

Education action plan

eSafety Toolkit for Schools

Creating safer online environments

This resource is designed to help schools develop an Education action plan by considering their current approach to online safety education.

Based on eSafety's [eSafety's Best Practice Framework for Online Safety Education](#), this resource provides schools with options to support online safety education for the whole-school community. It also offers suggestions to improve online safety teaching practices.

To help schools outline their responsibilities, objectives and approach to online safety education, an action plan template is provided at the end of this document. Please note that this action plan is not mandated or intended to be exhaustive. It should be read in conjunction with applicable school or sector policies and procedures.

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Approach	What we currently do	Other actions we could take
<p>Online safety education at our school is framed around acknowledging and understanding students' rights and responsibilities in the digital age</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage teachers to find out more about students' rights to digital protection, digital provision and digital participation and build these concepts into lessons, where relevant.¹ This could include students learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that they have a responsibility in the way they behave online • how human rights and law apply online • how to effectively use digital technologies with an understanding of equity, ethics and personal and social values. • Use a range of activities in curriculum, extra-curricular programs and at school events to help students appreciate the responsibilities that come with rights in the digital age. This includes understanding accountability, possible consequences of their online activity and knowing when to exercise self-control. • Design learning experiences that provide students with opportunities to think critically about online safety and develop their own language, views, strategies and interests as users of connected digital technologies. • Revise online safety policies or procedures to reflect the rights of the student.
<p>Our school's approach to online safety education is strengths-based. It considers risks, challenges, benefits and opportunities to engaging online. Note: a strengths-based approach focuses on enhancing student capabilities and addressing deficits, rather than focusing solely on the negative aspects of the incident at hand.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the positives and negatives of engaging online to help students develop an understanding of digital technologies, including learning decision-making processes and how technologies can be used to overcome barriers. • Give students opportunities to practice and showcase their skills, focussing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the benefits of being online • how to use digital technology in safe and empowering ways — building strengths, help-seeking behaviours and resilience. • Remember to avoid shock tactics and education based on emotional responses — there is little evidence to suggest they are effective in creating behaviour change.²

¹Third, A, Bellerose, D, Dawkins, U, Keltie, E & Pihl, K 2014, Children's Rights in the Digital Age: A Download from Children Around the World, Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre, Melbourne.

² Walsh, K; Wallace, B, Alying, N. Sondergeld, A. 2019, Best Practice Framework for Online Safety Education, Report for the eSafety Commissioner, Queensland University of Technology.

Approach	What we currently do	Other actions we could take
<p>Students are involved in the design, development and implementation of online safety education.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask students to provide relevant examples of how they engage online and use these examples when designing learning experiences. Effective online safety programs give students a voice in what they learn and how they learn it. • Consider a range of strategies to support students in learning with, and from, others. For example, peer education, students teaching parents/carers or intergenerational mentoring. • Refer to eSafety’s Activities for students to take the lead in online safety. This provides a range of activities for students across all year levels to help cultivate safe online environments. • Regularly review online safety programs and practices with students. This encourages students to be partners in their own learning, increases their agency and achievement, and creates positive long-term learning habits.
<p>Online safety education is taught to every student and reinforced at every year level/ stage of learning.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check when and how you are teaching and reinforcing online safety. Online safety can be taught through many areas of the Australian Curriculum/local syllabus, including (but not limited to) Health and Physical Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, Technologies, the Arts and English, and through the general capabilities. It can also be embedded into student wellbeing programs. • Use the Online Safety Curriculum Connection to identify content in the Australian Curriculum that supports the teaching and learning of online safety. This resource also connects a range of interdisciplinary resources that have been developed to support online safety education. • Use eSafety’s unique learning resources and lesson guides that are mapped to the Australian Curriculum across all year levels. • Remember — do not rely on one-off presentations to develop students’ online safety knowledge, skills and capabilities. A scaffolded and comprehensive approach is required. Schools planning to engage an external provider to complement curriculum-based online safety education should use eSafety’s Guide to engaging external education providers resource to support good practice.
<p>Online safety education is part of a whole school approach to safety and wellbeing.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider whether your school adopts a whole-school approach to safety and wellbeing that includes online safety. • Read eSafety’s Prepare resources — these support schools to review and strengthen their policies and procedures. • Read eSafety’s Engage resources — these provide advice on creating a positive school culture and involving the whole school community in online safety. • Remember that schools can better respond to incidents by focussing on wellbeing, restoring relationships and having partnerships with external support services, including local police. eSafety’s Respond resources provide valuable support.

In the classroom	What we currently do	Other actions we could take
<p>Lessons are tailored to address topics that are relevant and appropriate to students' ages and abilities.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep up to date with peer-reviewed online safety education research as well as eSafety's research. The latter continues to identify evolving and emerging issues, risks, and harms which may impact young people. This research provides a strong platform for developing online safety education content in an Australian context. • Anecdotal examples of online safety scenarios may be used when teaching students strategies to deal with situations (e.g. ignoring, blocking, reporting and seeking support). These examples must be shared with consideration, care and be de-identified. Lesson content may need to be adjusted if there have been recent online safety incidents in your school to account for any student sensitivity.
<p>Lessons are inclusive and differentiated for factors such as gender, disability, socioeconomic status, cultural and language background, sexuality, appearance and family background.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give teachers the opportunity to access professional learning that helps them identify the additional risks that diverse young people may face online and how to tailor lessons that support student safety and wellbeing. • Recognise that a one-size-fits-all approach may not suit vulnerable students. Provide tailored online safety education for students considered to be at increased risk online, including young people in care, those with disabilities, those experiencing loss/trauma or those with mental health concerns. • Recognise that nuanced or targeted approaches may be required to support vulnerable students to stay safe online. These approaches should be developed in consultation with students, their parents/carers and other specialists, as appropriate.
<p>Our approach to online safety education includes digital citizenship concepts to support greater civic awareness and engagement by students.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed digital citizenship concepts in online safety education. Lessons that foster critical thinking and explore civics and citizenship education should include digital citizenship. Note: A digital citizen is a person with the skills and knowledge to effectively use digital technologies to participate in society, communicate with others and create and consume digital content. • Support students to develop a broad range of skills and knowledge that contribute to an understanding of rights in a range of online spaces. In this way, students learn to effectively use digital technologies with an understanding of equity, ethics and personal and social values.

In the classroom	What we currently do	Other actions we could take
<p>Our approach to online safety education includes social and emotional learning concepts that support students' understanding and management of respectful relationships.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support students to practice their communication, problem solving and conflict resolution skills, linking both off and online. • Support students to become 'upstanders' and support their peers online. • Support students to build an understanding of positive self-image and their online identity. • Incorporate online safety into wellbeing programs, including respectful relationships, positive behaviour for learning or pastoral care/wellbeing.
<p>Our approach to online safety education addresses specific and emerging online risks.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support students to know how to respond to specific online risks, such as cyberbullying, image-based abuse and online grooming, by explicitly teaching these topics using age appropriate teaching strategies. • Encourage teachers to undertake professional learning to keep up to date with specific and emerging online safety risks. eSafety's Teacher Professional Learning Program covers these topics.
<p>Online safety education at our school promotes effective help-seeking as a key protective factor.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support teachers to incorporate quality, interactive online safety education into the lesson plan, so students learn to practice and apply their help-seeking skills both off and online. • Discuss how to report harmful content to the social media service it appears on, or to eSafety. For links to the latest games, apps and social media, with tips on how to report, visit the eSafety Guide. • Ask teachers to demonstrate how they incorporate online safety education into their lesson plans each year. • Consider regular promotion of help-seeking services in school communications. The eSafety website includes a list of counselling and support services that can be filtered by audience, the type of support required, issue and state/territory. Your education department or sector may also offer tailored support services or advice.

Supporting educators	What we currently do	Other actions we could take
<p>Online safety education is supported by regular professional learning and updates about emerging online safety concerns.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include online safety in staff induction training and make it a regular focus of professional learning. • Give teachers and casual relief staff opportunities to undertake targeted training in online safety and digital technologies. eSafety offers a range of online safety training for educators and professionals. • Encourage school staff to sign up for eSafety’s online safety newsletters which provide updates on new online safety resources, online issues, events, blogs and the latest research.
<p>Our school has processes in place to ensure that school staff engage appropriately and look after their wellbeing online.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share eSafety’s Tips for supporting staff wellbeing online with support staff to create and maintain a healthy relationship with technology. • Provide clear lines of referral to employee assistance providers, union representatives, wellbeing representatives and external agencies. • Share eSafety’s Tips for school staff using social media which provide guidance on using social media for official school-related, professional and personal activities. • Ask your education department or sector for support services and guidance on these topics.
<p>Our school has processes in place to support staff knowledge, confidence and engagement in online safety education.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gauge staff knowledge, confidence and engagement in online safety education to help support the development of safe online environments and a culture of taking online safety seriously. • Conduct an annual Survey of school community attitudes to online safety that includes a staff component.

Evaluation and review	What we currently do	Other actions we could take
<p>Our programs and approaches are assessed for effectiveness and consider evolving online safety issues, risks and harms.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect and evaluate school programs and incident data to assess the effectiveness of online safety education programs. Incorporate this feedback into future programs. Use this data to brief the school leadership/wellbeing or online safety teams, as appropriate. • Consider using the STEPS Framework for selecting online safety programs, adapted by eSafety with permission from Bullying. No Way! to help assess online safety programs. STEPS can also be used before beginning a program to help decide whether it is appropriate for your school. • Encourage educators to gather student feedback on program effectiveness. Doing so allows educators to gauge the program's relevance and impact. • Review your online safety programs and approaches annually to account for new technology risks and specific incidents at your school, nationally and globally.
<p>There are processes within the school or with other schools to share good practice.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider establishing a community of practice with neighbouring schools or schools within your sector to share successes and approaches to online safety education. Discuss online risks/issues you have identified for the student cohort. • If communities of practice already exist, consider including online safety as a topic of discussion.

Template

Reflecting on your responses to the table above, create an Education Action Plan to support schools to outline their responsibilities, objectives and approach to online safety education. Please note, this action plan is not mandated or intended to be exhaustive. It should be read in conjunction with any applicable school or sector policies and procedures.

Action plan	Priority activities	Responsible staff	Review date
Outline what you hope to achieve in the coming year to improve your school's online safety capabilities.	List your planned activities for the coming year. Activities can include the other actions we could take (above), as well as other Toolkit resources.		
Approach			
In the classroom			
Supporting educators			
Evaluation and review			