

# Be Safe Virginia

## Instructor Guide



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## Be Safe Virginia Program Purpose and Overview

**Be Safe Virginia** is a program focused on educating students pre-kindergarten through fifth grade in Virginia's Public Schools. The program's goals are to educate our youngest community members on important public safety topics in an age-appropriate manner. Themes range in scope from learning about the role of community helpers, to how to stay safe during in-person and online interactions, as well as understanding the impacts of substance abuse and bullying.

Originally known as STEPP (Success Through Education and Proactive Policing), this program was first developed through a partnership between the Chesterfield County Police Department and Chesterfield County Public Schools, where it had been taught exclusively since the original roll out in 1986. Be Safe Virginia is an updated version of the STEPP program and was developed by James Madison University and the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety, in collaboration with the Virginia Office of the Attorney General. Licensed teachers and early childhood specialists developed lessons and materials, and all lessons correlate to the Virginia Standards of Learning. The program is intended to be taught primarily by uniformed and non-sworn child safety officers in Virginia elementary schools familiar to their students but may also be taught by Pre-K – 5 staff, substitute teachers or school volunteers.

### Organization of Lessons

**I Do, We Do, You Do:** This is an instructional approach that shifts responsibility from the instructor (you) to the learner (the children) in an organized and gradual way. Students build independence and confidence as they learn new skills and eventually apply them in the lesson. The instructor gives students new information, models skills, and practices with the children before they can be independent. This instructional approach helps students master what they need to learn.

**I Do:** In this stage, the instructor (you) explains to students what they need to know about safety and shows them how to practice safe behaviors. You will ask a brief question at the end to see if they are ready to move on to the next section of the lesson. This is where you will model skills and behaviors.

**We Do:** During this stage, you work with the students to practice, discuss, or apply the new information or skills that you taught them about safety. The key here is for students to start thinking about what they need to understand. You provide support to the students through prompting, questioning, or challenges. Activities in this stage require children to recall, recognize, or organize information.

**You Do:** In the final stage of the lesson, students complete tasks independently. While they are working, you can provide support for the children individually or give them feedback while working independently. Activities in this stage can include discussions, games, writing activities, partner work, and more.

## Instructional Strategies

Throughout the lesson plans, there are various instructional strategies that the instructor is prompted to implement with the students. Instructional strategies are **how** we deliver the curriculum content to meet the learning objectives of the lesson plans. These strategies are incorporated to increase student engagement and participation in the lessons. Some of these strategies may be unfamiliar to an instructor who has limited experience teaching Pre-K–5<sup>th</sup> grade. Strategies an instructor may find include:

**Songs and poems:** Songs and poems create opportunities for children to learn new information with catchy and memorable phrases. If you do not feel comfortable singing, try stating the song as a poem or inviting a student or the teacher to sing along with you.

**Brain web:** To create a brain web, write the main topic in the center and draw lines from the center with connections. Next, have the students share connections related to the main topic.

**Visuals:** Using pictures and visuals, creates concrete examples for students who are trying to grasp new information. They are a valuable support for all learners (especially children with disabilities and children who are dual-language learners.)

**Whole-group reading:** Reading books aloud is an engaging way to instruct when presenting new information. It provides students with explanations and visuals and builds their vocabulary around the new topic. Whole group reading is especially powerful when followed by discussions to support comprehension and check for understanding.

**Discussions:** Discussions allow time for students to think about new information and apply or synthesize that information in a meaningful way. Discussions also encourage students to listen to and understand the perspectives of others.

**Skill-focused games:** Skill-focused games are an engaging way to allow children time to practice new skills. Students are active in learning and show increased motivation to participate.

**Active learning:** Incorporate hands-on activities, projects, and interactive lessons to engage students. Encourage students to explore and discover concepts through experimentation.

**Collaborative activities:** Create opportunities for group work and collaborative projects to enhance social skills and teamwork. This can also make learning more enjoyable.

Use your normal, natural voice... authenticity matters.

## Overview of Pre-K-Grade 2

Children in Pre-K-grade 2 range from 4–8 years old and are very playful. This age group is naturally curious and energetic and responds well to encouragement and positivity. Positive relationships are key to working with this age group. Effective and engaging lessons happen when children share thoughts and ideas through discussion, work with visuals, and concrete materials, and have the chance to move. This is an age group that is creative. They enjoy creating art, playing games, and sharing their experiences with others.

Children in Pre-K- grade 2 are developing their ability to control impulses and regulate emotions. It is common for children in this age group to lose focus or have a difficult time sitting still for a long period of time. If children are looking away or fidgeting, they may still be listening. Avoid calling out non-disruptive behaviors.

Simple, verbal redirection back to the tasks will typically refocus their attention. If the entire group is losing focus, you may need to try:

1. A reminder using the Learning-Ready Visuals included with lessons.
2. Acknowledging children who are on task and focused by thanking them for their attention.
3. Quickly stating what you would like the group to do. (*Remember, I need you to sit in your spot so the others can see what I am showing them.*)
4. Being flexible and adapt your plan. You may need to move on to the next activity, especially if it encourages participation.
5. Being aware that some children may be afraid or nervous with new adults or adults who wear uniforms. Allowing them to have more space or be an observer (rather than an active participant) will build trust. Once they are comfortable and relaxed, they will become more active participants.

## Teaching Tips for Pre-K–Grade 2

Preparation is key to successful instruction with this age group. Before teaching, organize all materials needed and review the lesson. Having materials organized before you start (copies made, materials ready, media open) will limit wait time for the students. The more time students wait, the greater potential for them to lose focus. This age group will need many opportunities to practice and engage with hands-on materials. They will also benefit from opportunities to discuss their real, lived experiences to connect with the content. These students are still developing the ability to think abstractly and rely heavily on pictures, songs and gestures, and real materials to support their learning and understanding.

When you arrive, focus on building positive relationships. Introduce yourself and try to learn the children's names. When possible, try to get on their level by kneeling so you can be eye to eye with them. When adults tower over children while standing, it can be intimidating especially if the adult is unfamiliar. Be encouraging and supportive by providing verbal praise or positive gestures (thumbs-up, high-five, smiling, handshakes).

Consider your tone of voice and relax! Children will respond best to you when you are your natural and authentic self. When asking children questions, be thoughtful about allowing children time to think and respond. They may need some "wait time" before they are ready to answer. When asking children questions, consider calling on one child at a time and discourage children from shouting out a choral response all together. This can create a loud scenario and will make it harder for you to quiet them back down so you can continue instruction. Ask questions only when you want an answer and be thoughtful about asking too many questions. On teaching days, children may be excited and might forget that normal classroom rules apply to the arrival of visitors.

Primarily, remember to be flexible and ask the classroom teacher for help if necessary. The classroom teacher knows the children well and can make adjustments and modifications on the spot, so the lesson is successful.

### Overview of Grades 3–5

Students in grades 3–5 typically range in age from 8 to 11. They are often referred to as "middle elementary" students, and understanding their characteristics and needs is crucial for effective teaching. Here's a description of students in this age group and some instructional tips for teachers:

**Increasing independence:** Students in this age group are becoming more independent in their learning and decision-making. They can follow instructions and complete tasks with less supervision.

**Varied interests:** Students have diverse interests and may show a growing passion for specific subjects or hobbies. Teachers can use these interests to enhance their engagement.

**Attention span:** While attention span is improving, students still require structure and variety to maintain engagement. They may struggle with prolonged periods of passive learning.

### Teaching Tips for Grades 3–5:

Preparation is key to successful instruction. Before teaching, organize all materials needed and review the lesson. Having materials organized before you start (copies made, materials ready, media open) will limit wait time for the students. The more time students wait, the greater potential for them to lose focus.

When you arrive, focus on building positive relationships. Introduce yourself and try to learn the children's names. Focus on desired behaviors. State what you want children TO do and avoid statements that focus on behaviors you want them to stop. Avoid raising your voice to gain attention because it may cause students to become loud. Wait until children are quiet and ready to speak. Once they are quiet, quickly start the lesson.

Start the lesson with a reminder of behavior expectations and reference as needed. Each lesson has Learning-Ready Visuals provided. Use positive reinforcement and acknowledge the effort and persistence of children. Look for helpers who are role models-reward them with a thumbs-up sign, smiles, or praise. When addressing behaviors that are distracting or inappropriate, do so quickly. State the behavior, why you need it to stop, and what you want them to do instead. Remember, do not take behavior personally.

If the entire group is losing focus, you may need to try:

1. A reminder using the Learning-Ready Visuals found with the lessons.
2. Acknowledging children who are on task and focused by thanking them for their attention.
3. Quickly state what you would like the group to do. (*Remember, I need you to sit in your spot so the others can see what I am showing them.*)
4. Being flexible and adapt your plan. You may need to move on to the next activity especially if it encourages their participation.
5. Being aware that some children may be afraid or nervous with new adults or adults who wear uniforms. Allowing them to have more space or be an observer (rather than an active participant) will build their trust. Once they are comfortable and relaxed, they will become more active participants. A cautious child is a more confident child because they are listening to their instincts in a scenario where they are feeling uncomfortable. Listening to your instincts is foundational to the success of a safety program.

Grade Level Crosswalk for Be Safe Virginia

|        | School Rules and Safety                        | Playground Safety                        | School Bus and Pedestrian Safety  | Community                                                               | Digital Citizenship                                         | Personal Responsibility and Safety                                            | Respect                                                                     | Self-Discipline                                                           | Bullying                                                                                | Drug Awareness                        | Alcohol Awareness                        | Nicotine Awareness                        |
|--------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| P<br>K | Lesson 1:<br>Introduce School Rules and Safety | Lesson #2<br>Introduce Playground Safety | Lesson #3<br>Introduce Bus Safety | Lesson #4<br>Introduce Community Helpers in Uniforms                    |                                                             |                                                                               |                                                                             |                                                                           |                                                                                         |                                       |                                          |                                           |
| K      |                                                |                                          | Lesson #1<br>Introduce Bus Safety | Lesson #2<br>Community Helpers                                          | Lesson #3<br>Introduce Internet Rules                       | Lesson #4<br>Introduce Stranger Awareness                                     | Lesson #5<br>Introduce Respect for Authority                                | Lesson #6<br>Introduce Car Safety                                         |                                                                                         |                                       |                                          |                                           |
| 1      |                                                |                                          |                                   | Lesson #1<br>Introduce How to Get Help in an Emergency                  | Lesson #2<br>Understand Internet Rules                      | Lesson# 3<br>Introduce Safety at Home                                         | Lesson #4<br>Understand Importance of Rules and Law                         | Lesson #5<br>Introduce Self-Discipline and Decision-Making                | Lesson #6<br>Introduce Bullying Behaviors and Prevention                                |                                       |                                          |                                           |
| 2      |                                                |                                          |                                   | Lesson #1<br>Understand Ownership and Theft Prevention in the Community |                                                             | Lesson #2<br>Understand the Difference between a Stranger and an Acquaintance | Lesson#3<br>Understand Professionals with Authority to Enforce Laws         |                                                                           | Lesson #4<br>Understand Bully Behaviors and Strategies to help Victims                  |                                       |                                          |                                           |
| 3      |                                                |                                          |                                   | Lesson #1<br>Apply Strategies for Emergency Preparation                 | Lesson #2<br>Understand Digital Citizenship                 | Lesson #3<br>Apply Positive Characteristics to Identify a Role Model          | Lesson #4<br>Apply Respectful Interaction with Professionals with Authority | Lesson #5<br>Apply Alternatives to Fighting                               |                                                                                         |                                       |                                          |                                           |
| 4      |                                                |                                          |                                   | Lesson #1<br>Apply Crime Prevention Strategies                          | Lesson #2<br>Understand Digital Citizenship — Cyberbullying |                                                                               | Lesson #3<br>Apply Strategies to Respect Others                             | Lesson #4<br>Understand Triggers and Apply Conflict Resolution Strategies | Lesson #5<br>Understand Peer Pressure                                                   |                                       |                                          |                                           |
| 5      |                                                |                                          |                                   |                                                                         | Lesson #1<br>Apply Internet Safety to Social Media          |                                                                               |                                                                             | Lesson #2<br>Apply Self-Discipline and Self Respect to Goal Setting       | Lesson #3<br>Understand the Impacts of Peer Pressure on Drug, Alcohol, and Nicotine Use | Lesson #4<br>Introduce Drug Awareness | Lesson #5<br>Introduce Alcohol Awareness | Lesson #6<br>Introduce Nicotine Awareness |