

Principles for School Road Safety Education

The 16 *Principles for School Road Safety Education* have been devised by experts and based on research to ensure content and delivery methods of road safety education are consistent with what is currently understood to be best practice in the field.

The Principles provide a framework of core concepts and values to guide the planning, implementation and review of road safety education programs, policies and practice in school communities.



Principles for School Road Safety Education

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLE

1. Implement evidence-based road safety education programs and initiatives in schools and include local research and current legislation where available.

CURRICULUM

2. Embed road safety education programs within a curriculum framework thereby providing timely, developmentally appropriate and ongoing road safety education for all year levels.
3. School management supports teachers to effectively implement road safety education by ensuring access to available resources and professional learning opportunities.
4. Use student-centred, interactive strategies to develop students' utility knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivation and behaviours regarding road safety.
5. Actively engage students in developing skills that focus on identifying and responding safely to risk situations.
6. Provide information to parents/carers that will encourage them to reinforce and practise road safety skills developed in the classroom, in the real road environment.
7. Encourage students to support and influence their peers positively as a way of improving road safety behaviour.

ETHOS AND ENVIRONMENT

8. Consult the wider school community when developing road safety guidelines and policies and then disseminate this information to families and monitor implementation.
9. School management actively promotes road safety education by supporting staff to plan and implement road safety education within the curriculum and other school programs and initiatives.
10. School management actively encourages staff to model appropriate road safety behaviour and attitudes consistent with the school's road safety guidelines.
11. Encourage and promote school-community participation in school road safety programs.
12. Review and update where necessary, in partnership with external authorities, the school road environment to encourage and support parents and carers to practise safer road safety skills.

PARENTS AND COMMUNITY

13. Provide parents and carers with information that will assist them to reinforce appropriate road safety messages and skills (including school guidelines and policies) at home.
14. Provide parents and carers with practical, opportunistic and planned, on-road training for modelling of appropriate behaviours to their children.
15. Establish and maintain links and involve community agencies and local government in the delivery of road safety messages that complement and support existing school road safety programs.
16. Engage, train and resource school health service staff to complement and support road safety education programs and other initiatives in schools.

The National Road Safety Education Forum (NRSEF) is a national association of senior road safety consultants representative of all state and territories.

In 2006, the NRSEF agreed that a set of nationally relevant principles of best practice would enhance the effectiveness of road safety education in schools.

The research project to develop the Principles for School Road Safety Education was commissioned by School Drug Education and Road Aware and was conducted by the Child Health Promotion Research Centre at Edith Cowan University in Western Australia.

The Principles have been developed from recent research on effective school road safety education and are based on current empirical, theoretical and practical evidence.

Overarching principle

Principle 1:

Implement evidence-based road safety education programs and initiatives in schools and include local research and current legislation where available.

Road safety education programs and initiatives based on research are more likely to be effective. Including local research and current legislation will help ensure that road safety education programs and initiatives are appropriate and relevant to the context of the school community.

Curriculum

Principle 2:

Embed road safety education programs within a curriculum framework thereby providing timely, developmentally appropriate and ongoing road safety education for all year levels.

When embedded in the curriculum, students' and teachers' awareness and knowledge of the importance of road safety education will be enhanced. Children and young people progress through developmental phases of learning. The ability to safely interact with the traffic environment relies on the learning and reinforcement of age appropriate content and skills throughout these phases.

Principle 3:

School management supports staff to effectively implement road safety education by ensuring access to available resources and professional learning opportunities.

Professional development and support is a fundamental principle in road safety education. Enhancing staff member's skills in facilitating road safety education will ensure current and accurate information and resources are delivered to students.

Principle 4:

Use student-centred, interactive strategies to develop students' utility knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivation and behaviours regarding road safety.

Programs that encourage student-centred activities such as those which promote play, social interaction, self-awareness, personal reflection and exploration of the world are most effective as they actively engage students, satisfy their natural curiosity in learning and encourage peer interaction during the learning process. Students from vulnerable groups such as lower socio-economic groups, culturally and linguistically diverse groups and rural and remote communities, who are at greater risk of traffic injury, benefit most from student-centred programs and interactive strategies.

Principle 5:

Actively engage students in developing skills that focus on identifying and responding safely to risk situations.

Learning is dependent on active engagement with a task. Emphasis should therefore be placed on learning new skills and applying these to the appropriate context. Skill development that focuses on identifying and responding safely to risk situations is central to road safety education. A combination of classroom activities and real traffic training will reinforce learning and develop skills.

Principle 6:

Provide information to parents/carers that will encourage them to reinforce and practice road safety skills developed in the classroom, in the real road environment.

Classroom curriculum can be effective in changing road safety knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviours of children and young people. However, safer road user behaviour is more likely when parents are encouraged to model and provide on-road practice that support classroom programs, messages and strategies.

Principle 7:

Encourage students to support and influence their peers positively as a way of improving road safety behaviour.

Peers are often the most influential role models in young peoples' social learning. Encouraging students to engage in safe road use behaviour, in peer situations, can be effective in improving this behaviour. When used in conjunction with other strategies peer discussion can greatly enhance learning gains.

Ethos and Environment

Principle 8:

Consult the wider school community when developing road safety guidelines and then disseminate this information to families and monitor implementation.

School road safety education is more effective when the three areas of the *Health Promoting Schools Framework* and the Principles are considered when planning, implementing and reviewing school road safety guidelines. To ensure guidelines are well implemented, schools are encouraged to involve the wider school community. Inviting feedback on draft versions can encourage ownership and increase acceptance. Providing parents and school staff with the school's road safety guidelines encourages them to model the desired behaviours and attitudes as specified.

Principle 9:

School management actively promotes road safety education by supporting staff to plan and implement road safety education within the curriculum and other school programs and initiatives.

Schools often face many barriers when implementing a new program. To increase program success it is important for school management to provide leadership and support to the school community in their efforts. By taking a proactive approach, school management can openly demonstrate their commitment to the program and promote road safety education.

Principle 10:

School management actively encourages staff to model appropriate road safety behaviour and attitudes consistent with the school's road safety guidelines.

Individuals learn by observing others perform a particular behaviour. Modelling is an important factor in effective injury prevention programs. Positive relationships between students and staff have been found to improve students' connectedness to school as well as reduce problem behaviours and improve attendance and academic achievement. Staff are therefore important role models for students and may exert considerable influence on the behaviours of young people.

Principle 11:

Encourage and promote school-community participation in school road safety programs.

When the whole-school community is involved in addressing road safety through school-based, environmental and community interventions there is potential for long-term behaviour change and reduction in road injuries for children and young people.

Principle 12:

Review and update where necessary, in partnership with external authorities, the school traffic environment to encourage and support parents to practise road safety skills.

Improvements in the school traffic environment such as road design, speed limits and the separation of pedestrians and vehicles around schools can greatly reduce pedestrian and cyclist injuries. This will enhance the safety of road users before and after school, and provide opportunities for parents to model appropriate road user behaviour with these facilities.

Parents and Community

Principle 13:

Provide parents with information that will assist them to reinforce appropriate road safety messages and skills (including school guidelines) at home.

Parents are best placed to model road safety for their children because they care and are motivated to ensure their child's safety. They are also aware and responsive to their children's habits in traffic and have many opportunities to teach their children about staying safe. Road safety information that is practical, offers ideas and encourages interaction between parents and their children is preferred. Families are more likely to be engaged in road safety education when information is relevant for their child and combines printed materials with interactive activities.

Principle 14:

Provide parents and carers with practical, opportunistic and planned, on-road training for modelling of appropriate behaviours to their children.

Practical road-side training is an effective way of improving children's road safety knowledge and skills. Perceptual-motor skills are best developed at the road-side or in the car. Teaching and modelling safe road user behaviours are important indicators of children's road safety behaviours. Parents are best placed to practise and model these behaviours with their children.

Principle 15:

Establish and maintain links and involve community agencies and local government in the delivery of road safety messages that complement and support existing school road safety programs.

Road safety educators and stakeholders are recommended to collaborate and combine their expertise when developing new road safety initiatives in schools as this will contribute to improved health and safety outcomes.

Principle 16:

Engage, train and resource school health service staff to complement and support road safety education programs and other initiatives in schools.

Road safety requires a comprehensive, combined approach. Engaging school-based health staff and relevant community groups to support road safety education curriculum supports this approach. Presentations and services offered by these groups can complement and reinforce classroom programs when included as part of a road safety education program.

For a copy of the Principles for School Road Safety Education: A Research Summary, go to

www.sdera.wa.edu.au