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YOUNG PEOPLE AS ACTIVE PASSENGERS IN A REAL WORLD CONTEXT

Author: Deb Zines, Anne Miller

Presenter: Deb Zines (Road Aware Drivers Project Officer, School Drug Education and Road Aware)

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ABSTRACT

Keys for Life is the result of a major review by the Road Safety Council of Western Australia to identify best practice, evidence-based education programs to reduce the level of road trauma for people under 20 years of age.

Implementing a pre-driver education program includes developing a program that has a balance of real-world, simulated and classroom-based learning experiences.

This paper focuses on the strategies undertaken by *School Drug Education and Road Aware* in Western Australia to assist teachers to develop evidence-based and balanced pre-driver education programs for young people. It provides a working example of how research findings have formed the basis of the development of *Keys for Life* – an outcomes-focused pre-driver education program that emphasises the importance of real world learning.

The topics covered, include a description of resources that provide interactive classroom, simulated and real world learning experiences; the focus on students as active passengers; the focus on the role of parents and carers as partners in real world learning; and the provision of professional learning for teachers.

Examples of practical, real world strategies that can be used by road safety professionals to address the development and implementation of pre-driver education programs in school, will be of interest to conference delegates.

BACKGROUND

Road Aware is an initiative of the Road Safety Council of Western Australia and is funded by the State Government through the Insurance Commission of Western Australia. *Road Aware* forms part of the *Arriving Safely: Road Safety*

Strategy for Western Australia 2003 – 2007. This state-wide strategy aims to reduce the overall number of road crash fatalities in Western Australia to a level equivalent to the best in Australia.

In 2003, a strategic alliance was formed between *Road Aware* and the *School Drug Education Project* (SDEP). The alliance resulted in the two projects becoming one organisation, *School Drug Education and Road Aware* (SDERA), sharing management, administrative, business planning and evaluation processes.

Road Aware aims to ensure that effective road safety education is provided to children and young people (aged 0 to 20 years) throughout Western Australia to reduce their levels of road trauma.

Road Aware commenced in January 2003, following research (Elliott, 2000), consultation and government endorsement of a policy position entitled *Road Safety Policy for Infants, Children and Young People* (Road Safety Council, 2002).

The research identified three strategic 'windows of opportunity' for road safety education as developmental stages at which children, young people and their parents and carers are engaged in road safety issues. This research culminated in the establishment of the following three *Road Aware* project areas:

Road Aware Parents (parents/carers of 0 – 4 year olds)

Road Aware Parents focuses on improving road safety outcomes for children aged 0 to 4 years by educating parents on safe pedestrian practices and the use of child car restraints. A child car restraint fitting and checking service and a parent education program are the key initiatives.

Road Aware Kids (4 – 14 year olds and their parents/carers)

Road Aware Kids focuses on improving road safety outcomes for children aged 4 to 14 years. The key focus areas include passenger, pedestrian, playing safety. Road safety education is implemented in schools with a priority on the early childhood years (Kindergarten to Year 3). Curriculum resources, teacher training, school road safety policy development and involvement of parents/caregivers are the key initiatives.

Road Aware Drivers (15 – 20 year olds and their parents/carers)

Road Aware Drivers focuses on improving road safety outcomes for pre-drivers aged 15 to 20 years by encouraging them and their parents/caregivers to be involved in extensive supervised driving practice. The *Keys for Life* program and accompanying parent/carer workshop, *Steps to Safer Driving*, are the key initiatives.

KEYS FOR LIFE PRE-DRIVER EDUCATION PROGRAM

While the majority of young drivers are not involved in road crashes, road safety remains a significant issue for Western Australian youth. Young drivers aged 17 to 24 years make up 15% of licensed drivers in Western Australia yet account for 31% of road crash fatalities. Clearly young drivers in Western Australia are over-represented in road crashes and half the injury related deaths of young Western Australian's are due to road crashes (Road Safety Council, 1998).

The moment young people receive their P plates, they enter a period of high risk, with the first six months of solo driving being particularly dangerous. A combination of inexperience, overconfidence, and propensity to take risks contributes to their vulnerability.

Keys for Life is a pre-driver education program designed for young people aged 15 to 20 years of age, in schools, tertiary colleges or other community locations. The program is one of a number of initiatives developed by *Road Aware* and is one of the supporting initiatives of the WA Road Safety Council's state strategy, *Arriving Safely*.

The *Keys for life* program aims to prepare young people for a lifetime of safer driving by:

- developing their understanding of the importance of gaining supervised driving practice
- fostering positive road-user attitudes and behaviours
- involving parents and the community in youth road safety education.

Keys for Life provides young people with opportunities to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes about road safety, supervised driving practice, risk management strategies and safer driving. It also provides young people with competencies and strategies to become safer drivers and passengers.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SUPERVISED DRIVING PRACTICE

Supervised driving practice has been identified as the single most important protective factor for young drivers in reducing their likelihood of crash involvement. Research indicates that young drivers are best prepared when they accumulate 100-120 hours of driving practice in a range of different conditions (Gregerson, 1996). *Keys for Life* aims to provide information to pre-drivers and parents/ carers about the benefits of gaining extensive and quality supervised driving practice. It is also designed to encourage students and their preferred supervisor/s to develop strategies to plan for, and maximise the benefits of supervised driving practice.

FOSTERING POSITIVE ROAD-USER ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS

The *Keys for Life* program is designed to develop attitudes and values consistent with a safer and healthy lifestyle within a road safety context. Students are provided with opportunities to develop an appreciation of the benefits of safer driving and a positive attitude towards their roles and responsibilities as drivers and passengers.

THE INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS AND COMMUNITY

Keys for Life aims to involve and support parents and community agencies in pre-driver education. Youth road safety is a significant concern for parents and the community. Effective health education, in a pre-driver education context, involves teachers, schools, parents/carers and agencies reinforcing the same road safety messages (World Health Organisation, 1986). To this end a complimentary resource, *Steps to Safer Driving* parent workshop, has been developed and introduced into school communities for students and parents.

The importance of creating a partnership between young people, their parents (or carers) and the school, is a key principle of the *Keys for Life* program. This will be achieved by encouraging parents or carers to:

- engage in on-road tasks where the 'pre-driver' is actively participating as a passenger
- model on-road tasks
- plan and negotiate supervised driving sessions
- attend the *Steps to Safer Driving* parent workshop with their 'pre-driver'
- access support from *Road Aware* and community agencies.

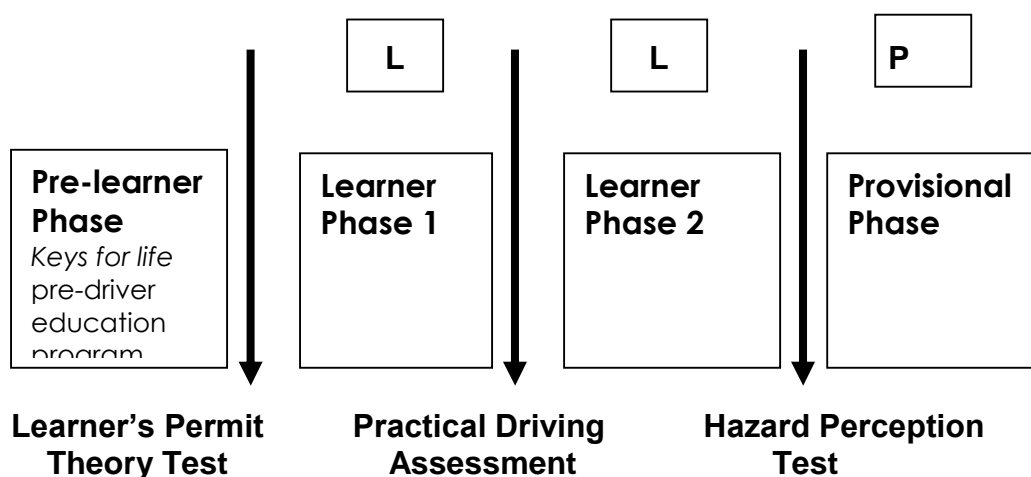
Within Western Australia there are many community organisations and key road safety agencies that provide complementary programs for schools. *Road Aware* provides information to teachers about these agencies and how they can be used to enhance and complement the *Keys for Life* program.

LINKS BETWEEN KEYS FOR LIFE AND THE GRADUATED DRIVER TRAINING AND LICENSING SYSTEM

The most effective pre-driver education programs are those linked to other road safety initiatives and legislation (Christie, R. 2001) and conducted in parallel with the experience of learning to drive at the Year 10 to 12 school level (Newman, S et al, 2001).

Keys for Life is designed to be a precursor to the Western Australian licensing system - the Graduated Driver Training and Licensing (GDT&L) system. The Western Australian government introduced the GDT&L in 2000 to address the issue of driver inexperience by ensuring learner drivers practise extensively and in a range of conditions, with a supervisor before driving solo.

The *Keys for Life* program supports the GDT&L system by motivating parents and young people to accumulate extensive hours of supervised driving practice and by offering students the opportunity to start the application process for the Learner's Permit at school. The diagram below represents the link between the *Keys for Life* program and GDT&L system in Western Australia.



Although not an outcome for the program, students involved in *Keys for Life* are offered the opportunity to sit the Learner's Permit Theory Test at school in a supportive classroom environment. An agreement between the WA Department for Planning and Infrastructure and *Road Aware* allows teachers to conduct the test in schools and non-school sites. This agreement is dependent on teachers strictly adhering to implementation guidelines.

OUTCOMES-FOCUSED PRE-DRIVER EDUCATION PROGRAM

The *Curriculum Framework for Kindergarten to Year 12 Education in Western Australia* describes an outcomes-focused approach to education. It sets out a series of outcomes that describe what students are expected to know, understand, value and be able to do as a result of their curriculum experiences. Schools and teachers use the framework to develop learning and teaching programs that will enable students to demonstrate their progress of achievement of outcomes in eight learning areas.

The *Keys for Life* resource supports outcomes-focused planning and is linked to the *Curriculum Framework*. It guides teachers through an outcomes-focused planning model by its structure and design. This model is further explored and encouraged at professional learning workshops. The resource describes four of the five Health and Physical Education Learning Area Outcomes in a road safety context. It explains how teachers can plan, implement and assess a pre-driver education learning and teaching program that will provide students with opportunities to progress their achievement of learning area outcomes and the *Keys for Life* aim and outcomes.

Although purposeful in its design, the *Keys for Life* resource is not prescriptive and encourages a flexible approach to planning and implementation. The 'grab bag' or 'tool kit' of ideas and activities are suggestions only and teachers can select the learning and teaching strategies suitable for their students.

An overview of the *Keys for Life* aim, outcomes and essential content is attached at Appendix A.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Guiding principles are provided in the *Keys for Life* program to assist teachers plan and implement an effective pre-driver education program that meets student and local area needs. Some of these are listed below and are based on both contemporary education and road safety education research (including Catchpole, J. et al 2000, Curriculum Council, 1998, Elkington, J. 2003, Elliott, B. 2000, Newman, S. et al 2001, and Remenyi, C. 2003).

Balance of real-world, simulated and classroom learning

A combination of classroom, simulated and real world learning experiences is more effective in achieving behaviour change than a program based only on classroom learning experiences. *Keys for Life* supports teachers to implement a balanced program by providing resources such as a video of road safety advertisements and clips, a student journal for active passenger tasks, and a range of simulated and classroom learning strategies and experiences.

Risk management strategies

Road safety education for pre-drivers should be solution-focused (i.e. presented in a positive manner) and include proven strategies for managing risks and minimising harm. Messages about road safety for young people should emphasise the benefits of, and strategies for, staying safer as a driver and passenger.

The *Keys for Life* program encourages pre-drivers to adopt a positive and proactive approach to risk management in a road safety context. Strategies such as, adhering to the speed limit, driving unimpaired, trip planning, responsible hosting, encouraging designated drivers, intervening to prevent impaired driving and using restraints are emphasised.

Development of knowledge, skills and attitudes

Road safety education should provide opportunities for students to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours. To do this effectively, road safety education should be conducted in frequent sessions over an extended period of time. *Keys for Life* supports teachers to deliver a minimum 10-hour program with an equal emphasis on developing Knowledge and Understandings; Interpersonal and Self-management Skills; and Attitudes and Values.

PARENTS AND CARERS AS PARTNERS IN REAL-WORLD LEARNING

Road Aware has produced two resources associated with the *Keys for Life* program:

- the *Keys for Life* student journal
- the *Steps to Safer Driving* parent workshop

These resources have been developed to:

- overcome the difficulty of teachers implementing real-world learning opportunities in their pre-driver program
- encourage communication and partnerships between young people and parents (or carers) relating to their shared role in extensive supervised driving practice
- encourage young people to actively engage with parents (and carers) in elements of the driving task as pre-learners.

The journal describes ten active passenger tasks for students to complete while travelling in a vehicle. These tasks include co-navigation, error and hazard spotting, commentary driving, judging braking and stopping distances, speed sensitivity, practising the use of peripheral vision, and observing tolerance, courtesy and compliance with road rules.

The journal is also designed for students to reflect on their real-world learning tasks and apply their observations, and can be used by teachers to gauge student progress in this area of learning.

Whilst some research suggests the limitations of including practices of driving-task familiarisation at the pre-driver stage (Newman, S et al 2001), other research recognises real-world learning experiences as being more effective in terms of behaviour change (Elkington, J. 2003).

The journal is to be used at home and has the added benefit of preparing parents to become involved in the learning to drive process. In addition to the reflective records and entries, the journal also provides information about licensing, road rules, insurance and safer vehicles, as a means of adding value to their knowledge and understandings developed at school.

The *Keys for Life* student journal encourages parents to engage in commentary driving with their pre-learners as a precursor to supervised driving practice. This is further reinforced during the *Steps to Safer Driving* parent workshop where parents are repeatedly prompted about the importance of extensive driving experience for learner drivers.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR TEACHERS AND AGENCIES

SDERA offers as part of its core business, drug education and road safety education professional learning opportunities for teachers throughout Western Australia.

Since the launch of the *Keys for life* program in September 2004, teacher workshops have been conducted recurrently in all metropolitan and regional areas of the state. Approximately 170 schools and over 300 teachers have been trained to deliver the *Keys for Life* program to well over 6,000 students. On average across the state, well over half of all secondary schools have been involved in *Keys for Life* training in under 12 months.

The workshops provide teachers and agencies such as Police, Health and Local Government with free resources and an overview of the *Keys for Life* outcomes, essential pre-driver education content and strategies to plan, implement and assess a school-based program.

The network of SDERA Regional Organising Committee facilitators and Regional Project Officers are an inherent part of the widespread reach of the program and professional development activities. In some of the more remote regional areas of the state this is of particular significance and enables a strategic, committed approach to professional learning.

AGENCY COLLABORATION

There are numerous agencies working to deliver and promote road safety education in Western Australian schools. The Road Safety in Schools Coordination Group, was established by *Road Aware* in 2003 with the aim of encouraging agencies working in school road safety to:

- coordinate and avoid duplication of efforts
- maximise efficiency
- promote consistent road safety messages to children and young people, their parents/carers and teachers.

Member agencies of this group have been supported and trained by *Road Aware* to deliver components of the *Keys for life* and *Steps to safer driving* parent workshop, especially in regional areas. Some agencies also deliver presentations at professional learning workshops to demonstrate the range of road safety resources available to schools and in particular, young people.

EVALUATION

The Injury Research Centre at the University of Western Australia has been commissioned by the Road Safety Council to conduct a long-term evaluation of the *Keys for Life* program and *Steps to safer driving* parent workshop in conjunction with the Graduated Driver Training and Licensing System.

The Injury Research Centre are recruiting 1500 students into this study. The cohort will consist of male and female students, in both rural and metropolitan settings that have participated in *Keys for Life*. Parents need to actively consent to their child participating in the study due to ethical requirements relating to student age and length of study.

CONCLUSION

The strategies undertaken by *School Drug Education and Road Aware* to assist teachers in developing evidence-based and balanced pre-driver education programs for young people have become and will continue to be, a key component of school-based health education for young people in Western Australia. Both the Road Safety Council of WA and the Insurance Commission of WA support this endeavour.

The *Keys for Life* program provides students with information, competencies and strategies about safer driving and road use, through a balance of real-world, simulated and classroom-based learning experiences and is supported by the *Steps to Safer Driving* parent workshop.

The importance of accumulating supervised driving experience is reinforced throughout the *Keys for Life* program and *Steps to Safer Driving* parent workshop, as the single most important protective factor for reducing the crash rate of young drivers.

The five-year evaluation being conducted by the Injury Research Centre will measure the effectiveness of, and various components relating to, both programs.

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Aim of the *Keys for Life* program

The *Keys for Life* program aims to prepare young people for a lifetime of safer driving by:

- developing their understanding of the importance of gaining supervised driving practice
- fostering positive road-user attitudes and behaviours
- involving parents and the community in youth road safety education.

Progress towards the *Keys for Life* Learning Outcomes will contribute to students achieving the overall program aim.

Keys for Life Learning Outcomes

The *Keys for Life* program is focused on student achievement of three road safety outcomes. These are known as the *Keys for Life* Learning Outcomes and describe what students should know, understand, value and be able to do, to become safer passengers and drivers. The learning outcomes reflect aspects of the *Health and Physical Education Learning Area Outcomes* from the *Curriculum Framework*.

Learning Outcome 1: Knowledge of road safety issues

Students understand factors that influence the safety of road users.

Learning Outcome 2: Skills for safer road use

Students use self-management and interpersonal skills to enable safer road use.

Learning Outcome 3: Road user attitudes

Students understand positive road user attitudes and how attitudes towards road safety are influenced.

Content

This describes the crucial knowledge, skills and attitudes students must develop, in order to maximise achievement of the *Keys for Life* Learning Outcomes.

The content for the *Keys for Life* program includes:

Road safety factors

- Vulnerability of young road users
- Road crash theory
- Consequences of safe and unsafe driving
- Skills for safer driving
- Risk factors
- Protective factors
- GDT&L System
- Road rules and enforcement
- Insurance

Road safety skills in practice

- Decision-making
- Planning
- Communication
- Negotiation

Valuing the safety of self and others

- Influences on road safety attitudes
- The relationship between road safety attitudes and behaviours
- The importance of supervised driving
- The rights and responsibilities of drivers
- Personal safety and the safety of other road users

Learning contexts

Teachers can choose the most appropriate learning contexts to cater for the needs and interests of students.

Examples of contexts for pre-driver education include:

- Laws and rules
- Active citizenship
- Driving and socialising
- Workplace driving
- Managing the use of alcohol
- Relationships and negotiation
- Trip planning
- Driving in different conditions
- Vehicle maintenance and safety
- Preparation for employment