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Child Road Safety Education Guidelines

This document provides guidance on best practice recommendations for child road safety education (RSE), based on published international evidence. It also provides information on the types of education interventions that have failed to show lasting positive impact. It is important to note that many RSE programs and materials have been devised and delivered, but that thorough evaluations of their impact are rare. The following good practice principles in Child RSE have been collated from the references that appear at the end of this document.

Good Practice Principles for Child RSE

- ✓ Regular evaluation should be conducted to assess delivery and outcomes.
- ✓ Must be part of a lifelong learning approach to road safety – should start as early as 4-5 years old and continue through primary and secondary school.
- ✓ Must be developed by considering the developmental trends and limitations of children. Each age group has different physical, psychological, and emotional development needs. Requirements for each age group should be clearly defined. Educational resources and materials must be adapted to the level of development and maturity of the student. Poor practice is non-incremental, repetitive and unrelated to the child's development.
- ✓ Training should progress from actions to concepts.
Eg. - For very young children, the focus could be on learning where to look on the road to identify oncoming traffic, and location of designated crossing areas. For older children, the focus could be on awareness of interactions in traffic by different road users.
- ✓ Development of skills (eg road crossing) is not sufficient. Appropriate attitudes towards road safety must also be developed.
- ✓ Effective RSE programs require a clear structure within a recognised curriculum with a planned, sustained and coherent programme of learning. For each age group and/or user group, tangible goals should form the basis to develop tailored strategies and interventions.
- ✓ Must be culturally appropriate.
- ✓ Needs to be practical, not only theoretical:
 - New knowledge and new skills need to be rehearsed and applied in environments which are the same as, or closely related to, the ultimate context of use (e.g the actual road environment or something closely representing it).
 - By learning the skills in an actual, but safe, road environment children and young people can learn from their errors and also become aware of dangers that appear in real life road use.
- ✓ Effective teaching methods encourage active student participation (eg use of role playing, simulations of traffic environment, actual street crossing practice etc.) and interaction with adults (eg discussion about what has been learned).



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- ✓ Must include parents as well as teachers to continue the entire cycle of training and education. Should be delivered in a social environment because children learn well from social interaction and modelling the behaviour of others.
- ✓ The quality of the implementation of the programme is as important as the programme itself. Therefore, it is important to involve teachers so that they understand programme aims, content, and their role in delivery and evaluation.
- ✓ Resources need to include support to schools and teachers to deliver programs.
- ✓ Should be developed and delivered by partnerships between teachers, parents and key agencies.
- ✓ Should be linked to travel modes actually used by children (eg walking, cycling, passengers in car/bus) and the associated risks.
- ✓ Focus should be on educational programs (eg support to teachers and presenters including training for teachers, assistance with planning) rather than simply on educational resources (eg book, website).
- ✓ The best results are achieved by interventions that improve the psycho-social skills of students such as self-esteem, assertiveness and resistance to peer pressure.

Examples to consider for each age group

For Early primary school children (ages 5-9 years)

RSE should address safe behaviours for:

- Walking along, across or near roads
- Cycling on footpaths and near roads
- Playing near roads
- Travelling as a passenger

RSE should promote increased exposure to traffic environments and safe behaviours and strategies while accompanied by adults or other responsible carer givers.

RSE should build an understanding of traffic management devices including signals, signs, road markings and crossing supervisors.

RSE should **not** encourage:

- increased pedestrian exposure of children unaccompanied by adults or older adolescents,
- use of any form of motorcycle, motorized bicycle/scooter, or roller blades



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RSE should promote the use of:

- seat belts
- booster seats for younger/smaller children
- bicycle helmets
- other protective equipment such as knee and wrist pads for roller-blade users

For Late primary school children (ages 9-12 years)

RSE should address safe behaviour for:

- Walking along, across or near roads
- Cycling on footpaths and near roads
- Playing near roads
- Travelling as a passenger

RSE should lead to an understanding of safe behaviour for independent travel and use of public transport, including choice of the safest route for each journey.

RSE should not encourage students to become over-confident about their ability to cope safely with traffic.

RSE should not encourage use of any form of motorcycle, motorised bicycle or motorised scooter.

Students should be given information about the risks involved in using these types of vehicles.

Students who ride motorcycles off-road should be given information about safe riding practices.

RSE should lead to an understanding of the causes of traffic crashes & their consequences.

For Early secondary school students (ages 12-15 years)

RSE should build an understanding of the relative safety of different transport modes, encourage students to consider transport safety when choosing the transport mode(s) for their trips, as well as considering the safest routes for each journey

RSE should assist students to develop strategies to avoid riding as a passenger of an impaired driver.

RSE should not encourage use of any form of motorcycle, motorised bicycle or motorised scooter.

Students should be given information about risks involved in using these types of vehicle.

Students who ride motorcycles off-road should be given information about safe riding practices.

RSE should lead to an understanding of the costs and impacts of road trauma for its victims and the RSE should promote the use of: seat belts, bicycle helmets, visibility aids for cycling at night, other protective equipment.



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For Late secondary school (ages 15-18 years)

RSE should not encourage use of any form of motorcycle, motorised bicycle or motorised scooter. Students should be given information about the risks involved in using these types of vehicle.

Students who ride motorcycles off-road should be given information about safe riding practices.

RSE should not encourage or facilitate earlier acquisition of a solo driving licence (provisional, probationary, restricted or full). School-based programs should not result in the award of a solo driving licence; nor should they lead to any reduction in the age at which a licence can be obtained.

RSE should encourage acquisition of increased amounts of supervised driving experience.

RSE should lead to an understanding of strategies to assist learner drivers to get the maximum benefit from the learner permit period.

School-based programs for learner drivers should only be promoted as an adjunct to, not as a substitute for, on-road experience supervised by a fully-licensed family member, friend or commercial instructor.

Driving skills training, including skid control, have been demonstrated to be ineffective and should be avoided.

Summary of Key Principles

Scarce road safety education resources should not be devoted to programmes that are known to be ineffective in reducing crashes and casualties.

Road Safety Education should:

1. not result in increased exposure to risk.
2. promote injury reduction measures that are known to be effective.
3. provide children of every age with the skills and knowledge required to perform safely the road-related activities in which they are likely to engage.
4. not lead to students becoming overconfident about their ability to cope safely with hazardous driving situations.
5. provide students with the knowledge and skills required to behave safely, and also with the motivation to do so.
6. provide students with the knowledge that will help them to be safer road users throughout their lives.



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Interventions to avoid due to lack of demonstrated effectiveness:

- One-off and ad hoc information/education sessions in schools including:
 - activities that are solely knowledge-based or aim only to raise awareness of risk, without also addressing motivations for risky behaviour, attitudes towards risky behaviour, and expected outcomes of risky behaviour
 - standalone road safety events or forums, including school visits from crash victims, emergency services, road safety enthusiasts, including sessions that focus on fear-based appeals for behaviour change
- Off-road training programmes including:
 - Pre-licence skills-based programmes
 - Skid control training
 - Post-licence driver and rider training
- Mass media campaigns that are not accompanied by appropriate enforcement action

Summarising extensive research findings on these topics, the World Bank's *Guide for Road Safety Interventions: Evidence of What Works and What Does Not Work* notes that:

'While studies show the education on road safety in schools does improve knowledge, there is no evidence that this knowledge changes the safety level of on-road behaviour. There is a risk that increased knowledge increases confidence and risk-taking.'

'Indeed, despite the value of education and training in other aspects of life, a comprehensive review of many scientific evaluations of school-based driver training demonstrated clearly negative results.'

Finally, the World Health Organization identified ten strategies for improving the safety of children on the road based on extensive international evidence. Of note, none of them include school-based or driver education.

1. Controlling speed
2. Reducing Drink driving
3. Using helmets for bicyclists and motorcyclists
4. Restraining children in vehicles
5. Improving children's ability to see and be seen
6. Enhancing road infrastructure
7. Adapting vehicle design
8. Reducing risks for young drivers
9. Providing appropriate care for injured children
10. Supervising children around roads



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