

## Supporting a whole school approach

Schools and community organisations have been working together on respectful relationships education for many years, in a range of capacities. Initially led by the community sector within a small number of schools, local partnerships increased as more robust programs were developed. Respectful relationships is now a core component of the Victorian curriculum and the Department of Education and Training is undertaking a staged implementation of a whole school approach to this work, of which community partnerships are a key element.

This tip sheet provides examples of how community organisations can support schools to implement an evidence based, whole school approach to respectful relationships education.



### School culture and environment

#### Support the school to conduct a gender equality assessment

Sometimes called a gender audit or a [baseline assessment](#), a gender equality assessment is an important early step in each school's journey towards implementing the whole school approach. Support the school by acting as a 'critical friend', bringing awareness and attention to examples of inequality and good practice.

#### Build capacity to respond to resistance

Support the school to develop a communications strategy that includes responses to difficult questions and resistance.

#### Engage student voice

Encourage the school to include students on their respectful relationships implementation team, or work with the student representative council (SRC) to support a student-driven campaign around gender equality or family violence and violence against women.

#### Extend the work beyond school hours

Support the school to think about how to incorporate their respectful relationships work into out of school hours programs, such as before and after school care, holiday programs, fetes and after school events.



### School leadership and commitment

#### Directly engage with the Principal

Ask the Principal what support they or their staff need from your organisation, introduce them to other community leaders who are active in primary prevention and gender equality and connect them with other schools doing respectful relationships work.

#### Embed respectful relationships work through strategic planning processes

To ensure commitment to the work and sustainability, ensure that preventing violence against women is built into the school's strategic plan, annual implementation plan, staff performance development plans and other existing structures and processes.



### Community partnerships

#### Act as a 'critical friend'

A critical friend can support the school's respectful relationship implementation team by posing thought-provoking questions, providing a different lens through which to view data obtained by the school, offering ideas and analysis of the school's work, and challenging the school to improve in certain areas.

## Connect the school with other initiatives

Support introductions and provide information about primary prevention and gender equality activities in the local community, to help raise the profile of the work the school is doing and build broader community engagement.

## Engage and inform the wider school community

Provide information sessions or professional learning on primary prevention and response to parents, after school care providers, breakfast clubs, holiday and school camp staff, local sports clubs and libraries.



## Teaching and learning

### Embed teaching and learning materials

The Victorian curriculum is supported by the [Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships](#) and [Building Respectful Relationships: Stepping Out Against Gender Based Violence](#) teaching and learning materials. Ensure these are embedded in the school and teachers are familiar with them, regardless of their curriculum area.

While some teachers have undertaken professional learning on these materials, some may require additional support around one or more of the topics. Familiarise yourself with Topics 7 and 8 – these deal with gender and power and gender based violence and are the areas where teachers may require additional support from experienced prevention practitioners.

### Support teachers to deliver curriculum

Some teachers may not be confident delivering respectful relationships education in the classroom. You can help build their capacity by spending time with the teachers, familiarising them with the content and answering any questions, observing or co-delivering one or two sessions and providing feedback, or being available over the phone before or after lessons to prepare or debrief.



## Professional learning strategy

### Educate school leaders and staff about the drivers of violence against women

It's important that school staff have a strong understanding of the gendered drivers of violence and the essential actions that reduce them, so they can recognise and address these dynamics when they play out within the school. The gendered drivers and essential actions are discussed on pages 23–34 of [Change the Story](#).



## Support for staff and students

### Develop and implement processes for responding to disclosures

Support the school to embed policies and procedures for action when staff identify that one of their students or colleagues may be experiencing or using violence. These school-wide procedures should include clear pathways for referring victim/survivors to [local specialist family violence and sexual assault services](#).

### Provide secondary consultation

Sometimes school staff need support and advice around specific situations. Connect the school with a specialist family violence or sexual assault service, or make yourself available as support for staff when responding to disclosures.

### Build awareness about self-care

Listening to and supporting a colleague, young person or child who has experienced violence can be confronting and potentially distressing. School staff may not have a lot of experience in this and may need support or supervision following a disclosure. Work with the school to establish processes that support staff to debrief both internally and externally.