

'Teaching 4 Traffic' - A Road Safety Education Toolkit for Teachers

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Biography

Vicki has a background in primary school education, having taught for 14 years in both rural and metropolitan South Australian schools. She began working at Transport SA in mid 1999 as the Education Consultant on the Safe Routes to School program.

Vicki has been involved in the development of a range of road safety education curriculum and support materials. She is currently involved in the development of a secondary school curriculum resource for South Australia.

Vicki provides road safety education support to all schools across the state. Vicki has been actively involved in the Road Safety Education Forum over the past 12 months.

Transport SA is committed to supporting teachers to teach road safety. In 2000 TSA undertook an evaluation process to review the teacher-training component of the SRTS program. The outcome of the review highlighted the need to develop a training resource/manual to base the training on. The paper explains/ details the process to develop the resource, discusses the components contained in the resource. The paper will explain how the training resource is used and presents the feedback that has been gathered since the implementation.

The paper describes the key outcomes to the education program expected as a result of developing the resource, what is expected to be the benefits to schools with the introduction of the resource.

Teachers provide the key to the longevity of the program and the method for conduit for delivering road safety messages. For change agents for students without the cooperation of teachers, teaching of road safety education would be difficult to implement, may just be reactive rather than proactive. We have been through a long period of time when road safety education was not on the SA primary school agenda widespread. This is slowly being changed to ensure that this continues teachers need to be provided with resources. In the times of competing priorities within schools teachers need resources that are relevant, practical and user friendly. We have developed a tool/ resource that provided an ongoing useful resource for teachers and schools.

1. INTRODUCTION

Road safety education is a vital inclusion into the school curriculum, and particularly important at the primary school level. The development of appropriate skills and behaviours to enable students to negotiate safely the road network must begin at a young age and continue throughout their schooling, to reflect the changing needs and physical development of students as they grow.

The road safety skills that are developed during primary school provide a foundation for continued learning about the road and traffic environment that is increasingly complex and unpredictable. These skills continue to develop as essential life skills.

Transport SA through its Safe Routes to School program has developed initiatives to ensure that road safety education is delivered within the primary school setting. The ongoing success of these initiatives is dependent on primary school teachers working in partnership with Transport SA to deliver road safety education.

Transport SA understands there is a close link between the degree to which teachers are prepared and supported to teach road safety, and the learning experiences and outcomes for students.

The Safe Routes to School program has been running in South Australia for seven years. The key elements of the program are engineering outcomes and an education plan developed specifically for each school.

The process to develop the road safety education program begins with the Teaching 4 Traffic training day. The Teaching 4 Traffic training manual is the key component of this training. The training day involves teacher representatives from an identified Safe Routes to School program area, usually consisting of five primary schools. Of the teachers that attend, at least one takes on the role from each school of the designated Traffic Safety Focus teacher. The role that this teacher plays in maintaining the road safety education within the school is vital. To ensure a high level of participation from each school Transport SA covers all costs involved in the training, including paying for teacher release time. The aim of the training is to provide the teachers with information about road safety resources, road safety issues specific to each school community and to facilitate the development of a Traffic Safety Education Plan.

The current Teaching 4 Traffic training day has evolved from the original training days when the Safe Routes to School program commenced. Transport SA engaged a consultant to evaluate the training. The evaluation process was comprehensive and provided an independent perspective of ways to improve the effectiveness of the training.

The initial stage of the evaluation involved a series of focus groups covering metropolitan and rural based teachers. Comments and opinions were gathered related to all aspects of the training as well as implementation issues within the school. The teachers involved in the review process had previously been trained through their participation in earlier Safe Routes to School programs, hence a variety of training experiences were considered.

The Consultant attended a typical training session to review this process first hand, which complemented the focus session review. The two aspects of the review process provided an opportunity to incorporate a balanced perspective of the current training model.

Following the completion of the review process, the consultant presented a report which highlighted a number of key points for the improvement of the training. This included the development of a 'road map' of materials, the inclusion of a number of templates and implementation strategies. The Teaching 4 Traffic training manual was developed on completion of the process.

The combination of content related materials and practical classroom information throughout Teaching 4 Traffic ensures that the resource can be used widely within schools. Teaching 4 Traffic is designed to be added to, maintaining its relevance over time.

The introduction of Teaching 4 Traffic is designed for the specific purposes of being a training manual and well as a school support resource. As a result of the development of the resource the format of the training session has been redesigned. Teachers are guided step by step through sections of the manual to ensure that they have a thorough understanding of all the components and the way that it can be utilised within the school community. A copy of

Teaching 4 Traffic is provided to all teachers who attend the training, while this remains the property of the trainee, the expectation is that the resource will be also made available to staff members not attending the training for their support.

The second purpose of the resource is to provide an ongoing onsite resource. A key priority for Transport SA is the provision of ongoing support to schools to enable each site to continue to maintain an emphasis on road safety education. While Transport SA staff support schools, the provision of a resource located within each site will provide teachers with an immediate resource, to assist with many facets of the Safe Routes to School education program. It is anticipated that over time individual schools will take increased responsibility for maintaining a profile of road safety, Teaching 4 Traffic will assist with this.

Teaching 4 Traffic has six separate sections, presenting the information in a clear and logical format. Section 1 explains the purpose of the resource and provides a context for its development. The Traffic Safety Focus teacher is extremely important to the program and this role is clearly outlined in this section.

Section 2 is devoted to providing information related to the primary school curriculum resource Road Ready. An overview of the resource is provided as well as implementation strategies for the school community.

Section 3 describes the 'Way to Go' parent information sheets and explains the links to Road Ready. Section 4 explains the process and issues related the development of the Traffic Safety Education plan. The steps to develop a road safety vision statement are outlined and a number of vision statement examples are provided.

Section 5 provides information related to planning special road safety events

Section 6 outlines the range of additional road safety resources that are available through Transport SA including some newsletter inserts. A blank page for teacher notes is included at the end of each section.

Teaching 4 Traffic is also designed to provide information about the Safe Routes To School program and the Traffic Safety Education Plan to staff new to the school.

As the resource is a new addition to the range that Transport SA provides for schools the initial response has been extremely positive. Response was positive from the first training session which was conducted using Teaching 4 Traffic involving 24 teachers from 3 Safe Routes to School program areas. General comments from teachers were that Teaching 4 Traffic was easy to understand and helped to put the pieces of road safety education in primary schools together. The traffic safety focus teachers commented that Teaching 4 Traffic has all the materials needed to help implement road safety education across the school. In addition to this, teachers have recognised and appreciated the level of consultation, which was undertaken to produce the resource.

Teachers who were trained prior to the development of Teaching 4 Traffic have also had the opportunity to become familiar with the resource. Training and Development sessions were organised by Transport SA and the feed back from teachers who have attended these sessions indicates that schools have been re-energised to teach road safety. Teaching 4 Traffic has also raised the overall profile of road safety education in these schools.

Transport SA expects that the Teaching 4 Traffic training days will now be more comprehensive and complete and the effectiveness enhanced through the use of this manual. Teachers will have an excellent ongoing resource to better enable them to teach road safety in the classroom.

Teaching 4 Traffic enhances the credibility of the Safe Routes To School program as teachers can see the level of commitment that Transport SA has put into developing the resource and the training session.

The resource has a major focus on implementation strategies for road safety education across the entire school community. It has been recognised by Transport SA, that although a school may develop a sound Traffic Safety Education plan, it is of little value if it is not actioned. Therefore a range of strategies for the implementation process has been included which target the key stakeholders within the school community. It is expected that there will be an overall increase in the amount of road safety education that is taught within primary schools participating in the Safe Routes to School program in South Australia.

2. CONCLUSION

The evaluation process was established to identify areas of the Safe Routes to School, teacher-training model that could be improved. Through a genuine consultation process and willingness on the part of Transport SA to value teachers' comments and to incorporate their suggestions, Teaching 4 Traffic has been produced. Significant improvements have been made not only to the teacher training components but also to the entire Safe Routes to School program. Transport SA has set a high standard in terms of the resource that has been produced which will in turn translate to the quality of the teacher training conducted. Above all Teaching 4 Traffic reflects the commitment to and belief in the importance and value of road safety education in primary schools from Transport SA. An investment in teacher training will work towards improved road safety outcomes for children

References

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Keywords

implementation, traffic safety education, commitment