

SISTER SCHOOLS IN VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA - PARTNERSHIPS IN EDUCATION EXCELLENCE



MINISTERIAL FOREWORD

The Victorian Government is committed to, and values, its strong education and government partnerships with China.

School to school partnerships, also known as sister school partnerships, are a great example of this commitment and serve as an excellent vehicle for internationalising education for students and teachers alike.

Sister schools provide students and staff with experience of languages, cultures and societies very different from their own. They increase intercultural understanding, global awareness and create lifelong friendships. They allow schools to learn different approaches to teaching and learning through shared pedagogy and curriculum collaborations.

368 Victorian government schools have one or more sister school partnerships with schools in 33 countries all over the world. Our partnerships with China leads the way, with over 172 sister schools currently in place.

This guide delivers a snapshot of the range of benefits that await your school should you begin the journey of a sister school partnership with a Victorian school.

As with any long journey we recognise the most difficult step is often the first, so to help you on your way this guide contains information on the recently launched Schools Connect Portal, an online database of schools seeking partnerships. You can log in to this portal and it will assist you in finding the perfect match for your school in Victoria.

I am pleased to present to you this guide and I sincerely hope it encourages you to begin the journey of a reciprocal partnership with a Victorian school today.



The Hon. James Merlino MP

Deputy Premier
Minister for Education

INTRODUCTION

Victoria, a modern and multicultural state, is a truly international place. More than 233 languages are spoken within its schools, businesses, down its hidden laneways and throughout its regions. A diverse and harmonious community, Victoria is a great place for learning, training and professional development and Melbourne is recognised as one of the world's best education cities.

Not just smart, Victoria is safe and friendly too! Melbourne was voted the World's Friendliest City and ranked the World's Most Liveable City for six consecutive years by The Economist magazine. Education is one of the criteria upon which this award is judged and in 2016 Melbourne got a perfect score.

The Victorian Government supports sister schools to help prepare teachers and students for a rapidly changing world. They build capability in students, provide professional development for teachers and can add to the prestige of your school.

In tomorrow's world, strong academic performance alone won't be enough to secure a job. Employers will favour people with real experiences in the world beyond national boundaries. A sister school partnership with a Victorian school is a way of providing this experience.

Begin the journey of a sister school partnership today to best position your staff and students to meet the challenges of the future.

It is better to travel 10,000 miles than to read 10,000 books.

Attributed to Confucius 551-479BC

The top five countries with Victorian sister school partnerships



China: 172	Indonesia: 39	South Korea: 16
Japan: 115	Germany: 26	

CASE STUDY

A sister school partnership is a meaningful, reciprocal and sustainable long-term partnership between two schools, aimed at improving student educational outcomes. Sister school partnerships are based on the principles of mutual educational benefit and reciprocity.

WHY PARTNER WITH VICTORIAN SCHOOLS

- Victoria is at the forefront of learning and innovation and has built a global reputation for excellence
- Victoria is an English speaking state and offers real world opportunities to practise English
- 230 teachers teach Mandarin in Victorian schools, so with many schools you will have a Mandarin speaker at the end of the line to help navigate your sister school journey
- Victoria is multicultural, safe and friendly
- With 1,500+ schools to choose from you are free to choose schools from both regional and city areas
- Small class sizes, run by well trained and highly skilled staff, ensure exceptional learning opportunities
- Victorian classrooms are equipped with the interactive learning tools of a modern age
- Government schools are committed to principles of inclusivity and are experienced in catering for students with learning difficulties
- Similar time zones allow for ease of communication
- Great experiences can be enjoyed beyond the classroom including a beautiful natural and clean environment with iconic wildlife
- Through partnership your school's reputation will be significantly enhanced.

Experience what it's like to visit the world's most liveable city!

THINGS YOU CAN DO IN A SISTER SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP

- Hands on professional development – shadow teachers to learn how the curriculum is delivered
- Interactive language lessons through WeChat and Skype video calls and teleconferencing
- Maths, Sports and Arts competitions between sister students using wikis, blogs, Skype, WeChat, QQ and teleconferencing
- E Pen Pal clubs to improve fluency in English and Mandarin and create lifelong friendships
- Short-term teacher exchanges to build professional practise in teaching and learning
- Reciprocal visits with breathtaking immersion activities. Experience Australia's unique local wildlife and clean and green environment

Everything around me was new, different and interesting. I learned a lot about Australian culture and made some wonderful new friends.

Nanjing Langya Road Student

CASE STUDY

NANJING LANGYA ROAD AND BACCHUS MARSH PRIMARY SCHOOL



How long is your partnership? Seven years signing an MOU in 2010.

How did you meet? Through the Victoria/Jiangsu Sister State relationship, our school hosted a study tour group from Nanjing Langya Road Primary School. The friendship started from there and developed into a strong sister school partnership.

What things do you do? Annual teacher and student exchanges with our sister schools. These relationships along with our school based cultural immersion program are strengthened by the support of a Chinese Language Assistant.

What do you get out of it? The development of intercultural understanding, lifelong friendships and sharing of pedagogies. The opportunities to integrate Chinese into specialist areas such as Kitchen, Garden, PE and Performing Arts are invaluable.

Melinda Williams, Principal
Bacchus Marsh Primary School

I enjoyed every single day at Bacchus Marsh Primary School

Nanjing Langya Road Teacher

KEY BENEFITS

- Career shaping professional development of senior managers and teachers
- Accelerated language learning among your students
- Increased intercultural understanding, global awareness and lifelong friendships
- Personal development of your students e.g. leadership, maturity, independence, resilience
- Unique cultural experiences – learn about Australia's ancient indigenous culture
- Positive impacts for less advantaged students
- Shared pedagogies and joint curriculum development
- Enhanced school reputation
- A better understanding of one's own culture/country

They get to see the culture in a more modern context, often there are stereotypes of other cultures. Sister schools provide a more up to date view.

ANSWERS TO COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS



HOW DO I FIND THE RIGHT SCHOOL TO PARTNER WITH?

To help match-make you with a school the Victorian Government has developed a Schools Connect Portal. The portal is an online database of schools from Victoria and around the world who are interested in forming a sister school relationship. Each school in the portal indicates their key interest areas of collaboration as part of their online profile.

Registering your school in the portal is the first step in your sister school journey.

www.education.vic.gov.au/sisterschools



HOW DO I KEEP THE PARTNERSHIP SUSTAINABLE?

- Memorandum of Understanding
- Annual action plan
- Broad ownership
- Regular communication

Partnerships need not include visits – take advantage of digital technology to keep up connections with your sister school.

Broad ownership is the key to sustainability.

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP

- Do your homework! Spend some time researching schools listed in the portal to find your perfect match
- Shared vision or common interest – ensure your sister school shares a similar learning philosophy and that objectives and expectations are aligned
- Put a written agreement in place, keep it simple but make it specific, with key outcomes and timelines
- Embed your sister school activity into the curriculum
- One staff member driving the program is not enough. Recruit support from the school leadership team to ensure shared responsibility
- If you're a city school seek out a sister school from a rural area to develop a point of difference and boost student engagement
- Ensure you have good video streaming or teleconferencing services
- Using smart phones to text with partner schools can be more effective and timely than using email
- Don't expect too much too quickly
- Reciprocity – the more you give the more you will get back!

Do something concrete each term to connect the sister schools to keep the relationship fresh and relevant.

FURTHER RESOURCES TO HELP YOU ON YOUR WAY

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au>

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/management/Pages/sisterschools.aspx>



Good luck on your Sister school partnership journey.

Access the Schools Connect Portal



Subscribe to our official WeChat Public Account

