

## **Changing mental models: How advances in learning theory inform design and delivery of road safety education in secondary schools**

Joel, A. & Baldwin, R.  
New Zealand Transport Agency

### **Abstract**

Safer Journeys, the New Zealand Road Safety Strategy 2012-2020, has a priority area of increasing the safety of young drivers. Part of the New Zealand approach is to increase young people's access to high quality road safety education. A literature review shows most road safety education (RSE) programmes internationally lack evidence that either their design or their impact is effective. While some delivery methods and resources may increase knowledge or skills, any such gains often fail to translate into changes in attitudes and behaviour. However, recent developments in learning theory are changing approaches to RSE in schools. Keys to effective RSE include designing activities that are deliberately linked to how young people learn, ensuring relevance that motivates and engages young people, creating dissonance and developing deep knowledge, and developing competencies for making decisions and taking action. The NZ Transport Agency has used this new knowledge about effective learning to inform the design of curriculum resources, which were trialled in secondary schools before release. Embedding resources in the day-to-day work of subject-specialist teachers was considered important to ensure broad access to effective learning experiences. Practical examples from the curriculum trials illustrate key design features and show how student outcomes indicate that the new approaches may result in young people being better equipped with the skills, behaviours and attitudes they need to contribute to safer use of the road system.