

FINDING THE RIGHT MIX – USING MULTIPLE APPROACHES TO ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION



Leonie Hede and Jo Bogic were thrilled to accept this year's Starting Out Safely Road Safety Education Award on behalf of Newport Gardens Early Years Centre, an ECMS service.

The annual Starting Out Safely Award is sponsored by VicRoads and was awarded at the Early Childhood Education Conference together we grow – connecting communities in late May.

With a risk assessment in place for the local area and standing parent permissions, the centre often seizes the opportunity to take its children into the local community where they practise road safety fundamentals.

“We also try to transfer safe habits from home such as when using the bikes and the scooters in our yard. The children use road rules to ensure they do not impede anyone on the pathways and the rule is

if they want to use a scooter or a bike they need to be wearing the helmets,” says early years educator, Jo Bogic.

“We talk about safe places where children can play, such as in their back yard or in the park with a responsible adult, while safe arrival and leaving practices are communicated through our newsletter and signage and we also provide parents with pamphlets on safe use of child car seats,” adds teacher, Leonie Hede.

During early 2016 Joanne attended a *Starting Out Safely* professional development session to “gain up-to-date information into ways we could increase ‘Road Safety’ in our program”.

“It was great to hear how we can imbed Road Safety Education principles into the curriculum at our centre,” recalls Jo. “Also, it was good to collaborate with other educators on what they do and how we can improve. The training also allowed me to recognise the value of what we already had embedded in our programs.”

The staff at Newport Gardens ensured their children would get the best value out of their ThingleToodle session by setting up additional learning experiences prior to the session including creating their own road signs and using block play to simulate roads and traffic.

“*But going out and experiencing the real world is what real life learning is. So I think that those experiences broaden children’s concept of self and self-esteem and strengthen their resolve that they’re capable and confident learners.*”

Jo also had increased discussions with the children about “How can we keep safe on our roads?”. There was also an excursion into the local community during which the “children spotted many road signs which we talked about”.

“So they (the children) knew quite a lot beforehand and were able to be really involved in the session,” recalls Jo.

“I think the ThingleToodle session was very effective. It is delivered in a fun way and makes it fun for the children to learn about how to be safe with the prompts of ‘stop look listen and think’ and learning the song and they have the big mascot of ThingleToodle ... the children loved it. Leonie was actually ThingleToodle ... she was amazing.”

“It’s really well related to the children ... they get a lot of messages out of it and it’s reinforced here afterwards and shared with parents through Story Park and our newsletter,” adds Leonie.

Once the ThingleToodle Session had been delivered, Jo continued following up on what was learnt in the session with her group. “We also play games in our room using the colours of the traffic lights. So for ‘green’ they would have to move around the room and for ‘red’ they would have to stop so they knew what the colours represented.”

When asked “What’s the most effective approach to teaching children about road safety?” Jo and Leonie recommend a combination of approaches ranging from structured sessions such as ThingleToodle to excursions into the nearby community.

“Some (children) are visual (learners) and some are auditory, some need that kinaesthetic input so I think that having multiple ways of offering information is really valuable,” says Leonie.

“But going out and experiencing the real world is what real life learning is. So I think that those experiences broaden children’s concept of self and self-esteem and strengthen their resolve that they’re capable and confident learners.”

For both Jo and Leonie, the *Starting Out Safely* professional development session reaffirmed their belief in the strength of their existing RSE activities plus introduced them to other possibilities and the experiences of other educators.

“I just think we embrace Road Safety Education really well at our centre,” says Jo. “I have talked to the children in our room and let them know that we won this award and they’re just so excited and really proud.”



Opened in 2014, Newport Gardens Early Years Centre operates as an integrated hub encompassing long day educational care, sessional three and four-year-old kindergarten programs, a maternal and child health service, Yooralla early intervention services, toy library, community playgroups, and community room available for training, parents groups and other related functions.

The centre’s kindergarten and long-day educational care programs are managed as part of the Early Childhood Management Services (ECMS) early years management organisation.

To organise a *Starting Out Safely* professional development session, please contact the RSE team rse@elaa.org.au

