING STANDARDS

What are the *Victorian Essential Learning Standards*?

The *Victorian Essential Learning Standards* describe what is essential for all students to achieve from Prep to Year 10 in Victorian schools. The Learning Standards provide a framework for planning the whole school curriculum by setting out standards for students to achieve in core areas. Schools will be able to use the Learning Standards to plan their teaching and learning programs, including assessment and reporting of student achievement and progress.

The Learning Standards are based on the best practice in Victorian schools, national and international research and widespread consultation with school communities, educators, professional associations and community groups. They will provide the means for all Victorian schools to use the best curriculum thinking to better prepare students for success at school and beyond.

Shaping the new *Victorian Essential Learning Standards*

The starting point for a curriculum for essential learning is the question: what do students need to know and be able to do to succeed in the future?

Students need to develop a set of knowledge, skills and behaviours which will prepare them for success in a world which is complex, rapidly changing, rich in information and communications technology, demanding high-order knowledge and understanding, and increasingly global in its outlook and influences. To succeed in that world, students will need to create a future which:

Is sustainable – developing an understanding of the interaction between social, economic and environmental systems and how to manage them

Is innovative – developing the skills to solve new problems using a range of different approaches to create unique solutions

Builds strong communities – by building common purposes and values and by promoting mutual responsibility and trust in a diverse sociocultural community.

Educational principles

The *Victorian Essential Learning Standards* are underpinned by a clear set of educational principles which reflects the community's expectations for schooling in Victoria.

Specifically, the educational principles are:

1. **Learning for all** – proceeding on the basis that all students can learn given sufficient time and support, and that good schools and good teaching make a positive difference to student outcomes
2. **Pursuit of excellence** – seeking to accomplish something noteworthy and admirable individually and collectively, and performing at one's best
3. **Engagement and effort** – acknowledging that student ability is only one factor in achievement and that if students work hard and make an effort, they improve
4. **Respect for evidence** – seeking understanding and truth through structured inquiry and the application of evidence to test and question beliefs
5. **Openness of mind** – being willing to consider a range of different views and consider different ways in which evidence is perceived and solutions can be reached.



Three strands of learning

To succeed beyond the compulsory years of schooling, all students need to develop the capacities to:

- manage themselves as individuals and in relation to others
- understand the world in which they live
- act effectively in that world.

To ensure that the school curriculum develops students with these capacities, the Learning Standards are developed within three core, interrelated *strands*. Each strand has a number of components called *domains*.

The domains describe the knowledge, skills and behaviours considered essential in the education and development of students to prepare them for further education, work and life. They also include the standards by which student achievement and progress is measured. The three strands for the new curriculum and their associated domains are:

Physical, Personal and Social Learning

- Health and Physical Education
- Interpersonal Development
- Personal Learning
- Civics and Citizenship

Discipline-based Learning

- The Arts
- English and Languages Other Than English
- The Humanities (Economics, Geography and History)
- Mathematics
- Science

Interdisciplinary Learning

- Communication
- Design, Creativity and Technology
- Information and Communications Technology
- Thinking.

Using the new Learning Standards

In many ways this is not new. Right now many schools are already doing valuable work in building students' knowledge, skills and behaviours in the areas identified in the Learning Standards. For example, many schools explicitly set out to build good social and interpersonal skills in their students. Other schools promote the 'Thinking Curriculum' and, of course, much of what is in the three core strands is already part of the Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF) on which the existing school curriculum is based.

What is new, however, is that Victoria has now a set of standards for ensuring that all three strands, and their domains are addressed by all schools in their teaching programs and in their assessment and reporting practices.

The CSF will remain as an important curriculum resource to help teachers in writing teaching and learning programs. However, in the future, the school curriculum and reports to parents will be organised around the new *strands* and *domains* and not around the eight Key Learning Areas defined in the CSF. This will mean that schools are able to give greater recognition to the skills which are part of the Interdisciplinary Learning strand and to personal learning which is part of the Physical, Personal and Social Learning strand.

This does not mean that schools will have to allocate specific time to teach 'Thinking' or 'Problem Solving'. These skills are part of the teaching programs in schools now. There are many ways in which schools can structure curriculum programs to meet the Learning Standards appropriate to the needs of their students, their staff expertise and their community's expectations. The Learning Standards have not been designed as an organisational template on which to develop timetables or school structures.

The Learning Standards are designed to be used for whole school curriculum planning. School teams will decide how to meet the Learning Standards. For some standards this may be through explicit teaching focused on a particular standard and for others it will be by creating units of work which address a number of standards at the same time. The key to using the Learning Standards successfully will be the development of a whole school curriculum plan. Figure 1 on page 6 illustrates this approach.

A new structure

Within each strand of learning, the essential knowledge, skills and behaviours are organised into *domains* with further divisions into *dimensions*. Standards are written for each dimension. The relationship between the strands, domains and dimensions is shown in Table 1.

Strand	Domains	Dimensions
Physical, Personal and Social Learning	Health and Physical Education	Movement and physical activity Health knowledge and promotion
	Interpersonal Development	Building social relationships Working in teams
	Personal Learning	The individual learner Managing personal learning
	Civics and Citizenship	Civic knowledge and understanding Community engagement
Discipline-based Learning	The Arts	Creating and making Exploring and responding
	English	Reading Writing Speaking and listening
	Humanities (Economics)	Economic knowledge and understanding Economic reasoning and interpretation
	Humanities (Geography)	Geographical knowledge and understanding Geospatial skills
	Humanities (History)	Historical knowledge and understanding Historical reasoning and interpretation
	Languages Other Than English (LOTE)	Communicating in a LOTE Intercultural knowledge and language awareness
	Mathematics	Number Space Measurement, chance and data Structure Working mathematically
	Science	Science knowledge and understanding Science at work
Interdisciplinary Learning	Communication	Listening, viewing and responding Presenting
	Design, Creativity and Technology	Investigating and designing Producing Analysing and evaluating
	Information and Communications Technology (ICT)	ICT for Visualising thinking ICT for Creating ICT for Communicating
	Thinking	Reasoning, processing and inquiry Creativity Reflection, evaluation and metacognition

Table 1: The structure of the essential learning strands

Stages of learning

While it is recognised that student learning is a continuum from Prep to Year 10, and different students develop at different rates, they broadly progress through three stages of learning from:

Years Prep to 4 - Laying the foundations

In these years the curriculum focuses on developing the fundamental knowledge, skills and behaviours in literacy and numeracy and other areas including physical and social capacities which underpin all future learning.

Years 5 to 8 - Building breadth and depth

In these years students progress beyond the foundations and their literacy and numeracy becomes more developed. An expanded curriculum program provides the basis for in depth learning within all domains in the strands.

Years 9 to 10 - Developing pathways

In these years students develop greater independence of mind and interests. They seek deeper connections between their learning and the world around them and explore how learning might be applied in that world. They need to experience learning in work and community settings as well as the classroom. They are beginning to develop preferred areas for their learning.

The new Learning Standards recognise the differing learning needs of students at each of these stages, phasing curriculum expectations and standards over six levels which are consistent with the structure of the CSF.

In some domains standards are not introduced at the early levels, in recognition of the different learning needs of students across the stages of learning. For example, standards will be set for all levels in literacy and numeracy but not in Science or the Humanities where formal standards are more appropriate for later years.

Assessment against the different standards for different levels enables teachers, schools and parents to form a clear picture of student progress throughout the stages of learning from Prep to Year 10.

Standards

The Learning Standards define what is essential and developmentally appropriate for students to know and be able to do at six different levels. These levels are associated broadly with the years of schooling from Prep to Year 10 as shown in Table 2.

The standards are central to the teaching and learning process. Assessment against these standards enables teachers, schools and parents to form a clear picture of student progress throughout the stages of learning from Prep to Year 10.

Level	School Year	Attributes of the Successful Learner
Level 1	Preparatory Year	Beginning learners develop social skills such as understanding classroom behaviour and making connections between school and home. Through curiosity and encouragement, they take an interest in learning, begin to learn basic literacy and numeracy skills and develop some simple technical and coordination skills.
Level 2	Years 1–2	Learners begin to organise ideas, use language to work with peers and master basic literacy and numeracy skills. They begin to develop an awareness of other groups, cultures and times.
Level 3	Years 3–4	Learners become more persistent and prolific in their learning and develop confidence through using specific skills. They are able to participate in discussion about ideas and beliefs and express informed opinions.
Level 4	Years 5–6	Learners become more complex thinkers and are able to apply problem-solving strategies. They are able to participate in and lead small group activity and learn more deeply by undertaking more extended projects.
Level 5	Years 7–8	Early adolescents develop a stronger individual sense of identity and begin to consider increasingly complex ideas. Their interest in learning becomes more dependent on what they see as important or consistent with personal goals. They participate in a variety of physical activities and understand the effects of risk taking.
Level 6	Years 9–10	Learners begin to see themselves as young adults. They are independent thinkers able to use formal methods of enquiry and seek to apply learning to the world outside school. They set personal health and fitness goals and undertake activities to achieve them.

Table 2: Attributes of the successful learner across the levels

Figure 1

VICTORIAN ESSENTIAL LEARNING STANDARDS

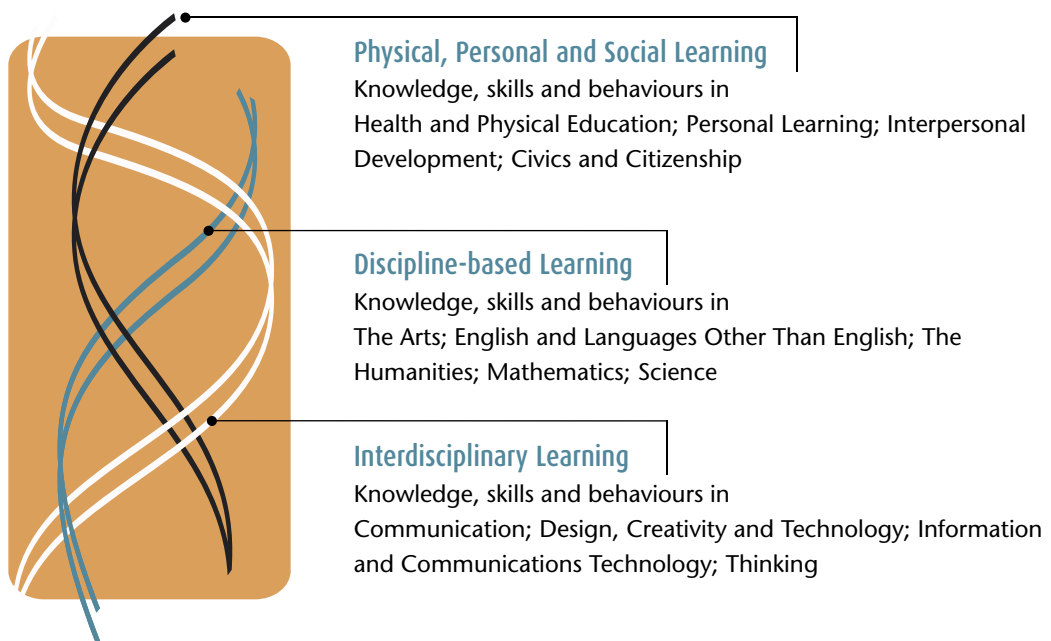
A WHOLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Three interwoven purposes

To equip students with capacities to:
Manage themselves and their relations with others
Understand the world and
Act effectively in that world

to prepare them for success in education, work and life.

This is achieved through the three core, interrelated strands of



across the stages of learning

Years Prep to 4 Laying the foundations	Years 5 to 8 Building breadth and depth	Years 9 to 10 Developing pathways
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underpinned by educational purposes, principles and values
to form

Victorian Essential Learning Standards a framework for whole school curriculum planning

Schools plan their teaching and learning programs, using the three strands, to enable their students to achieve the essential statewide learning standards.

What do schools need to do now?

2005—A year of validation

Although planning for full implementation of the *Victorian Essential Learning Standards* will commence from the start of the 2005 school year, 2005 will serve as a validation year where the Learning Standards are effectively validated in practice by schools, as they use them in their own environment.

Schools will be expected to use the Learning Standards to audit existing programs and use the audit to prepare a plan for 2006 and beyond that reflects the new approach. Teachers will need to work with their colleagues in exploring ways of using the new Learning Standards.

The VCAA will sponsor, support and evaluate trials by groups of schools of important elements of the new Learning Standards (for example, assessing and reporting Physical, Personal and Social Learning as well as Interdisciplinary Learning strands in efficient and effective ways); and validate lessons/units/courses already in use in schools. The VCAA will seek expressions of interest from schools interested in participating in this process.

What support will there be for schools?

Schools will be supported in this task by the Learning Standards themselves and associated support materials developed throughout 2005.

The Learning Standards are complemented by Department of Education and Training materials developed as part of the Student Learning strategy. These include the Curriculum Planning Guidelines, the Principles of Learning and Teaching P–12, Assessment and Reporting Advice and the Knowledge Bank, each of which will be available to all sectors.

In addition, the VCAA will provide ongoing support for schools in using the Learning Standards to develop appropriate curriculum programs.

When will the Learning Standards be available to schools?

The first stage of the Learning Standards, which includes the rationale and structure, descriptions of the domains of essential learning, descriptions of the stages of learning and learner characteristics at the six levels and a set of assessment principles will be released online in Term 4 2004 at <vels.vcaa.vic.edu.au>.

The second stage of the Learning Standards, comprising learning focus statements and standards for each domain across the six levels, will be published on CD-ROM and distributed to schools at the beginning of the 2005 school year. The Learning Standards will be accompanied by support materials such as sample units of work and assessment tasks which will illustrate ways in which the Learning Standards can be used. The CD-ROM will also include materials developed by the Department of Education and Training as part of the Student Learning strategy.

Later in 2005, a second CD-ROM will be provided to schools which will include additional support materials such as sample programs, units, assessment tasks and annotated work samples. Some of these will be based on existing published materials, some will be newly developed, while others will be based on programs and practice from Victorian schools.

Further information about the *Victorian Essential Learning Standards* is available online at <vels.vcaa.vic.edu.au>.

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