



Learning Co-operative Strategic Plan 2026-2030

Purpose

This strategic plan sets the direction for the Learning Co-operative (Co-op) from 2026–2030. It reflects the school's progressive educational philosophy while ensuring strong governance, regulatory compliance and long-term sustainability. The plan will guide annual planning, resource allocation, funding applications and community decision-making.

Acknowledgement of Country

The Learning Co-operative acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which the school community learns and gathers, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation. We recognise their continuing connection to land, waters, culture and community.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have cared for and learned from this land for tens of thousands of years. The Co-op is committed to fostering respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and knowledge systems within our learning community.

Through our teaching and our connection to place, we aim to support students to develop understanding of Country, cultural respect, and a shared responsibility to care for the environment and for one another.

School Profile

The Learning Co-operative (Co-op) is an independent, community-based, democratic primary school located in Melbourne, Victoria. Established in 1973 by families and academics seeking a child-centred and collaborative approach to education, the school operates as a co-operative, with parents, staff, and students working together to create a vibrant and supportive learning community.

Guided by a progressive philosophy, students shape their learning through inquiry, play-based and outdoor experiences, while teachers provide explicit teaching to build strong foundations in essential skills and knowledge.

Parents actively contribute to daily learning, school operations, and governance, participating in classrooms, committees, working bees, and the Board.

The school values wellbeing, inclusion, environmental stewardship, and respectful relationships, while acknowledging the Wurundjeri people as the Traditional Custodians of the land.

The school is committed to maintaining a child-safe environment where the safety, wellbeing and participation of all children are prioritised.



What Makes the Co-op Unique

The Learning Co-operative offers a distinctive educational environment shaped by its cooperative structure, progressive learning philosophy, and strong community involvement.

A parent co-operative model

Families are active members of the co-operative and play a critical role in its operation. Parents work alongside staff in classrooms, contribute to committees and governance, and help maintain the school environment, creating a strong sense of shared responsibility and belonging.

Child-centred, progressive learning

Learning is shaped by students' interests and curiosity through inquiry, play, and hands-on experiences. Students are encouraged to take ownership of their learning while teachers provide explicit instruction to build strong foundations in essential skills and knowledge.

Strong relationships and community

The Co-op is built on collaboration between students, staff and families. Small class sizes, shared activities and cooperative decision-making foster meaningful relationships and a supportive learning environment.

Connection to nature and sustainability

Outdoor learning and environmental stewardship are central to the school's philosophy. Students regularly learn through exploration of the natural environment while developing respect for the land and sustainable practices.

Democratic participation and student voice

Students are encouraged to express their ideas, participate in decision-making and contribute to the life of the school community, building confidence, responsibility and leadership skills.

Vision: Our vision is to be a bold, inclusive alternative school where learning is child-centred and child-led, supported by parents and educators, and deeply connected to nature and community.

Mission:

We are an inclusive learning co-operative led by children, parents, and educators, grounded in curiosity, creativity, and community. Rooted in nature and guided by play, we nurture confident, kind individuals who feel seen and supported. Families are true partners—co-creating our school through active involvement in teaching, governance, and community life. Together, we foster belonging, honour identity, and prepare young people to move into the world with confidence and purpose.

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Values:

- Child led learning and growth: nurturing each child's unique journey through curiosity, creativity and play
- Community connection and inclusion: Rooted in strong relationships, belonging and shared learning across the whole community.
- Wellbeing, compassion and integrity: Creating a safe loving environment where everyone feels seen, heard and supported
- Sustainability and nature: Living with care for the Earth, each other and ourselves.

Philosophy Statement

At The Learning Co-operative, children come first. We honour each child as a capable, unique individual with their own strengths, voice, and way of learning, and we create environments where they feel seen, heard, and valued.

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we learn and grow, and we pay our respects to Elders past and present. We recognise their enduring connection to land, waters, culture, and community, and honour their role as the first teachers and caretakers of this place.

We see this acknowledgement as more than words. It is part of our ongoing commitment to reconciliation. We strive to listen, learn, and deepen our understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, and perspectives. As a learning community, we commit to continually educating ourselves, embedding this knowledge into our practice, and walking respectfully alongside First Nations peoples in the spirit of truth, justice, and care.

Learning is a collaborative journey shaped by curiosity, creativity, and connection. Grounded in nature and guided by play, we foster deep relationships between children, parents, and educators and our environment, knowing that learning flourishes in community and across generations.

We are committed to inclusion, mutual respect, and compassionate practice. Through consensus, open dialogue, and relational approaches to conflict resolution, we nurture self-awareness, shared responsibility, and the confidence to express and listen with care.

Wellbeing is central to our work. We cultivate emotional safety, resilience, and kindness, supporting children through both challenge and achievement while encouraging a lifelong love of learning grounded in sustainability, justice, and belonging.

As a parent-run co-operative, families are co-creators of this space. Together, we model integrity, continuous reflection, and courageous thinking, preparing young people to move into the world as empathetic, capable, and engaged global citizens.



Guiding Principles of Learning

The Co-op's approach to education is informed by current national and Victorian education reform directions, progressive education traditions, and our commitment to child-centred learning. The following guiding principles describe how learning is supported in practice.

At the Co-op, we believe that children learn best in environments that nurture curiosity, independence, strong relationships and a sense of belonging. Our approach to learning is guided by the following principles.

Child-centred and child-led learning

Students are active participants in their learning. Their interests, questions and ideas help shape learning experiences, encouraging curiosity, motivation and ownership of learning.

Inquiry and exploration

Learning is driven by inquiry, investigation and creativity. Students explore real questions and problems, developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Explicit teaching of essential skills

Alongside inquiry learning, teachers provide explicit instruction in key skills and knowledge, including structured phonics and evidence-based literacy teaching informed by the Science of Reading. This balanced approach combines student-led inquiry with structured teaching so that students develop strong foundational skills while maintaining curiosity, creativity and independence as learners.

Relationships and wellbeing

Learning happens best in a safe and supportive environment where students feel valued, respected and connected to others. Strong relationships between students, staff and families are central to the learning community.

Learning through nature and experience

Outdoor learning, play and hands-on experiences are an important part of the Co-op's approach. Students learn through exploration of the natural environment and real-world experiences, developing respect for the environment and an understanding of their relationship with the land.

Cultural inclusion, Country and Indigenous perspectives

The Co-op is committed to fostering cultural respect, inclusion and reconciliation. Learning experiences seek to meaningfully embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives across the curriculum, supporting students to develop understanding of Australia's First Peoples, their histories, cultures and continuing connection to Country.

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Where possible, learning connects students with the local environment and acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which the school operates. Students are encouraged to develop respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems, cultural traditions and ways of caring for Country, recognising that these perspectives provide valuable ways of understanding the natural world, community and sustainability.

Student voice and agency

Students are encouraged to reflect on their learning, set goals and contribute to decision-making within the school community. Opportunities for participation and shared responsibility support students to develop confidence, independence and a sense of belonging.

Inclusion and diversity

The Co-op values diversity and aims to create an inclusive learning environment where all students feel they belong and can participate fully. Teaching approaches recognise the diverse backgrounds, strengths and needs of students and seek to ensure equitable access to learning.

Strategic Priorities

Our strategic plan focuses on strengthening the Co-op as a **progressive, community-led learning environment** while ensuring strong governance, sustainability and student wellbeing. We have identified six key strategic priorities for our 2026-2030 plan.

- **Teaching and Learning:** Deliver a coherent, child-centred program combining student-led inquiry with explicit teaching.
- **Wellbeing and Resilience:** Foster a school culture that values wellbeing, inclusion, and strong relationships.
- **Governance and Finance:** Ensure effective governance, regulatory compliance, and long-term sustainability.
- **Staff and Parent Capability:** Empower staff and parents through clear roles, professional development, wellbeing support, collaboration, and succession planning.
- **Collaboration and Community:** Support respectful teamwork and build strong connections with local organisations, progressive networks, and the wider community.
- **Stewardship:** Act responsibly to nurture the Co-op's people, philosophy, and environment.

In the following table, each strategic priority includes a vision for the future and a set of key strategies that will guide implementation over the life of the plan.



Strategic Objectives, Goals and Actions

Teaching and Learning	Wellbeing and Resilience	Governance and Finance	Staff and Parent Capability and Support	Community, collaboration and communication	Stewardship and Responsibility
<i>Strategic Vision:</i> All students actively shape their learning, developing curiosity, independence, and essential skills through a progressive, engaging curriculum.	<i>Strategic Vision:</i> Every student feels safe, supported, and included, with strong social-emotional skills and resilience to thrive in learning and life.	<i>Strategic Vision:</i> The school operates with robust governance, financial stability, and clear compliance, ensuring long-term sustainability and strategic growth.	<i>Strategic Vision:</i> Staff and parents are confident, supported, and capable, contributing effectively to student learning, school operations, and the co-operative community.	<i>Strategic Vision:</i> The Co-op fosters strong partnerships within the school and the wider community, creating a collaborative culture that enriches learning and builds meaningful relationships.	<i>Strategic Vision:</i> The school nurtures its people, philosophy, and environment, acting as responsible stewards to preserve and grow the Co-op for future generations.
Goal 1. Develop and implement a curriculum plan which aligns with Co-op's learning philosophy and the Victorian Curriculum 2.0	Goal 1. Develop and implement a plan to nurture the overall wellbeing of all students	Goal 1. Comply with all regulatory requirements	Goal 1. Be a positive and supportive place to work and volunteer	Goal 1. Build and maintain strong relationships among staff and parents	Goal 1. Demonstrate respect for the Wurundjeri people as continuing custodians of the land

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Actions: Develop a new curriculum plan , which aligns with Co-op's learning philosophy and complies with regulatory requirements. Implement a curriculum plan which aligns with Co-op's learning philosophy and the Victorian Curriculum 2.0. Maintain clear documentation showing curriculum delivery Review the curriculum annually to ensure relevance and quality	Actions: Define and document Co-op's approach to student wellbeing and resilience. Develop a whole school well being plan. Maintain documentation evidencing the delivery of the wellbeing and resilience plan Embed trauma-informed practice. Build strong, safe relationships throughout the community.	Actions: Parents, staff, Board and Co-ordinator to understand and ensure compliance with all regulatory requirements Ensure all relevant documentation including compliance registers are maintained and reviewed. Provide induction and training for all new Board members	Actions: Parents, Board and Co-ordinator to ensure Co-op meets its obligations as an employer Ensure policies and procedures are in place to support staff and parents and prevent burnout Provide and promote an Employee Assistance Program Celebrate staff and parent contributions Ensure staff and parents can contribute to Co-op's success	Actions: Create opportunities for staff and parents to connect in professional, educational and social settings Strengthen opportunities for planning between staff and parents working together during time-on Create opportunities for staff to feel part of the community, including invitations to community events	Actions: Acknowledge the Wurundjeri people as continuing custodians of the land on which the school has been established Develop and implement a Reconciliation Action Plan Engage respectfully with Wurundjeri knowledge holders and Elders.
Goal 2. Create an environment where students lead their own learning	Goal 2. Value and respect diversity among students	Goal 2. Maintain a skilled and effective Board	Goal 2. Develop and support the capability of staff	Goal 2. Encourage communication and collaboration which is kind, clear and respectful	Goal 2. Embrace our role as the current stewards of co-op, including its philosophy, its people and its natural environment

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Actions: Provide flexible, well-resourced indoor and outdoor learning spaces that meet students' needs. Support students to set, and evaluate individual learning goals Explicitly teach independent learning and executive functioning skills. Maintain documentation of students' progress. Facilitate an active Student Council and program for student voice Provide opportunities for self and peer assessment	Actions: Model and explicitly teach the value of diversity and responding to discrimination including through resources, community and culturally rich learning experiences Assist students to understand and embrace Co-op's values through explicit teaching and role modelling. Support development of an annually reviewed student-created "Kids' Code of Conduct."	Actions: Provide training and external support as needed. Staff and parents support the Board to be proactive in identifying and acting as issues arise. Maintain clear processes for raising and escalating concerns. Implement Board succession planning and documentation processes.	Actions: Ensure each staff member has an individual -performance plan that is reviewed annually. Facilitate appropriate professional development aligned with school priorities. Facilitate networking with progressive education communities. Provide clear expectations and centralised guidance.	Actions: Model high standards of communication Provide training in effective communication Maintain a parent code of conduct Ensure guidelines for communicating online e.g. via email and Slack are regularly communicated and followed. Use restorative practices for conflict resolution.	Actions: Respect and celebrate the contributions of previous parents and staff, for example inviting ex coop parents and students to visit, join events and "Friends of the Co-op" bushland working bees. Ensure ongoing regeneration and re-vegetation projects Implement a staged landscape plan to enhance outdoor learning, play areas, and sustainability features
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Goal 3. Optimise the learning experiences and outcomes for each student	Goal 3. Build resilience through challenges and risks with cushions underneath	Goal 3. Maintain a strong financial position, with a suitable buffer against unknowns	Goal 3. Co-ordinate and optimise the effectiveness and efficiency of contributions from staff and parents	Goal 3. Strengthen connections with the local community and with other progressive learning institutions	Goal 3. Explore opportunities for Co-op to evolve and be ready for the future
Actions: Provide learning opportunities tailored to the interests, needs and abilities of each student Provide one-on-one, small-group and inter-age learning and social opportunities, including 'kids teach kids'. Offer immersive deep-dive learning experiences, excursions, camps and sleepovers. Monitor progress using formative and summative assessment practices. Support student	Actions: Explicitly teach students about healthy risk, challenge and growth, normalise mistakes, uncertainty and problem-solving. Provide regular opportunities for unstructured outdoor play with managed risk. Implement a progressive camp program across year levels to build independence, social confidence and resilience. Include age-appropriate challenges (e.g. navigation, shared	Actions: Set annual budgets by the end of the year Regularly monitor the financial position Maintain a 5 year financial plan Provide training and external support to staff where needed Ensure effective communication between the finance committee, Board and parent group Seek grants and external funding	Actions: Align skills with roles, whilst also providing opportunities for growth Ensure clarity of roles and responsibilities for all adults working with children Provide training for time-on parents (child safety, supervision, behaviour support).	Actions: Actively pursue opportunities for inter-school activities Build partnerships with local organisations, ADEC, ISV. Participate in community events and activities, and foster local relationships Develop relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and people Run playgroup Encourage connection with former students and families	Actions: Actively plan and invest for the future Ensure facilities and resources meet the future needs of students Pursue grants where appropriate Undertake long-term planning and investment. Upgrade infrastructure (batteries, solar panels, water tanks). Manage ecological impacts (e.g., rabbit control).

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self-reflection and ownership of their learning. Collaborate with allied health and external specialists when required. Provide extension and enrichment opportunities for high-ability students.	responsibility, outdoor living) Use trauma-informed practices to support students during challenge, provide opt-in scaffolds, co-regulation and alternative pathways where needed. Ensure students feel safe to take risks without fear of shame or failure Support students to reflect on challenge, effort and growth. Include student voice in evaluating outdoor play and camp experiences				
Goal 4. Optimise the use of Co-op's land, natural environment and resources, as well as appropriate use of technology	Goal 4: Embed Child Safe Standards	Goal 4. Embed understanding among parents of the co-operative rules, consensus decision-making principles, and	Goal 4. Support the Co-ordinator	Goal 4: Ensure strong communication between committees, Board and parent group	Goal 4. Use the natural environment respectfully and sustainably, and encourage reuse, repurpose and recycling

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		expectations about parent contributions			
Actions: Prioritise hands-on, outdoor and nature-based learning experiences. Develop new outdoor learning spaces to better support outdoor learning. Maintain a safe and thoughtful approach to using technology Implement digital literacy and cyber safety education. Maintain and review ICT infrastructure and security. Ensure that use of land and resources supports learning and safety.	Actions: Ensure all staff and parents understand and meet Child Safe Standards. Provide training in mandatory reporting, child safety and cultural safety. Ensure child empowerment and student voice in safety planning. Apply child-safe recruitment processes for staff and volunteers. Ensure safe physical and online environments.	Actions: Set, communicate and maintain standards regarding parent contributions Establish and implement procedures to ensure accountability while maintaining relationships Ensure alignment between rules and practise	Actions: Ensure opportunities for open communication between the Co-ordinator and the parent group Provide centralised feedback Define and clearly communicate the responsibilities and expectations of the Co-ordinator Support professional development, career progression and networking opportunities Empower the Co-ordinator to succeed in the role	Actions: Maintain clear communication channels and reporting structures. Provide regular updates and shared decision-making information.	Actions: Model and integrate a low-waste approach into everyday activities Incorporate upcycling and re-design ideas into the curriculum Prioritise environmentally conscious purchasing. Reduce plastic use including laminating only when necessary Mindful cooling and heating

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			Respect the Co-ordinator's time and space away from co-op		
Goal 5: Ensure individualised learning and transition support		Goal 5: Strengthen the effectiveness, consistency and transparency of committees	Goal 5: Embed understanding of co-operative principles and expectations	Goal 5 : Ensure inclusive participation for all families	Goal 5: Strengthen digital sustainability and data security
Actions: Provide appropriate support for diverse learning needs, including ILPs. Develop and implement tailored transition programs for new students. Support transition to high school. Support transition to different cohorts. Maintain regular communication with		Actions: Ensure all committees meet regularly and in accordance with their Terms of Reference. Review and update each committees regularly to maintain clarity of purpose, roles and decision-making authority. Require each committee to keep accurate minutes of meetings and key decisions. Communicate minutes	Actions: Communicate and uphold expectations around parent contributions. Maintain procedures that support accountability and healthy relationships. Offer accessible induction for new families.	Actions: Reduce barriers to parent involvement (flexible roles, clear expectations). Provide information in accessible formats. Ensure neurodivergent, multilingual and diverse families can participate fully. Monitor inclusion through feedback and reflection.	Actions: Maintain secure, ethical data practices. Review technology use and purchasing for sustainability. Implement systems for protecting privacy and digital information.

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families regarding support.		and action updates to the parent group and the Board in a timely and accessible manner. Ensure committees maintain clear communication pathways with the Board and Parent Group, including escalation processes for risks, issues or decisions requiring Board approval. Provide induction and support for new committee members to ensure continuity and effectiveness.			
Goal 6: Document and uphold a clear pedagogical framework		Goal 6: Strengthen risk management and emergency preparedness	Goal 6: Ensure staff wellbeing is actively supported		
Actions:		Actions:	Actions:		

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Define the Co-op's teaching approaches (e.g., play based, inquiry, project-based, cross curricula, outdoor learning). Provide regular professional learning on agreed pedagogical practices.		Review, maintain and regularly update the Emergency Management Plan. Review and manage operational, financial and environmental risks annually. Ensure OHS and Bushfire requirements are consistently met and training and external support is provided where needed.	Monitor workload and adjust expectations where required. Provide time for planning, collaboration and reflection. Build a culture of psychological safety and staff voice. Implement recognition and retention strategies.		
			Goal 7: Strengthen succession planning for staff and parents		
			Actions: Establish handover processes for committees, key volunteer roles and staff roles.		

			Maintain clear documentation to support smooth transitions. Mentor new parents stepping into leadership or time-on roles.		
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Implementation and Review

The strategic plan will be implemented through **annual implementation plans (school improvement plan)** developed by the Board and school leadership.

Progress will be monitored through:

- annual review of priorities
- Board reporting
- community consultation
- evaluation of key initiatives.

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