



BOX HILL HIGH SCHOOL

SCHOOL BELONGING POLICY



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand this policy, please contact Box Hill High School on (03) 9877 1177 or box.hill.hs@education.vic.gov.au.

Rationale

School belonging, or a sense of psychological membership and connection at school, represents the extent to which students feel accepted, respected, included, and supported in their school environment. When students have a sense of school belonging, they feel confident that they have a place, are known as individuals, and feel safe at school.

A sense of school belonging is a complex and multifaceted experience that is influenced by many factors and variables within a school setting including individual differences. All students, regardless of their background, ability status, gender identity, racial identity, or sexual orientation have the right to belong at school.

School belonging has been found to be an essential component for student wellbeing, academic outcomes, and physical health. It is estimated that approximately 1 in 3 students do not feel a sense of belonging to school (OECD, 2019). Therefore, to address this issue, a student's sense of school belonging should be valued and nurtured within school settings.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the shared responsibility of belonging for the whole school community inclusive of parents, staff, teachers, students, and school leadership. Every individual within a school community can help create a climate of belonging.

Scope

This policy includes the role that students, teachers, staff, school leaders, and parents play in promoting a sense of belonging for others in the Box Hill High School community. Developing a strong sense of belonging is the shared responsibility of key stakeholders- school leadership, teachers, students, and parents.

POLICY STATEMENT

School Leadership

Box Hill High School is committed to providing consistent and structured opportunities for students to build positive relationships with each other, their teachers, their parents, and staff at our school. Teachers at our school know their students and seek feedback from their students about their relationship, rapport, and level of engagement through informal and formal processes. Through school-wide and year level events, classroom expectations and norms, engagement programs and learning programs, we provide both time and space for teachers to build relationships with their students, and for students to build positive relationships with their peers.

School leadership (e.g., Principal Class, Leading Teachers) create formal structures to consult students on school decisions and build their sense of agency. We strive to ensure that students are represented in decisions in terms of various socioeconomic, linguistic, cultural, religious backgrounds and academic levels and (dis)ability statuses. These include the Student Representative Committee (SRC), other student leadership groups, focus groups and student/staff working parties.

Efforts are made at Box Hill High School to ensure continuity of care for students during their time at school.

Our school endeavours to employ teachers who are skilled in and passionate about their content areas and who are culturally competent and sensitive to students' social and emotional needs. We actively promote an ethos of care in the school community and know that effective learning requires positive teacher-student relationships.

Box Hill High School ensures that teachers have access to professional development that encompasses improving student-teacher relationships and ways to foster positive, safe, and fair classroom environments that build on the strengths and assets that students bring into the classroom.

Box Hill High School has strategies in place to evaluate, build or strengthen a teacher's sense of belonging to school (e.g., teacher mentoring programs and 'buddies', induction programs for new staff, staff association social events).

Box Hill High School implements student wellbeing and engagement programs, extra-curricular activities, interventions, and classroom-based learning activities that promote social, emotional, and cultural competencies to students. Examples include:

- Year 7-9 RESPECT Program.
- Year 10 'Momentum' program.
- Lunchtime clubs.
- Homegroup.
- Whole school camps program.
- Year 8 RAISE mentoring.
- Respectful Relationships.
- Year level programs and workshops.
- Utilisation of the schools 'Mental Health Fund' to access programs, workshops and support the provision of allocated resources.
- Development of the Box Hill High School 'Reconciliation Action Plan'.
- Marrung Reconciliation Working Group.
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Box Hill High School has a comprehensive and tiered approach to preventing, identifying, and managing mental health concerns. School Leadership ensures that the Student Wellbeing and Inclusion and Diversity teams are well-resourced, qualified, and supported in the school (including a Leading Teacher of Student Wellbeing and Disability Inclusion Leader). Teachers are also kept informed about referral pathways, student support processes and supporting documents (e.g., Individual Education Plans, Wellbeing Support Plans, etc)..

Leadership ensures that there is regular professional development each year that builds teacher capacity to support and engage students. Examples of this include teacher year level meetings and professional learning focused on setting up for success and creating a positive climate for learning.

Teachers

The Box Hill High School teaching staff incorporate a number of strategies and are involved in a number of opportunities to support school wide belonging. Examples of this include:

- Staff at Box Hill High School acknowledge that a positive student-teacher relationship is one of the most effective ways to build a student's sense of school belonging.
- Teachers at Box Hill High School are encouraged to provide personal support, affirmation, and inspiration for learning, as well as academic support to students.
- Teachers at Box Hill High School demonstrate fair and consistent restorative practices to school discipline.
- Teachers strive to make regular (positive) contact with parents for proactive and positive communication.
- Teachers at Box Hill High School provide students with opportunities for personal agency over their learning in the classroom. Examples of this include goal setting and the incorporation of quality classroom differentiation.
- Teachers actively emphasise the value of what students are learning for uplifting their communities, honouring their ancestral heritage, and combatting issues of social justice and social inequality in school and society.
- Teachers are supported by school leadership in recognising and responding to the way larger societal, systemic, and structural inequalities are impacting historically marginalized students in their schools.
- Teachers actively build upon the knowledge systems, experiences, and perspectives that students bring as assets into the classroom and school.
- Teachers ensure that students understand the importance and purpose of what students are learning. This can be seen through reference to Learning Intentions and implementation of the 'Victorian Teaching and Learning Model 2.0' - elements of learning and elements of teaching. It is also evidenced through providing links to real world examples.

Students

Box Hill High School encourages students to support each other academically as well as personally (e.g., peer support programs, VCE study groups, homework club, class group work assignments).

To support student belonging at Year 7, our new students are involved in an extensive transition program that builds relationships and rapport with the school. This includes:

- Transition evening with new students and parents.

- Additional early transition sessions for identified students with additional needs.
- State-Wide Orientation Day.
- A three-session orientation program that focuses on relationships, organisation and upskilling for success in High School.
- Year 7 Orientation Camp.
- Parent information evening.
- Year 7 picnic.
- Individual and small group support as required.

All students at Box Hill High School are expected to live to the school values- *Respect, Resilience, Growth, Creativity* and be inclusive, affirming, respectful, and encouraging of each other. Explicit and consistent messages around the importance of school belonging are communicated through a range of platforms. Examples of this include:

- Assemblies.
- Recognition of students showing values through awarding House Points.
- RESPECT Program classes.
- Homegroup.
- External speakers.
- Acknowledgement and celebration of various events and cultural days of significance (e.g. Harmony Day, Spring Festival, RU OK? Day).
- Compass.
- Newsletters.
- Microsoft Teams.
- Posters.

Students are encouraged to have high personal expectations and goals around their learning and social wellbeing, with assurance that teachers will support them in reaching these high standards.

Students are encouraged to take up extra-curricular activities such as interschool sport, House competitions, lunchtime clubs, competitions and fundraising events. To increase a sense of belonging, we have a strong student leadership framework that provides multiple layers of leadership opportunities across the school journey.

Box Hill High School also places a large emphasis on increasing opportunities for students to have a voice and provide feedback (student voice and agency). Examples of this include:

- Homegroup 'pulse-checks'.
- Culture surveys.
- Student 'Attitude to School Survey' (AtoSS).
- Student focus groups.

At Box Hill High School, all students are encouraged to use their personal strengths and are made aware that they each have a role to play in contributing to a culture of belonging, safety and inclusion at their school.

Parents

Parents of Box Hill High School are encouraged to be involved in school life in meaningful ways. Examples of this include:

- School Council.
- Attendance at parent-teacher-student conferences.
- Student Support Groups.
- Attendance at school events (e.g. International Women's Day breakfast, Open Afternoon, school productions).
- Morning tea focus groups.
- Volunteering in school activities (e.g. Duke of Edinburgh).
- VCE expo.
- Course counselling.

Box Hill High School provides multiple communication channels for parents that consider their needs and preferences. This includes:

- Newsletters twice a term
- Compass
- School Website
- Policies

Box Hill High School seeks feedback from parents about their overall satisfaction with the school and communication from teachers and school leaders more generally. This is conducted through parent focus groups and via the annual Parent Opinion Survey, along with advocating for parents/carers to contact the school when required.

Box Hill High School endeavours to make parents feel welcomed when they are at school. Reception staff provide a warm and welcoming experience and ensure they are heard, valued and that their needs/inquiries are followed up by relevant staff in a timely manner.

Box Hill High School has a number of administration and Educational Support staff that can speak Mandarin which helps to build connections between our large Chinese community and the school. Box Hill High School also utilises Department of Education interpreting and translation services to meet the other cultural diverse needs of our community. Box Hill High School continues to explore ways to enhance parent connectedness and belonging with the school throughout the year.

Related Policies

This School Belonging Policy is to be read in conjunction with other related school policies, procedures, and codes. These include our:

- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Child Safe & Wellbeing Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy

The above policies, and other school Box Hill High School policies can be found on our website: <https://www.boxhillhs.vic.edu.au/page/515/Policies>

Policy Status and Review

Reviewed June 2025.

The Assistant Principal is responsible for reviewing and updating the School Belonging Policy at least every two years.

This policy will be reviewed by April 2027.