



## Why have a student leadership framework?

The *Student Leadership Framework for Primary Schools* will assist schools to meet the following objectives from the *Student Welfare Policy*:

- providing resources and opportunities for students to gain leadership experience using a range of mechanisms, including student representative councils or school parliaments
- maximising student participation in decision making and ensuring that principles of equity and fairness are reflected in school practice
- incorporating students' views into planning related to school climate and organisation
- encouraging students to have a sense of belonging to the school community.

### Good Practice:

#### *SRC projects*

SRC projects that have been operating well in many primary schools include:

- improving school grounds
- developing school uniform
- organising recycling
- contributing to breakfast programs
- organising fun events.

These projects can strengthen students' sense of belonging to the school.

### Good Practice:

#### *SRC elections – a whole school approach*

One city primary school conducts elections for the SRC by encouraging the entire student body to vote. The SRC then selects the leaders (student executive) by an interview panel comprised of SRC members and teachers.

### Good Practice:

#### *SRC elections*

Have you thought about developing policies on the frequency of elections, the allocation of student groups for representation and specific instructions on voting procedure? Schools report that where this happens students' understanding about democratic procedures and decision making is accelerated.

## Who is the framework for?

The framework has been developed to assist primary school communities, under the leadership of the school principal, to reflect on the school's traditions and practices relating to student leadership. It is designed to identify new opportunities for using student leadership strategies.

This framework builds upon the increasing interest and activity in primary schools related to student leadership. It draws on the experience of a number of primary schools which have enlisted the assistance of students with well developed leadership skills, in the planning and delivery of education. A consistent theme in the comments from these schools relates to the positive 'ripple effect' (including benefits for staff) that can come from a willingness to listen to students' ideas, to value their opinions and to support them in implementing positive actions. These schools report that the active involvement of students has been one of the most practical and helpful strategies for engaging the co-operation of students and increasing the value that students and their families place on schooling.

## What are the key principles of student leadership?

The following principles are a guide for primary schools when designing student leadership programs and activities.

- All students have the potential to develop leadership skills over time.
- All students have the right to develop and demonstrate leadership skills.
- A school's student leadership program will be more sustainable if it is supported by students, parents, teachers, the school and local community.



- School communities should identify and promote a range of styles of student leadership.
- Leadership opportunities need to be offered in ways which do not unlawfully discriminate against any groups in the school.
- Leadership opportunities should provide for, and encourage, equal participation by boys and girls.
- Leadership roles in a school need to be perceived as valuable by the students and the school.
- A school's student leadership program will be more sustainable if leadership skills, knowledge, attitudes and values are encouraged and developed through a wide range of school programs and activities.
- Students should be encouraged to apply leadership skills to initiatives which strengthen the school community.
- Leadership can be an important catalyst for building students' awareness that their views are important to staff in the school and that they can have an influence on what happens to students in the school. These opportunities can be of particular significance to groups of students who do not enjoy school.
- Leadership opportunities are an important strategy for promoting equity, including gender equity. It is important to understand and address invisible barriers which work against the participation of students in some groups. Consider in particular, students who:
  - have a disability
  - are Aboriginal
  - are from multicultural backgrounds
  - are from low socio-economic status backgrounds
  - live in remote or isolated circumstances.

**Good Practice:***Diversifying leadership roles*

A number of primary schools have trained student leaders as peer mediators in conflict resolution and as peer support leaders who train other students in these areas. In this way student leaders can become practical helpers for other students.

**Good Practice:***Valuing student input*

In most primary schools, students are elected as SRC class representatives. Class meeting outcomes form the basis of the agenda at the SRC meeting and, in turn SRC meeting outcomes are reported back to classes. Projects develop from here.

**Good Practice:***The school community working together*

In some primary schools the SRC and the school council have a joint meeting each semester. This provides a chance to review achievements and to set directions for school community projects.

**Good Practice:***Widening leadership opportunities*

Ensuring that students are not able to occupy the same formal leadership positions in successive years allows leadership roles to be allocated to more students.





## What student welfare outcomes will be achieved?

Members of the school community are in a position to encourage students to lead and to participate. This will in turn improve school climate and discipline.

### Good Practice:

#### *Leadership skills*

Many primary school students participate in an on-going program to develop skills such as chairing meetings, tabling reports, working as a team and recording decisions.

### *Outcomes\* for schools include:*

Students, staff and parents are assisted to develop strategies for addressing student welfare and discipline needs in all the activities of the school.

### *Outcomes\* for students include:*

Students are encouraged to contribute to the provision of a caring, safe environment for fellow students, staff and parents.

Students are encouraged to provide their views on school community decisions, including reviews of student welfare, using agreed upon processes which include student representative councils and school parliaments.

### Good Practice:

#### *SRC support for school focus*

One rural primary school SRC has

- planted a time capsule
- published a newspaper
- produced a 'History of the School' booklet.

This has improved school spirit and developed literacy and research skills in student leaders.

## What help is available?

Student welfare consultants in each district office are responsible for the co-ordination of student leadership programs in primary and secondary schools. The Department of Education and Training also has a senior education officer with responsibility for co-ordination of student participation and leadership programs across the state.

### Good Practice:

#### *District initiatives*

- Camps with district secondary school SRC members as leaders for primary SRC participants work well.
- Workshops to develop student leadership skills in areas such as problem solving, decision making and running meetings can have more impact when led by secondary students.



*\*The outcomes listed are taken from the Student Welfare Policy*