



The Hon James Merlino MP

Acting Premier

Minister for Education

Minister for Mental Health

Thursday, 20 May 2021

SUPPORTING OUR KIDS TO BE HEALTHY AND HAPPY

Our kids deserve to grow up healthy and happy. And after their family and friends, our schools are one of the biggest supports in a young person's life.

As we build our mental health system from the ground up, we're putting schools at the centre of our response – helping to make sure they have everything they need to support their students, families and communities.

The *Victorian Budget 2021/22* invests a dedicated \$277 million in new support for our schools, ensuring mental health and wellbeing is a core part of a student's experience at school.

This includes establishing a new \$200 million School Mental Health Fund, which schools will use to deliver programs, staff and other support specific to their school community's needs.

The Fund will be rolled out to all regional and rural government schools as a priority in mid-2022, with metropolitan schools to follow from 2023. Schools will be able to draw from a range of evidence-based measures proven to work – from the 'Positive Education' model to therapy dog programs to mental health first aid training.

Schools will also be able to use their funding to engage more mental health and wellbeing staff to further support their children and young people.

Funding will massively expand the Mental Health in Primary Schools pilot, reaching 100 schools. A partnership with the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, the pilot enables schools to employ a Mental Health and Wellbeing Coordinator, while also supporting staff to better understand and respond to mental health and wellbeing issues affecting their students.

This investment builds on our pledge to fund a mental health practitioner in every government secondary and specialist secondary school by the end of 2021.

Supporting the excellence of our teaching workforce, the Labor Government will invest \$148.2 million to establish a new statutory authority, the Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership.

With a dedicated focus on advanced professional learning for high-performing teachers in government, Catholic and independent schools, the academy will operate from a purpose-designed CBD location and seven regional centres, including Bairnsdale, Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Mildura, Moe and Shepparton.

The Budget invests \$20.5 million to increase access to the Labor Government's ten Tech Schools, which are building students' STEM skills and connecting them to the jobs of the future.

This funding will be used to expand on-site and virtual delivery capabilities of existing Tech Schools, and pilot a mobile Tech School delivery model for students in remote areas of Gippsland.

The Budget invests \$43.4 million to continue the successful Doctors in Secondary Schools Program, giving students at participating secondary schools access to primary health care at school.

An investment of \$39.3 million continues the Koorie Literacy and Numeracy program, expands the Koorie Pre-School Assistants program to four new locations, and continues the Koorie Families as First Educators and Koorie Engagement Support Officer programs.

The Budget invests \$19.5 million to continue the work of the Turnaround Teams in government schools. Made up of an executive principal and two leading teachers, Turnaround Teams work intensively with schools facing complex challenges to improve student outcomes and create sustainable change.

A \$12.5 million investment will continue the implementation of the school-wide positive behaviour support (SWPBS) framework. Its implementation is supported by 17 specialist coaches, and has had success in improving student behaviour and giving teachers further skills to foster positive school-wide environments.

To attract and develop quality teachers in Victorian schools, the Budget invests \$4.8 million to equip an additional 95 teaching students to work in schools in disadvantaged areas, and further develop ten existing, and establish two new, Teaching Academies of Professional Practice partnerships between schools and universities.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Education James Merlino

“Whenever I visit a school, families and teachers tell me mental health and wellbeing is the single biggest issue affecting our kids.”

“This is our opportunity to fundamentally transform the way we support our young people. That means putting schools at the heart of our response – giving them the funding, the staff, the tools and whatever else they might need to be there for our kids.”

“Our students deserve to succeed. Whether that’s better support in the classroom, or better training for teachers, we are delivering the funding our kids need to make it a reality.”