



Ringwood Secondary College

Students at Ringwood Secondary College volunteer to be ‘eSmart Ambassadors’ — giving peer-to-peer advice to younger students on online safety and social networking.

Tell us about Ringwood Secondary College

Ringwood Secondary College is located in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. We have nearly 1400 students from years 7 to 12, drawn from more than 50 primary schools.

Ringwood Secondary College values are respect, integrity and personal best. We aim to enable our students to be responsible and productive citizens in a global community.

What is the ‘eSmart Ambassador’ program?

We ask for ten volunteers from our year 7 class to be ‘eSmart Ambassadors’—to talk to the incoming year 6 students about online safety, use of social networking, and managing their ‘digital reputation’. Rather than using teachers or outsiders, our program is designed so that kids are talking to other kids.

We have had a lot of feedback that this makes the students more engaged and willing to listen—they are getting advice from their immediate peers on technology they all use, and issues they all experience.

The school has a 1:1 iPad program for students, so we also make sure that the ambassadors can provide advice on appropriate use of photos; what it is and is not okay to upload to Facebook, Instagram etc.

We also focus on bullying—what to do if you see it happening, if it happens to you, or if you see it happening online. We try and make sure that students can recognise the problem of bullying when it happens and do not contribute to it.

How was the program developed?

The school has had programs for safe and appropriate use of information technology and the internet for individual students since around 2007 when laptops were introduced.

The eSmart Ambassadors program was developed in 2011. eSmart is an initiative of the Alannah and Madeline Foundation in collaboration with the Victorian Government. The ambassadors program we use was developed entirely internally by us and was accredited by eSmart in May 2012.



How does the program work?

The program is run on two separate days:

- Orientation day, when incoming year 7 students are shown around the school in December before the school year; and
- Wellbeing Day, as part of a range of talks and activities around behaviour, friendship, organisational and time management skills.

At both of these sessions the eSmart ambassadors guide incoming students through issues to do with online safety.

Has it been a success?

Yes! The number of incidents of cyber-bullying and inappropriate use of social networking have dropped significantly in the year since the program has been implemented.

We have also had good feedback from all students involved—the younger students say they prefer learning about online safety from fellow students, and the eSmart ambassadors have been able to gain skills and experience in public speaking and mentoring.



What is the future for the program?

We have extended the program so that the students who were eSmart ambassadors in year 7 go on to do the same in year 8, continuing to mentor the same younger students and sharing their experiences during the school year.

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