Best Practice Framework for Online Safety Education

eSafety has developed a framework to guide Australian school-based online safety education initiatives and to help schools assess the quality of programs and approaches.

SCHOOL

Best practice online safety education should be based on a multicomponent framework addressing:

1. students' rights and responsibilities in the digital age	2. Resilience and risk	3. Effective whole-school approaches	4. Integrated and specific curriculum	5. Continuously improved through review and evaluation

*This framework is based on research into existing best practice in online safety education, conducted in 2019 and 2020 by Professor Kerryann Walsh, QUT, in consultation with the eSafety Commissioner.

Element	Effective practices
1. Students' rights and responsibilities Online safety education is based on recognising, acknowledging, and understanding rights and responsibilities in the digital age.	**1.1** Focus on students in the context of their relationships with, and responsibilities to, others. **1.2** Uphold children's rights to provision, participation and protection in digital environments. **1.3** Acknowledge the significant opportunities and safety challenges that students face in online environments. **1.4** Empower all students to participate meaningfully in the design, development, and implementation of their online safety education.
2. Resilience and risk Online safety education positively frames the use of technology, while also building awareness of factors that decrease and increase the risk of harm.	**2.1** Use strengths-based approaches when teaching students and school communities about digital environments and online technologies. **2.2** Understand that risk of harm varies according to technology type, platform, access, and patterns of use. Not all risk results in harm. **2.3** Respect student diversity and strive to meet the needs of all students for online safety education inclusive of gender, age, culture, ability, appearance, socio-economic status, family background, geographical location, and access. **2.4** Develop and implement digital environment learning experiences and opportunities that are accessible to and relevant for all students.
3. Effective whole-school approaches Online safety education is underpinned by effective whole-school approaches for promoting student wellbeing and preventing student harm.	**3.1** Teach online safety education to every student, at every year level, and every stage. **3.2** Use engaging teaching strategies and trustworthy, relatable, technically confident, and well-trained educators. **3.3** Address topics and themes that are relevant and appropriate to students' age, development, abilities, cultures, and individual factors. **3.4** Take a balanced and positive approach, avoiding scare tactics and confrontational strategies. **3.5** Set clear goals, regularly assess, and provide feedback on students' knowledge and skills. **3.6** Build supportive school environments with strong policies, well-trained teachers, and partnerships with parents/caregivers and community outreach services for student online safety referral, advice, and support.
4. Integrated and specific curriculum Online safety education builds knowledge and skills across the curriculum. It includes both technical and relational (interpersonal) aspects needed to navigate digital environments and develops student agency to use what they have learned in practice.	**4.1** Teach digital citizenship and digital/media literacy to support critical thinking and civic engagement education. **4.2** Develop social and emotional learning skills to support students' understanding and management of emotions, respectful online relationships and resilience. **4.3** Address specific current and emerging risks, including those that students report are most important. **4.4** Promote effective help-seeking, teach where and how to obtain guidance and support.
5. Continuous improvement through review and evaluation Online safety education is continuously improved using the best available evidence, data and authoritative information from eSafety about online safety issues, risks and harms.	**5.1** Schools and teachers share good practice and learning to improve online safety education. **5.2** Engage in professional learning to build capacity and support the implementation of online safety education. **5.3** Review online safety education annually to identify strengths and weaknesses and update to ensure relevance to online safety issues, risks, and harms. **5.4** Use data and other evidence to assess and improve programs and practices.

Next steps:

To find out more about how to use the Framework visit:
esafety.gov.au/education/best-practice-framework