

An approach to road safety education – in the senior school

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Abstract

Although road safety education has been delivered in all NSW schools as part of a mandatory curriculum for the last seventeen years, evidence confirms that road safety for adolescents is based, not simply on knowledge, but on the attitudes and behaviours of young people using the road environment.

The redevelopment of the NSW secondary school road safety education resources has sought to address the ways in which road safety is communicated to young people within the school environment.

Whilst road safety education is a mandatory component in the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) syllabus in both Primary (K-6) and Secondary (Years 7-10), there is no such pathway in the senior schools years (Years 11-12).

A strategy to address this gap was to develop a resource that met the needs of both the students and teachers in the only mandatory course in the senior school year – English. *In the driver's seat – the nature of authority*, examines the concept and value of advertising to promote road safety messages to young people. The new resource includes support materials such as teacher notes, teaching and learning strategies as well as lesson plans linking the curriculum based activities to the NSW mandatory English Preliminary Syllabus.

The development of the resource has utilised a variety of multi-media materials to meet the needs of the targeted curriculum. The resource is based on existing RTA television, cinema, printed and radio advertisements and posters/brochures. State-wide professional development for English teachers on the use of the resource is being provided as part of this resource's implementation in a two phase program.

The first phase was to support all NSW English teachers with a personal copy of the resource after attending a two hour workshop held outside school hours (evenings or weekends) conducted by trained presenters through the NSW English Teacher's Association (NSWETA) – the writers of the teaching and learning strategies resource materials. This phase has now concluded.

The second phase of the implementation strategy is conducting the professional development sessions through the education sectors with schools that attend receiving copies of the resource during the remainder of the 2008 school year.

This paper provides an opportunity for those working in road safety, in a variety of settings, to consider the concept of road safety using a framework that can be adapted to meet the needs of the audience. This model of delivery has been trialed by students and teachers and received substantial endorsement as a tool for influencing the attitudes and beliefs of young people with regard to road safety.

Key words

Education; schools; curriculum; road safety; young people.

Introduction

School based road safety education remains a critical component of the New South Wales Centre for Road Safety's (NSWCRS) strategy to ensure the safety of children and young people. Whilst the number of children killed or injured on NSW roads has decreased significantly in the last 10 years, there remains a view that any injury or loss of a child from a road related crash is unacceptable and preventable.

The road environment is a complex one. Legislation has changed rapidly over the past few years. There are more vehicles, capable of greater speeds, competing with an increased number of pedestrians and road users. To adjust to these changes, road safety education in schools has needed to change and adapt to these influences.

To ensure that road safety education is not only taught, but taught well, the NSWCRS has over the last 17 years used a model of consultation and professional development to ensure that teachers are confident and capable of delivering road safety and utilizing the resources developed for this delivery, in the most optimal way.

In NSW, Road Safety Education is part of a mandatory curriculum delivery to all school students from Kindergarten up to Year 10 (school years K-10). The main curriculum framework in which Road Safety Education sits, is the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) curriculum, which as its title suggests, combines a number of key health and safety issues as well as other living skills.

Whilst road safety education is a mandatory component in the PDHPE syllabus in both Primary (K-6) and Secondary (Years 7-10), there is no such pathway in the senior schools years (Years 11-12). Road safety is a part of the senior PDHPE syllabus however the total candidature for this course is usually around 12,000 students from a total pool of 76,000 students studying the preliminary courses.

A deliberate strategy to address this gap to ensure that all senior students had access to the road safety program and relevant materials was to develop a resource that met the needs of both the students and teachers in the only mandatory course in the senior school year – English.

The most recent road safety educational resource developed by the NSWCRS, *In the driver's seat – the nature of authority*, examines the concept and value of advertising to promote road safety messages to young people. The project was undertaken in consultation with all of the education sectors in NSW and trialed by a range of teachers and students; it has used the concept of text types not only to educate students through their English curriculum, but hopefully to influence their values and attitudes to safe road use.

The resource has been developed for senior students Stage 6, Year 11 (16-17 year olds) and it is closely linked to the outcomes of the Preliminary Higher School Certificate English Curriculum to make it an attractive educational tool for teachers to utilise in their teaching programs.

Development of road safety educational materials also accesses the expertise of the three NSW education sectors with representatives from the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET), the Catholic Education Commission of NSW (CEC) and The Association of Independent Schools of NSW (AIS) being members of the NSWCRS' resource committee during the concept and development stages through to trialing by teachers and students and final production.

In the driver's seat – the nature of authority, contains a variety of teaching/learning activities highlighting key road safety messages for 16 to 17 year olds. It examines the concept and value of advertising to promote road safety messages to young people. The new resource contains support materials such as teacher notes and lesson plans and is based on existing NSWCRS television, cinema, print and radio advertisements. All activities support the outcomes of the NSW Board of Studies Preliminary English Syllabus Stage 6 (Year 11).

It has been designed for students who are at the age where many of them learn to drive, to help them to:

- familiarise themselves with issues of driving safely
 - consider the nature of authority and freedom in a civil society
 - develop a sense of responsibility towards self-regulation
- and to
- use these social understandings as analogies for their processes of responding, composing and reflecting.

Distribution potentially to all NSW secondary school English teachers has been supported through professional development workshops for English teachers.

The mandatory nature of the English curriculum combined with the target audience provides an ideal catalyst for the development of this senior school resource.

The intention was to develop a teacher manual and student resources for Stage 6 English that made explicit links to the areas of study relevant to the work required for teachers and students in the NSW Stage 6 English Board of Studies courses that reflects best practice in English teaching. It was to be focussed on the NSW Stage 6 Preliminary Course (Year 11) as a means of ensuring the relevance and sustainability of the resource for future years. There was also an identified gap in available educational resources that met the needs of the teachers and students in this area of the curriculum. A quality educationally sound resource would be strategically well placed at this time.

To meet these requirements the following were identified as the criteria essential for the future resource's development:

1. A range of learning experiences which provide all NSW English teachers with the knowledge and skills to use NSWCRS road safety advertising, multimedia and educational texts in classroom pedagogy to complement current practice in English.
2. Links to the relevant outcomes and syllabus content. This needed to be provided for all Stage 6 (Year 11) compulsory English courses: Standard, Advanced and English as a Second Language). These links were to be directly linked to course requirements and outcomes.
3. Student task outlines and worksheets.
4. Various assessment strategies and sample tasks that incorporate and reflect best current practice.
5. Related resources (required for learning experiences).
6. Annotated student work samples to assist teachers in student assessment. This would include reference to marking criteria.

Structure of the teacher manual and lessons:

The lessons would be sequenced through the specific advertising/educational campaigns and their particular aspect of road safety (eg. country speeding) and their mediums (eg. television, cinema, radio, billboard or print). The teaching and learning experiences would then use each text (e.g. 'Heaven and Hell') and respond to the text through textual analysis and through widening students' repertoire of the language relevant to the study of English. Students would then be guided through the deconstruction of the text (text annotations and guided questions) and would be given choices in responding and composing tasks. These responding and composing tasks would be accompanied by student work samples and modelled responses where appropriate. They would be learning activities that any English teacher in NSW could use to complement typical approaches to the Year 11 Preliminary, Standard, Advanced and ESL courses.

The components of the *In the driver's seat – the nature of authority*, resource are:

- 1 x *In the driver's seat – the nature of authority* CD ROM with a PDF version of the teacher manual
- 1 x *In the driver's seat – the nature of authority* DVD
- 1 x teacher manual

The rationale for using these three elements has been to ensure that all schools and teachers, irrespective of their technology capabilities or capacity – can use whichever resource components most suit their needs.

Key Design Factors of the Stage 6 Resource

The range of student abilities and interests contained within Stage 6 represents significant variability in terms of skills as well as cultural and socio-economic circumstances. The following points underpin the

design concepts for the Stage 6 resource and reflect the issues affecting teachers of road safety in the classroom.

The resource addresses the outcomes for the Stage 6 (Year 11 preliminary) English curriculum in the Standard, Advanced and English as a Second Language (ESL) courses and has been designed for flexible delivery as an Area of Study or as an adjunct to other aspects of the Year 11 courses. The package has been designed to be selectively adopted by teachers according to the needs, interests and abilities of their students. It is not meant to be taught in its entirety but rather to offer a range of approaches and activities for teachers to select from.

There was a need for congruity between teachers' needs and their readiness to accept new teaching materials. The content of this resource is most pertinent as several sections address the syllabus outcomes that English teachers find more difficult to teach. By providing a world's best quality resource to teachers to work with, in this area greatly opens the options to provide road safety education to a broader senior school population.

The CD ROM and DVD contain the NSWCRS/RTA road safety advertisements/texts in different media supported by a selection of the workplace texts used in the development of the educational campaign and the 120 page teacher book includes teacher notes and student teaching and learning strategies and activities.

Using the texts produced by the NSWCRS/RTA in various road safety and safe driving campaigns, the resource has developed educational strategies for students to explore the idea and practice of authority in the community. Students are able to consider the nature of authority and freedom in a civil society and use these social understandings as analogies for their own processes of responding, composing and reflecting.

The resource contains four main sections:

Section 1:

Who is at the wheel? The nature of authority: How we compose and respond to texts.

This section raises questions of authority in the community and in texts. Students are required to consider where authority lies and how it operates. To understand these issues they explore ways in which the NSWCRS/RTA achieves compliance with road rules by the public. This includes developing an advertising campaign using authentic workplace texts as models.

Section 2:

What pedals are pushed? The power of the text: Close study of language.

Here the students explore different approaches of persuasion and how they are realised in the NSWCRS/RTA texts. Students respond to and compose a range of texts in different modes and media, reading them for their intended message and the effectiveness of their communication.

Section 3:

Who is in the back seat? The hidden persuaders: Critical readings of the texts.

The 'hidden persuaders' takes a critical approach to the texts, examining the ways language and assumed values shape our responses.

Section 4:

You steer. Controlling the text: Understanding personal response and responsibilities.

A focus on reflection the processes of responding, composing and learning. Students are asked to move from close textual activity and return to the broader community issues through a forum to draw together issues of personal freedoms and community safety.'[1]

As with all NSWCRS Education Resources, teacher resource notes assist teachers in addressing teaching and learning outcomes and in the creation and delivery of their lessons.

Process of learning

A particular challenge faced by schools in road safety education is going beyond awareness-raising and simply the provision of knowledge. These are worthwhile outcomes, although it is important to note that knowledge and awareness on their own are generally not effective in promoting or sustaining longer term behaviour change. Positive behaviour change is heavily linked to changes in attitudes and values as well as the development of necessary skills.

Positive attitudes, values and skills are typically best developed in ongoing programs that are conducted by qualified people who have established an existing and positive relationship with the learner/s. This is the environment in which road safety education should occur within schools.

Appropriate qualified school personnel may include PDHPE teachers, student welfare teachers, Year advisers and other interested staff with expertise and an ability to promote appropriate student discussion.

In this scenario the English teacher is more than able to fulfil this role. By working through the teaching and learning strategies, in an educational setting fostered by trusting relationships, students, their peers and teachers provide a point of ongoing contact and support. The premise of this educational tool is that learners become masters – a teacher has success when the authority invested in them grows within the student. While students are able to replicate the messages and knowledge they mature as learners only when they are able to adapt and act on that knowledge in their own lives.

Rolling out the resource

The NSW English Teachers Association (NSWETA) - writers of the teaching and learning strategies - were engaged to deliver the first stage of the professional development and roll out of the *In the driver's seat – the nature of authority* to the English teaching population across the state. The professional development sessions were to cover all mandatory Preliminary English courses – Standard, Advanced and English as a Second Language (ESL).

The presenters were senior school English teachers, especially trained in the content of the resource and the theories underpinning its learning.

From March 2007 to April 2008:

- 32 presenters were trained across NSW in all education sectors. The selection of presenters was done ensuring that they were presently active in the profession of English teaching and were professionally well respected. They underwent a two day training session. This included the following strategies:
 - provide them with expertise in the content and theories in the package
 - develop ways of integrating the package into programs already operating in various schools
 - develop approaches for successful delivery of professional development
 - ways of ensuring teacher accreditation for attending sessions through the NSW Institute of Teachers
 - and to provide advice and materials for promoting the opportunities of the professional development sessions
- A support network was set up for the trainers and mentors to support each other and to share ideas, experiences and seek advice.
- 5 mentors in key locations across the state were appointed with high profiles in successful professional development of English in NSW.
- The resource and sessions were widely and consistently promoted to all schools and English teachers.
- 79 professional development seminars were organised including video conferences to school in remote areas. 1,311 teachers attended the two hour professional development sessions. These all occurred outside of school hours. Either after school or on weekends during participants own time.

- Because of the structure of schooling, the nature of effective faculties and the many and varied pressures on teachers, the culture of teachers is collegial. Whilst the marketing of the resource clearly targeted it as belonging to the individual teacher attending the professional development sessions, schools tended to send single representatives to collect and be trained in the delivery of the resource. Occasionally a significant number of a faculty attended, often after one had returned to the school with a glowing report of the quality and relevance of the resource. According to workshop records, at least one copy of the resource can now be found in the 516 English departments across the state.

Evaluation

Evaluations were received from participants in the professional development sessions. They were asked to review the experience using a four point Likert scale:

Table 1.

Quality of resource:

Brilliant	Very Good	OK	Disappointing
46.00%	52.90%	1.02%	0%

Sample comments:

‘A fantastic resource, focusing on an urgent contemporary issue and a target audience who will find the presentation and interactive nature of the resource engaging and provocative.’ (Tweed River)

‘I’ll be using these resources next week for three of my classes. Really practical, interesting and high powered to engage students in deep critical thinking.’ (Ballina)

‘Relates to students socio-environment, especially in country areas (Upper Hunter). New and innovative – allows for a wide scope of learning styles.’ (Hunter)

Introduces some challenging abstract ideas and literary concepts and scaffolds activities to build students understanding. Useful for early year 11 and appropriate year 12 units of work.’ (Mudgee)

Table 2.

Quality of presenter/presentation:

Brilliant	Very Good	OK	Poor
28.89%	64.66%	6.29%	0.14%

Sample Comments:

‘The presentation and consequent discussion was linked creatively to the syllabus and outcomes. Most impressed with the variety of activities and clever use of technology to improve learning. Excellent for standard students, clear scaffolds and instructions.’ (Tweed River)

‘Presentation gave me time to view and assess resource from audience’s point of view and time to flick through and discuss written activities.’ (Inverell)

‘Easy to understand, very useful, drew attention to relevant aspects/applications.’ (Sydney)

Conclusion

This innovative educational program was embarked upon with a desire to develop understandings of the Year 11 English curriculum by NSW teachers of the Preliminary component of the Higher School Certificate candidature, and through this vehicle convey to their students the importance of the messages for young drivers and their passengers. Education sectors are presently utilising the content, framework and strategies developed in this resource to further enhance their Year 12 English programs thus increasing the total potential audience that will come into contact with this material.

In the driver's seat – the nature of authority has taken a hold in the NSW English teaching community and has done so with overwhelming praise for its quality and suitability for students across mandatory English courses. Reports from English teachers using this resource with their students confirm a high level of student interest and engagement with the content of the NSW Centre for Road Safety texts. This model of delivery has received substantial endorsement as a tool for influencing the attitudes and beliefs of young people with regard to road safety.

Most importantly, professional development to up-skill classroom teachers in the use of this new resource was and is being provided to all secondary schools across NSW. This ensures that the resource is utilised to its fullest capacity by teachers who are trained in its use and are confident with the complexities of the material. The courses are accredited with the NSW Institute of Teachers, meeting nine different areas of their Standards of Professional Competence criteria, to ensure recognition of the rigour of the material at the highest level for those participating.

This resource began its state-wide professional development rollout and distribution to NSW English teachers and schools free of charge from July 2007 and will continue throughout the 2008 school year.

References

1. NSW Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA), 'In the driver's seat – the nature of authority' May 2007, 2.