



## Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS)

The Victorian Government, when releasing the Blueprint for Government Schools in 2004, asked the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) to develop a curriculum planning framework which would describe what is essential for students in Victorian schools to achieve.

The **Victorian Essential Learning Standards** (VELS) provides a whole-school curriculum planning framework, identifying what is important for students to achieve at different stages in their schooling and setting standards for these achievements.

The framework identifies three interwoven purposes of schooling that prepare learners for success in education, work and life by equipping them with the capability to:

- Manage themselves and their relations with others;
- Understand the world; and,
- Act effectively in that world.

Three core, interrelated and equally weighted strands of the curriculum are described. Each strand describes knowledge, skills and behaviours organised within a group of domains. The focus is on developing deep understanding that can be transferred to new and different contexts. The strands and associated domains are:

- Physical, Personal and Social Learning  
*Health and Physical Education; Personal Learning; Interpersonal Development; Civics and Citizenship*
- Discipline-based Learning Interdisciplinary Learning  
*The Arts; English and Languages Other Than English; The Humanities; Mathematics; Science*
- Inter-disciplinary Learning  
*Communication; Design, Creativity and Technology; Information and Communication technology; Thinking Processes*

VELS is not an organisational template, nor is it a syllabus. Individual schools are responsible for the development of school policy, implementation of the curriculum, reporting to parents and school organisation and resources. School teams plan their teaching and learning programmes, using the three strands, to enable their students to achieve the essential statewide standards.

For detailed information about the structure of VELS go to <http://vels.vcaa.vic.edu.au/>

VELS is different to Curriculum and Standards Framework II because it::

- defines new language and meaning;
- makes explicit inter-disciplinary and social learning;
- emphasises the development of deep understanding;
- encourages a multi-domain approach not Key Learning Areas; and,
- changes the focus, knowledge and skills content within subjects and requires holistic, whole-school planing, not level-based / subject-based planning.

VELS challenges schools to:

- develop a holistic approach to teaching and learning across the three strands;
- explore multi-domain learning;
- design and use multi-domain assessment tools;
- develop multi-domain teaching teams; and,
- redefine teachers' work.

Implementation of VELS requires a whole-school approach. Familiarisation activities help school teams to understand the context for VELS, and its structure. Auditing current curriculum and teaching and learning practices identifies strengths and areas requiring attention. Developing a strategic plan allows each school to design its implementation processes and time-line, cater for resource and professional learning requirements, inform the school community about its intentions and develop evaluation and review processes. Implementation of VELS is at least a three-year process.

Independent schools are not required to implement VELS. Most, however, are investigating the potential of the framework to focus and/or drive their whole-school curriculum planning. It is not possible to say whether the new regulatory framework that will come into place in 2007 will require schools to align their curriculum to VELS.

AISV is offering support to independent schools through targeted professional learning opportunities across a range of domains including assessment, literacy and numeracy, LOTE, Science, Personal Learning, Values, Interpersonal Development, ICT etc.

In addition, schools can access both workshop and personalised support throughout the year about familiarisation, auditing and teaching and learning strategic planning. Information about these opportunities is available through weekly memos and at [www.ais.vic.edu.au](http://www.ais.vic.edu.au)