

A checklist for schools to monitor Traffic Safety Education.

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ABSTRACT

In Victoria, core Traffic Safety Education activities are encouraged by the key road safety agencies at primary and secondary school level in all school sectors. School initiatives are based on harm prevention and minimisation strategies associated with transport use by young people. School Traffic Safety Education policy and programs are based on a whole-school approach, which involves strategies to help teachers identify student/school needs at critical stages of student development and to take action to meet these needs within the school program. However, there is no resource tool which allows schools to monitor and review their progress and effectiveness as part of their whole school planning and strategy development.

This paper explores the basis for the development of a survey tool to enable schools to evaluate and monitor their Traffic Safety Education programs, in terms of student outcomes, over time. It then proposes a model to show what the survey tool will include to measure a range of Traffic Safety Education indicators, including learning and teaching about traffic safety, student and the whole schools community's sense of responsibility for self and others in the transport systems that they use, connectedness to school, and student welfare support.

INTRODUCTION

The structure of this paper provides the rationale for the development of the checklist, a literature review that explores the principles underlying both the rationale and content of the checklist, a proposed checklist and concluding comments.

Victorian government schools are required to develop their strategies to address their school community needs every four years. The result is called a School Plan, which provides the

focus and priorities for the whole school program, and against which the school reports its progress.

In order to develop the school plan, the school needs to conduct a thorough review of the learning and teaching programs, the school daily administration and the school management. The whole school community, students, teachers and support staff, parents and personnel or agencies that work with the school can provide input to the process.

If the school wishes to assess the effectiveness of its Traffic Safety Education program, there is no specifically designed tool for the collection of data and information from the whole school community. So there is a need for a reliable way for the school to gather an evidence base to inform a way forward in its Traffic Safety Education program.

THE RESEARCH BASE FOR DEVELOPING A TRAFFIC SAFETY EDUCATION CHECKLIST

Recent development of support materials for teachers and schools to implement the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) (2005), the curriculum and assessment guidelines for schools, provides a clear base of research and consultation on which to develop an approach to school program delivery.

The Principles of Learning and Teaching (PoLT) P-12 (2005) explain six principles that can be used by schools to reflect on practice and support professional dialogue to strengthen pedagogical practices. The Principles are based on a pilot program of consultation with forty-four schools (The Principles Of Learning and Teaching P-12 Background Paper 2004). They support the teacher to form learning environments to best meet students' needs. The Principles are also informed by research on how students learn. The Science in Schools (SIS) and The Middle Years Research And Development (MYRAD) project research (2001) showed different teaching approaches often result in significant differences in "both the ways students approach their learning and in the quality of that learning". MYRAD identified a critical point of middle schooling as being the transition from primary to secondary schooling and focussed on the need to build a strong interface between primary and secondary schools. The Middle Years Pedagogy Research and Development Project (MYPRAD) (2001) sought to

investigate why students in the middle years of schooling felt unengaged and disconnected from school and iterated the need for schools to gather and utilise data to evaluate and determine a way ahead. The Principles are applicable across all key learning areas and all stages of learning and provide a structure to help teachers find a focus for their professional learning. They have developed from the basis for the MYPRAD.

Essentially, they promote classrooms as 'learning communities', with an emphasis on building rich meanings for ideas in which students are intellectually engaged and feel a collaborative partnership with their peers and their teachers. They support the social and intellectual climate that schools seek to create. Using the Principles is about teachers and schools identifying and sharing areas of apparently successful practice where they would like to do better. At this conference last year I presented a paper (REMENYI 2006) which traced how Traffic Safety Education activities exemplified and are the perfect vehicle for this transformative rather than transmissive approach to education.

In a way this checklist is an extension of the Principles' Data Collection Tools, which follow the Principles and are electronic teacher and student surveys, including a student perception survey for early year's students. Without listing the six Principles of Learning and Teaching, their thrust can be précised into three needs:

1. Students learn best when they are engaged and connected to a learning environment – activities should be relevant to their everyday lives and encourage them to take greater responsibility for their own learning.
2. Teachers as facilitators create an effective learning environment when they empower students to direct their learning, both on their own and with other students.
3. Schools that develop strong links with their wider communities and use ICT to enhance students use and view of the world at large are vibrant learning communities.

The Principles For School Drug Education (DEST 2004) provide a framework of core concepts and values based on harm prevention, minimisation and safety practices to support effective drug education practice within schools. This framework can also be translated into the context of Traffic Safety Education. The Principles for School Drug Education provide a

broad conceptual tool to inform the planning, implementation and review of school drug education programs, policies and practices. The essential characteristics can be summarised (after Meyer, Lois with Cahill, H. 2004) as:

1. Comprehensive and evidence-based practice – this is what the checklist aims to facilitate by empowering schools to generate their own specific, valid and reliable data.
2. A whole school approach – the checklist must allow input in a positive way from all facets of the school community.
3. Clear educational outcomes – the checklist must link to specific essential learnings linked to the stages of schooling and consistent with broader principles for the promotion of physical and mental health and wellbeing within school communities.

In Victoria, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development used the evidence base developed in the Principles of Drug Education to further identify the characteristics of good pedagogy and good health promotion practice (CAHILL 2003). Cahill's paper identifies what doesn't work – scare tactics, using 'survivors' as exemplars, stereotyping adolescence, information only and self-esteem only approaches; and focuses on the World Health Organisation (WHO) "model of the Health Promoting School that invites schools to address the ethos, curriculum and partnerships that can be brought into to play to promote wellbeing" (WHO 1994). The importance of developing a safe and supportive environment and an ethos conducive to mental health and learning as well as effective pedagogy and positive real relationships are emphasised. All of these findings can just as readily inform best practice Traffic Safety Education in schools.

THE PROPOSED CHECKLIST

While the following checklist has yet to be trialled appropriately, it has been based on the principles outlined in the research review above. Cahill (2003) and the Revised Principles for Drug education (DEST 2004) and the MYPRAD (DEAKIN 2001) all explain that their Principles and findings of what works in schools "overlap and inform each other and are best understood and applied in an holistic and integrated way"(DEST 2004).

Schools should attempt to fill in the checklist by canvassing responses from the entire school community. They may also wish to consult the Administrative Guidelines - Traffic Safety Education (DEECD 2007) to inform their understandings of the Departmental policies and procedures required of schools. The ability for various groups, and the school as a whole, to complete the checklist should also be a guide as to the level of Traffic Safety Education knowledge, skills and attitudes. The checklist is designed so that it is general, inclusive of all kinds of responses and can be completed at most levels of understanding of what Traffic Safety Education might mean or entail. Some responses may utilise locally developed auditing methods, uses of resources and support agencies; while others may rely on tools and resources produced by road safety agencies and bodies.

Please complete your understanding of the status of the items below about Traffic Safety Education in your school

Name:

Signature:

Date:

TASK	Completed – Yes or No	Activity/Document/Resource/Comments
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Preparation:		
Audit of the school traffic situation		
Inclusion of Traffic Safety Education in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a scope and sequence chart ○ curriculum outline/overview ○ syllabus 		
Specific activities identified at: Orientation Program Transition Program Year 10		
Teacher responsible for Traffic Safety Education identified		

Development:		
Awareness of Traffic Safety Education issues established – communication strategies within school community		
opportunities for improvement and recognition of prior achievement		

provided		
Strategic Plan – learning outcomes for each activity identified		
School vision statement in Traffic Safety Education developed		
Planning team formed (can include staff, students and the wider community)		
Student leadership opportunities provided (eg Student action teams, monitors)		

Communications:		
Include Traffic Safety Education on the school website		
School Traffic Safety Education program linked to the local government road safety strategy		
Processes for reporting outcomes to staff and wider school community (Including school newsletter, school council and wider community e.g. Local newspaper)		

Accountability:		
Traffic Safety Education policy statement produced		
Process in place to incorporate Traffic Safety Education into annual reporting		
Perceived social, environmental, and economic impacts of Traffic Safety Education in the school program		
Process in place to incorporate key Traffic Safety Education data into annual reporting		
Process in place to report school progress each term to school council		

CONCLUSION

The checklist supports the approach that values the questions and ideas of all members of the school community and empowers them to act on their feedback, reflection and learnings to better the school program. Using the checklist will utilize the strong links and interdependencies between professional learning and classroom learning.

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