

Starting Out Safely

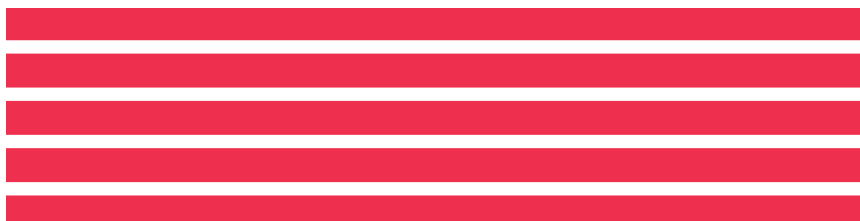
ROAD SAFETY EDUCATOR RESOURCE



Starting Out Safely




EARLY
LEARNING
ASSOCIATION
AUSTRALIA



Learning
about being
safe starts
early





Early childhood road safety education is about educators working with children and their families to develop skills, behaviours and attitudes that assist children to be safer on our roads as passengers, pedestrians and users of bicycles and other wheeled toys.

To be effective, road safety education must be evidence-based, and match the child's stage of development and level of independence as a road user. As children develop these skills they become safe and active participants in their communities, now and into the future.

Road trauma continues to be one of the leading causes of death among young Australians.

Therefore, it is important that educators act purposefully to help children learn about their own safety and the safety of others on the roads.

THE NATIONAL PRACTICES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION

The National Practices for Early Childhood Road Safety Education have been developed by early childhood education and road safety experts throughout Australia and New Zealand, to support evidence-based road safety education practice in early childhood settings. The eight practices are based on research and are strongly aligned with the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).

These have now been complemented by additional resources that expand the thinking about how to embed road safety education into everyday practice.

The Starting Out Safely Road Safety Educator Resource brings to life the National Practices and supports quality education and care.

The ideas and strategies explored in this updated Resource will also assist educators to strengthen their practice in response to Exceeding themes of the National Quality Standard.

As part of continuous improvement educators can consider:

- How is road safety education embedded in service operations? **(Theme 1)**
- How are road safety education strategies and approaches informed by critical reflection? **(Theme 2)**
- How are plans for incorporating road safety education shaped by meaningful engagement with families and the community? **(Theme 3)**

The Resource offers advice about how to explore road safety education through the use of effective pedagogical practices.

It includes stories of practice, links to the EYLF and the National Quality Standard (NQS), and suggestions for taking action.

Presented by



WHO IS THE EDUCATOR RESOURCE DESIGNED FOR?

The Educator Resource is designed for early childhood educators (including tertiary students) working with young children and their families in early childhood settings.

HOW CAN THE EDUCATOR RESOURCE BE USED?

The Educator Resource reflects the National Practices for Early Childhood Road Safety Education. The Resource can be read in any order and used individually to address specific safety issues or concerns raised by children, families or educators.

It can also be read as a whole to support reflective thinking about how to embed road safety education across the program.

When using this Resource, educators are strongly encouraged to consider the local environment, children and families' experiences, their understanding of road safety and any road safety issues specific to their neighbourhood or community.

The reflection questions can be used in conjunction with this Resource and may be a helpful way to stimulate discussion at a staff meeting about how road safety education might look at your service.

NATIONAL PRACTICES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION

National Practice: Holistic approaches

Recognise that children's learning is integrated and interconnected when making curriculum decisions about road safety education.

National Practice: Responsiveness to children

Deliver road safety education which is responsive to individual children and extends children's strengths, knowledge and interests.

National Practice: Learning through play

Through play-based learning seek opportunities to address road safety in a way that expands children's thinking and encourages problem solving.

National Practice: Intentional teaching

Engage in intentional teaching which extends and expands children's learning about road safety.

National Practice: Learning environments

Provide opportunities in the learning environment, including the local community, for safe and meaningful interaction with children, parents and carers about road safety.

National Practice: Cultural competence

Implement road safety education that is culturally relevant for the diversity of children, their families and the community.

National Practice: Continuity of learning and transitions

Use the opportunity of transitions, in active partnership with children, families and the local community, for road safety education.

National Practice: Assessment for learning

Together with children and families, reflect on each child's learning and application of road safety to plan for future learning.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

You might consider the following questions as you read the Educator Resource to help you recognise implications for your practice.

- What is your understanding of road safety education? How have you come to this understanding?
- How do you currently implement road safety education in the program? As a regular part of the program? A week here and there? When an issue arises? How have you come to do things this way?
- What are the road safety questions, concerns or issues in your community? What do you know about these?
- What are the experiences, understandings and interest in road safety of the families in your service? Why might this be the case? Are your concerns the same as the families' concerns?
- Are there any cultural factors that might affect the way road safety education is understood by children and their families in your setting? If so, what are these factors?
- What road safety education practices might be useful to utilise in your setting?
- How and when do you communicate with families regarding road safety education?

The Resource components are available for download at:
www.childroadsafety.org.au

EXPLORING ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION:

Being a Road User – getting out and about into the local community

Taking children on excursions into the local neighbourhoods is one of the most effective ways to teach children about road safety. Not only will children make stronger connections with the community they will also experience real opportunities to practice the skills, knowledge, understanding and behaviours that support safe road use.

Road safety education that includes regular outings to the local neighbourhood becomes a powerful enabler for children's active participation in community life. Learning to become safe road users early in their lives invites children and their families to contribute to the broad road safety strategies designed for whole communities. For example teaching children about a new pedestrian crossing or making sure that children know the safest places to cross busy roads.



“Bringing children into the public sphere celebrates their potential to contribute and lets them feel the pulse of their future lives.”

John Nimmo One Hundred Languages of Children'
Carolyn Edwards, Gella Gardini, George Forman
(1998) *The Child in Community: Constraints From the Early Childhood Lore*

CONNECTIONS

Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)

“Experiences of relationships and participation in communities contribute to children's belonging, being and becoming. From birth children experience living and learning with others in a range of communities. These might include families, local communities or early childhood settings. Having a positive sense of identity and experiencing respectful, responsive relationships strengthens children's interest and skills in being and becoming active contributors to their world”.

(Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, 2009 p.25).

National Quality Standard

Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities

6.2.1: Continuity of learning and transitions for each child are supported by sharing information and clarifying responsibilities.

6.2.3: The service builds relationships and engages with its community.





ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION IN PRACTICE

A large inner-city long day care service initiated a practice of regular outings in the community several years ago. This strategy has meant that each year every child leaves the centre many times and walks or catches public transport within their own local community (about a 1km radius). These excursions vary depending on the ages and interests of the children and range from a short trip to buy a banana or two from the local supermarket to a longer trip to visit a museum or the station and eat lunch along the way.

Local excursions that include safe participation on the roads and footpaths of the local community offer a powerful way for children to practise their emerging skills, behaviours and attitudes.



PRACTICE SUGGESTIONS

Effective practices for road safety education - Getting 'Out and About'

Getting out and about into the local community is now recognised as one of the most effective road safety education strategies. To facilitate great connection with the local community, educators can consider the following strategies:

- Develop a comprehensive road safety, transport and excursion policy that includes specific road safety strategies including routine outings (regular) where documentation only needs to be filled out once if the destination, children, route and risks are the same.
- Visit the surrounding neighborhood and identify possible locations and destinations that may be of interest to children – about a 1km radius.
- Invite families to identify the places that they would like their children to visit in the local neighbourhood and what the safety issues might be.
- Complete a risk assessment and excursion permission form that includes specific strategies for road safety.
- Ask the children and families to be part of the risk assessment process.
- Ask the older children to think about places they would like to go and how they can travel safely as they go.
- Practice the skills that children need before they head out – holding hands, stopping, listening etc.
- Practise going on a local neighbourhood excursion, increasing the number of children and expanding the destinations over a period of time.
- Communicate with families, in advance, preferably in the family handbook or on a service website. For example, inform the family that you plan to regularly take children out into the community to visit places of interest. Highlight the learning outcomes that you hope to achieve. Plan excursions to ensure that educators maximise learning opportunities.

A note on complying with the Education and Care Services National Regulations:

When children leave the licensed spaces of an early childhood service to go into the community (across the road or further afield) there are specific requirements under the Education and Care Services National Regulations. It is essential that educators take time to familiarise themselves with these expectations and consider how these will be communicated to all staff as well as children and their families.

While complying with regulations may seem daunting it is helpful to remember an important point. The same minimum educator to child ratios applies for an excursion as to daily practice within the service. Completing a risk assessment process, however, may find that you need more staff to ensure children are adequately supervised at all times. This means that a short excursion to explore your local neighbourhood may not require huge additional resources.

For more information on the **Education and Care Services National Regulations** refer to The Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/>

FURTHER INFORMATION >

For more information about Starting Out Safely activities and resources please visit: www.childroadsafety.org.au

EXPLORING NATIONAL PRACTICE:

Working with Children with Additional Needs

Road safety education is most effective when opportunities for learning include all children. Children with additional needs (disabilities and/or medical conditions) benefit as much from opportunities to experience being safe as road users as their peers.

Children who are diagnosed with particular learning needs or who require specific equipment to actively participate in learning environments will require educators to consider the varying ways they can be safe. This includes learning to be safe road users.

Educators can start this conversation with families on enrolment and share ideas about how educators can support children to learn and participate in safe road use. For example how to arrive and depart safely, move in the play spaces, and go out in the community on excursions.

Ethical practice requires educators to consider every child's active participation in all aspects of the program and make modifications to ensure road safety education meets everyone's needs.



“Children with additional needs will require educators to modify road safety education opportunities so that everyone can participate.”

ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION IN PRACTICE



The educational leader at a regional kindergarten was approached by a parent about enrolling his daughter, Ruby, into the four year old program the following year. During the initial conversation with the parent he shared the details about his child's additional needs and that the family was working with an occupational therapist to help Ruby with her mobility. Getting out and about had always been a challenge, so coming to kindergarten and managing the car park, entrance and the centre itself was another big step. Over a couple of months before the start of the kindergarten year the educators, family and the therapist worked out a plan to enable safe access and participation for Ruby. This included redesigned disability car parking with better signage and a designated walking path. During the following year at kindergarten the team met regularly to ensure that Ruby could participate safely in all aspects of the program including their regular outings into the community.



CONNECTIONS

Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)

“Children bring family and community ways of being, belonging and becoming to their early childhood settings. By building on these experiences educators help all children to feel secure, confident and included and to experience continuity in how to be and how to learn”.

(Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, 2009 p.16).

National Quality Standard

Quality Area 5: Relationships with children

5.1.1: Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.

5.1.2: The dignity and rights of every child are maintained.



PRACTICE SUGGESTIONS

- Talk with families on enrolment about the ways the service plans for and includes road safety opportunities for children. For children with additional needs it will be helpful to spend time thinking about how this will work best for individual children and whether the family have any ideas or concerns.
- When planning an excursion into the community add a section to the risk assessment to consider how children with additional needs can actively participate. Strategies might include:
 - thinking about the planned route and how accessible the pathways and destinations might be - for example, are there ramps and flat surfaces
 - using public transport options that have accessible entry and exit points
 - identifying hazards that may be relevant for some children such as noise or busy traffic.
- Include all children in thinking about safe road use for each other. If there are children in the program who have specific learning needs invite the children to think of ways that everybody can be included in road safety education experiences.



FURTHER INFORMATION >

For more information about Starting Out Safely activities and resources please visit: www.childroadsafety.org.au

EXPLORING NATIONAL PRACTICE:

Working with Children Birth to Three

Road safety education can begin very early. Children from birth to three benefit as much from opportunities to experience being safe as road users as their older peers.

When educators support very young children to learn the skills, knowledge and attitudes for safe road use it will be easier to consolidate these as children get older.

Very young children are naturally curious and seek out new opportunities with enthusiasm. This makes them more vulnerable on the road but also allows educators to support them to learn ways of being safe. For example, transitions to, from and within early childhood programs offer very young children the most significant opportunities for learning and development.

There can also be many opportunities through the program where children can learn fundamental skill such as listening, thinking, stopping, and moving.



“When children use transition times to practise the skills, attitudes and behaviours that help them to be safe and manage risk, there are lasting benefits.”

CONNECTIONS

Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)

“Children bring family and community ways of being, belonging and becoming to their early childhood settings. By building on these experiences educators help all children to feel secure, confident and included and to experience continuity in how to be and how to learn”
(Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, 2009 p.16).



National Quality Standard

Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice

1.1.2 Each child’s current knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program.

1.2.1 Educators are deliberate, purposeful, and thoughtful in their decisions and actions.

1.2.2 Responsive teaching and scaffolding, Educators respond to children’s ideas and play and extend children’s learning through open-ended questions, interactions and feedback.

ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION IN PRACTICE



The focus of road safety education with children under the age of three is to explore and become familiar with the ideas and concepts associated with road safety education. For example roads and cars, go and stop. Knowing about these concepts will support children to understand and practise safe road use habits as they get older.

Learning intentions for this age group could include supporting children to learn to:

- wear helmets on all wheeled toys – even small trikes and ride-ons
- ride on the correct side of the bike path – stopping at crossings for pedestrians
- stop and check as you ride on the path or around the room
- follow simple instructions
- know that they and others need to be securely strapped into the pram/car seat/bike seat at all times
- practise safe car seat and pram use when playing with dolls/teddies etc.

For example

In the baby's room of a small long day care service the educators developed a learning goal to ensure that all children know about wearing helmets. After some time reinforcing the message and supporting children to put the helmets on before riding their bike it was amazing to see the children doing this independently showing that they are capable learners right from the get-go.

The educators had thought that this might be too hard to achieve with such young children. They discovered if they don't allow these learning experiences to happen adults can limit the choices for children.



FURTHER INFORMATION >

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PRACTICE SUGGESTIONS



- Introduce helmets in the same way as hats and sunscreen so they become a habit. Every time bikes or wheeled toys are used educators help children choose a helmet and put it on.
- Make 'Wear your helmet posters' so that children can see images of children from their service wearing helmets on their wheeled toys and bikes.
- Include key concepts in discussion with children such as direction (this way up/down), stop and start, slow, fast. Talk to children "when you are in the pram, I will put your harness on to keep you safe", "the straps need to be firm to keep you safely in the pram".
- When approaching a crossing point with children be a 'stop, look, listen, think' role model – use language like "are there any bikes coming?", "Is it safe to cross?"
- Use indoor road safety mats for road and signage during dramatic play to reinforce concepts.
- Create fabric roads that are easy to wash and safe to crawl on. Make them from upcycled jeans (use fabric pens to mark the lines) to suit the size of the cars and vehicles that you already have.
- Create board books with photos of children in car seats on bikes. Read the books to children and describe what you see – safety door, seat belt etc.
- Create dramatic play cars that could include a car seat for small toys, made from a box with a seat belt for the driver.
- When toddlers are playing with dolls and prams – have harnesses to strap them in – talk about keeping the dolls safe.



NATIONAL PRACTICE:

Assessment for learning

Through play-based learning seek opportunities to address road safety in a way that expands children’s thinking and encourages problem solving.

Play is a central component of effective early childhood education and care programs. Through play, children learn about themselves and the world around them. Play provides the opportunity for children to learn by doing and when the child is in control of the play, they can learn naturally, make choices and solve problems without fear of failure, fostering self-esteem and confidence for further exploration.

Thoughtful and reflective educators support children’s growing understanding of safety through play-based experiences and the provision of materials, space and sufficient time for full engagement. Supportive adults will extend children’s thinking by being a play partner, a role model and a guide to understanding safe behaviours.

“Road safety education is enhanced when play underpins the whole curriculum and reflects children’s interests and strengths.”



CONNECTIONS

Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)

“Play can expand children’s thinking and enhance their desire to know and to learn” (*Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, 2009, p.15*).

National Quality Standard

Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice

1.1.1: Curriculum decision making contributes to each child’s learning and development outcomes in relation to their identity, connection with community, wellbeing, confidence as learners and effectiveness as communicators.

1.2.2: Educators respond to children’s ideas and play and extend children’s learning through open-ended questions, interactions and feedback.



ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION IN PRACTICE

Educators can encourage playful exploration in many ways. Sand and soil areas in the outside environment provide a perfect space for children to create their own scenarios and play with their ideas about roads, vehicles, traffic and keeping safe.

A small city children's service received their annual delivery of sand to replenish the sand area. Instead of asking the families to relocate the sand as they normally would, they talked to the children about how they might relocate the sand from the big pile at the gate to the sand areas. The children worked together and devised a detailed system to deliver the sand to its new home that involved trucks and trolleys, pathways, and entries and exits. The educators used the opportunity to talk with the children about how they could keep everyone safe during the process. In response, the children developed more elaborate plans including gates and signs, and asked educators for hats and vests to keep safe when directing the trucks. The children's playful exploration of this routine service task lasted several weeks and facilitated growth in the children's understanding and awareness of how to keep themselves and their friends safe.

Children also benefit from dramatic play opportunities where they can act out what they know and observe in their families and community life.

When a parent informed a service that he had just secured his first job as a bicycle patrol officer, the educators invited him to show the children his bicycle and uniform, and tell them about his work keeping people safe on the roads. The visit generated much discussion and excitement among the children. They were particularly impressed with the bicycle's flashing lights, siren and bell. The educators responded to the children's enthusiasm by providing police shirts, bicycle helmets, tyres, traffic signs, blocks and a mounted steering wheel in the dramatic play area. Children pretended to be drivers in cars, cyclists and bicycle patrol officers. The play allowed children to act out and make sense of what they had heard and seen during the visit.

PRACTICE SUGGESTIONS

Play is central to children's exploration of road safety.

When children are supported to play through their ideas, they are provided with the opportunity to develop the skills, attitudes and understanding necessary to become safe road users. Educators might consider the following key ideas when encouraging children to engage in play.

- Support children's play ideas and interests.
 - Listen intently to children and tune in to their questions or comments about the road environment either as passengers or pedestrians. Respond respectfully and accurately to their questions, thoughts and ideas, and join in with their play experiences to support and extend their understanding.
 - Through observing children's play, educators can evaluate and assess children's individual strengths, interests and understanding of road safety, and plan experiences that support further engagement and participation.
 - Act as a guide during play, assisting children to use and include safe road strategies, for example safe practices for crossing the road (stop, look, listen and think).
- Set the environment to support children's exploration and engagement of road safety by providing:
 - Open-ended resources and equipment such as blocks, cars, signs and other building equipment, that can be freely chosen by children, will stimulate imagination and can be used in a variety of different ways to explore. This will stimulate children's understandings of the road environment.
 - Extended play time to explore ideas and concepts related to road safety. Educators can support these extended play opportunities with resources and specific information that engages children's thinking and understandings.
- Invite children to undertake their own travel survey about how children and families arrive at the service. Children could also map and analyse this data.



FURTHER INFORMATION >

For more information about Starting Out Safely activities and resources please visit: www.childroadsafety.org.au

NATIONAL PRACTICE:

Cultural Competence

Implement road safety education that is culturally relevant for the diversity of children, their families and the community.

Being culturally competent focuses on educator's capacity to respectfully respond and understand diverse ways of knowing, being and living. When these perspectives are incorporated into programs for children and their families, differences are celebrated and individuals feel a greater sense of belonging and connectedness. For the most part, this practice is more about being patient and inclusive rather than only utilising a set of activities and resources.

Children's experience and understanding of being road users is shaped by those of their families and communities. This can be a complex story, particularly for families who are newly settled in Australia. Families may have experienced very different rules and cultural attitudes to road safety in other countries and are themselves still learning about being safe on Australian roads.

“Supporting safe road use in culturally sensitive and inclusive ways will ensure children and families become active participants in community life.”



CONNECTIONS

Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)

“Educators who are culturally competent respect multiple cultural ways of knowing, seeing and living, celebrate the benefits of diversity and have an ability to understand and honour differences”

(Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, 2009 p.16).



National Quality Standard

Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice

1.1.1: Curriculum decision making contributes to each child's learning and development outcomes in relation to their identity, connection with community, wellbeing, confidence as learners and effectiveness as communicators.

1.1.2: Each child's current knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program.

ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION IN PRACTICE



For a rural Family Day Care service, road safety education needed to start with families. The town had recently seen a significant number of families settle in the community from southern Sudan, many with young children. The families were very new to Australia, having spent their initial settlement time in the inner city, and were still learning about the expectations of their new home. The service noticed that a number of children were arriving by car to Family Day Care without appropriate child car seats or seatbelts.

Educators attempted a conversation with the families, however it was difficult to explain the road rules as English was not a shared language. The staff and management sought advice on how to address this issue with families, meeting with a local community leader and the social worker responsible for supporting the families. Together they planned an information night in collaboration with a community leader and the local police to talk about the Child Restraint Road Rules and other local road safety issues. They also arranged for interpreters to be present to ensure families were able to participate. After the information night, the service noticed an improvement in the families' use of appropriate child car seats and booster seats. Due to the success of the information night, the service plan to hold a similar event each year.

Sometimes being culturally competent means looking at things from another perspective. A newly graduated educator started working at a preschool service in a diverse community. During her first month at the service, she became concerned about the number of children who were being collected by older siblings (mostly teenagers), and their relaxed approach to both signing children out and the journey home. Her colleagues at the service informed her that families in that community (mostly South Sea Islanders) expected older siblings to play an important part in looking after younger children.

After some reflection, the team decided to talk to the families about the importance of keeping children safe in the road environment. Rather than discourage the practice, the educators actively supported the teenagers to role-model safe road user behaviours with their younger siblings. This support included planning the safest route home, walking the route with the teenagers, and talking about safe places to cross roads and the importance of holding hands with their siblings. The strategy has been working well and several of the teenagers have even indicated an interest in undertaking work experience at the service.

PRACTICE SUGGESTIONS

The following are strategies that educators might consider when embedding road safety education in culturally competent ways.

- Get to know the local community and their experience of road safety. Using local knowledge about the lives of individuals and groups within the community equips us to make informed decisions.
- Make contact with community leaders. This may take some time and effort but will pay off when there is a particular issue that must be addressed, such as the safe transportation of children in cars. Elders or leaders of the community can assist community professionals to promote key health and wellbeing messages.
- Talk to organisations or agencies who work in the local community in supporting children and families from diverse cultural backgrounds. These organisations may be able to assist you to understand the experience of road safety for families before they arrived in Australia, e.g. families may have previously been living in a country where seatbelts or child car seats were not required.
- Be sensitive and try to avoid judging families, particularly where English is not a first language. It can be hard to understand new rules and cultural attitudes, and many of us need help to engage our children in safe road practice. Role-modelling safe practices and teaching children road safety skills will also help make the whole family safer road users.
- Use bilingual workers or invite a parent to assist you to communicate the key messages around road safety. Parents can become safety champions and help other families to understand rules and expectations, and how to adopt safer road use strategies.
- Educators could collect images of their local community (in particular, places that families and children might visit regularly) and display them in the service to assist children and families to feel a sense of belonging and become more aware of how to use these spaces safely.



FURTHER INFORMATION >

For more information about Starting Out Safely activities and resources please visit: www.childroadsafety.org.au

NATIONAL PRACTICE:

Continuity of learning and transitions

Use the opportunity of transitions, in active partnership with children, families and the local community, for road safety education.

Transitions to, from and within early childhood programs offer young children rich opportunities for learning and development. The experience of moving successfully from one group or space to another, or one experience to another, equips children to manage their everyday lives now and into the future. When educators pay attention to these times, focusing on continuity and intention, they maximise the possibilities for holistic learning that incorporates physical, cognitive, social and emotional development.

Transitions provide great opportunities to embed road safety education into the curriculum. Transitions to/from the service and transitions across age groups or to school offer opportunities for children to learn to take increasing responsibility for their own safety and wellbeing and that of others.

“When children use transition times to practise the skills, attitudes and behaviours that help them to be safe and manage risk, there are lasting benefits.”



CONNECTIONS

Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)

“Children bring family and community ways of being, belonging and becoming to their early childhood settings. By building on these experiences educators help all children to feel secure, confident and included and to experience continuity in how to be and how to learn”
(Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, 2009 p.16).



National Quality Standard

Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities

6.2.1: Continuity of learning and transitions for each child are supported by sharing information and clarifying responsibilities.

6.2.3: The service builds relationships and engages with its community.




ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION IN PRACTICE

Transition visits as children prepare to enter primary school offer an excellent opportunity for children across all age groups (not only children who will be entering school) to engage in meaningful road safety education.

A kindergarten service in a suburban community has made a particular effort to support children and their families' transition to school. The team of educators were concerned by conversations where parents had expressed anxiety about their children walking on the footpath outside the school, given its location on a busy dual-lane highway.

The educators planned a series of opportunities across the year to equip children and their families to become safer and more confident road users. This included teaching children the importance of holding hands with an adult near roads and what to look out for when preparing to cross a road. Parents were also invited to participate in these planned opportunities. In addition, walks around the neighbourhood to practise crossing roads safely and regular visits to the school (located around the corner from the service) helped everyone feel more confident.



A small rural service was approached by a parent requesting that their four-year-old child catch the school bus to the kindergarten (next door to the school) with their older next-door neighbours. The educator and management team were initially concerned about the young child catching a bus on her own, but after further discussion with the family, understood that this was likely to be the only way that this child could participate in kindergarten.

The management team and educators worked together with the family, bus company and bus driver to develop clear policies and procedures that supported children to be safer passengers and pedestrians, including procedures for signing children in and out of the service, the wearing of seatbelts, and getting on and off the bus.

The educators developed a roster to ensure that someone would be available to meet the child at the bus stop and walk with her to the kindergarten. The educators actively included arriving to the kindergarten on the bus as part of their transition planning.



PRACTICE SUGGESTIONS

Opportunities to support effective transitions are present throughout the program and across the year.

Educators might consider the following ideas to embed road safety education into the program

- At enrolment and settling-in times, talk to children and their families about the various ways to travel safely to the service, e.g. holding hands as you walk along the footpath, making sure that the correct child car seat and booster seat are used, getting out of the car on the kerb side, crossing the road safely and closing the gate behind you.
- Invite children to discuss the ways they travel to and from the service, and how they might do this in a safe way. This could include using local road safety education materials and resources that support children to learn specific skills, attitudes and behaviours.
- Use the enrolment interview process with families to alert them to any particular traffic hazards at and around the service (tricky intersection or busy car park), and offer advice on how to manage these safely.
- Encourage children to think and plan for how they leave the service. Perhaps children can make a list or create a book that helps them remember. Engage children in understanding how their actions (e.g. holding hands, waiting for their parent/carer to be ready to leave, walking rather than running), can help keep them safe.
- Make particular efforts to visit places in your local community, including the school. These experiences offer children real opportunities to practise being safe pedestrians.



FURTHER INFORMATION >

For more information about Starting Out Safely activities and resources please visit: www.childroadsafety.org.au

EXPLORING ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION:

Support children's learning through planning and goal setting

WHAT IS ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION?

Road safety education is the intentional practice of developing the skills, knowledge, understanding and attitudes children need to be safe road users now and into the future.

To be effective, road safety education must reflect children's context and experience and match their stage of development and level of independence as a road user.

Educators maximise the benefits of road safety education in early childhood when they understand children as capable and competent and include them in real opportunities to practise being safe on our roads.

USING THE PRACTICES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S LEARNING

The National Practices support educators to implement Road Safety Education. As part of the expectations of planning for children's learning educators can identify goals that develop children's skills, knowledge, understanding and attitude in relation to road safety.

The practices detailed in this resource assist educators to implement road safety learning goals.

ROAD SAFETY LEARNING GOALS

Children become safer road users when educators intentionally plan to support and extend learning in one of the following domains.

Skills

- > Being able to stop
- > Listening
- > Gross motor skills
- > Motor planning skills
- > Self-regulation

Understanding

- > Why we want to be safe and why it's important our community
- > Cause and effect
- > Speed
- > Distance
- > Spatial relations
- > Consequences

Knowledge

- > The language and vocabulary of road safety
- > What happens
- > Conceptual

Attitude

- > Self-respect
- > Taking care
- > Respect for other
- > Awareness



PLANNING FOR ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION

Road safety education requires intentional (thoughtful, purposeful and deliberate) planning that articulates the way educators support children to acquire the skills to be effective road users into the future.

Through intentional teaching decisions, educators can ensure that the program includes the resources and practices to support children's learning and development.

This diagram demonstrates the process that educators may use to plan for including road safety education in the curriculum.

Planning intentionally and identifying clear goals for children's road safety education creates more meaningful learning opportunities as well as a process for understanding whether plans for learning have been successful. Goals are best determined through consultation with families and communities and can be shared through documentation as children learn and grow.



FURTHER INFORMATION >

For more information about Starting Out Safely activities and resources please visit: www.childroadsafety.org.au

NATIONAL PRACTICE:

Learning Environments

Provide opportunities in the learning environment, including the local community, for safe and meaningful interaction with children, parents and carers about road safety.



The learning environment is a visible representation of educators' reflective practice, and demonstrates educators' values in the learning spaces and materials offered.

“ Well-designed learning environments reflect children's interests and promote meaningful play through the provision of 'real life' materials that reflect everyday life.”

Learning environments conducive to road safety education include intentionally created indoor and outdoor spaces within a program where materials are set up to encourage children to explore and practise positive skills, behaviours and attitudes. For example, stop at the stop sign on your bicycle.

Real road environments in the local community play an important part of the environments offered to children for example, during excursions and emergency evacuations.

Effective learning environments also include partnerships with families to support road safety education through program participation and the sharing of information.

CONNECTIONS



Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)

“Environments that support learning are vibrant and flexible spaces that are responsive to the interests and abilities of each child”

(Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, 2009 p.15).

National Quality Standard

Quality Area 3: Physical environment 3.2: The service environment is inclusive, promotes competence and supports exploration and play-based learning.

3.2.1: Outdoor and indoor spaces are organised and adapted to support every child's participation and to engage every child in quality experiences in both built and natural environments.

3.2.2: Resources, materials and equipment allow for multiple uses, are sufficient in number, and enable every child to engage in play-based learning.



ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION IN PRACTICE

Providing rich learning environments can include storybooks that inspire children to consider the world around them. A group of four-year-olds in a long day program prepared for their community walk by reading the story *Ruby's School Walk* by Kathryn White and Miriam Latimer. The story is about what Ruby sees, or imagines that she sees on the way to school.

Once out on their walk, the story prompted the children to really look at their surroundings and talk about what they were seeing as they walked. When they returned, the educator set out long rolls of paper on several tables to encourage the children to draw the things that they had seen on their walk.

The children were able to remember and draw many things including houses, people, roads, footpaths and road signs. This story shows us that we can help children to focus on specific aspects of their environment to aid awareness and memory, and to build on their road safety knowledge and understanding.

Learning environments that support road safety education include spaces and places within the local community. Educators at a children's service located on the roof of an inner-city building included the immediate streets, local square and shopping precincts when developing the procedures for their emergency evacuation plan.

Following this process, they went on to develop a regular excursion plan that supported children to explore the place they had identified in their emergency evacuation plan.

They visited the surrounding area and specific evacuation sites as a regular part of the program and as a result the children became more confident and safer during evacuations.

The families commented on their children's increased understanding of how to keep safe on the road and how this had made them more confident to take children out into the city.



PRACTICE SUGGESTIONS

Learning environments for children can be created from a wide range of materials and resources.



Whether commercially-made, recycled, locally-sourced, borrowed or donated, materials and resources can enhance and support children's learning about road safety. Some of the best resources are members of the community: family members or local workers. Consider the following possibilities.

- Take photos of the local neighbourhood areas that children might see on their way to and from the service. These photos can be displayed in block construction areas or other learning environments to provide opportunities for children to recognise features of the road environment.
- Invite families to supply photos of their travels or adventures, and include them in learning spaces.
- Invite your local school crossing supervisor or police officer to visit, and engage children in thinking about what questions to ask visitors and how they might respond to the visits in their play.
- Provide small cars, bicycles, scooters and helmets in imaginative play areas.
- Use preloved road maps to support children to create their own maps of the journey to preschool.
- Provide dress ups for a variety of occupations including emergency workers, policemen/women and school crossing supervisors, and props such as steering wheels, chairs with 'seatbelts', large cardboard boxes and road signs.
- Use road play mats as an aid in talking about the street 'furniture' we see every day.
- Support children to set up a road crossing situation inside or outside. Encourage children to practice their safe road crossing skills by acting as pedestrians. This could look like a zebra crossing and become a working feature of the outdoor play space, as children on bikes practice to stop, and children practice waiting for a safe moment to cross.
- Encourage children to create a travel survey and ask each child how they travel to the service. This can be combined with numeracy, literacy and strengthening communication skills.
- Provide opportunities for children to use online maps to extend their understanding of roads and traffic.

FURTHER INFORMATION >

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NATIONAL PRACTICE:

Responsiveness to children

Deliver road safety education which is responsive to individual children and extends children's strengths, knowledge and interests.

Being responsive to children allows educators to offer programs that support children's being, belonging and becoming. Responsive practice requires educators to notice the unique aspects of children's lives and to build curriculums that reflect these attributes.

“When we tune in to who children are, the things that are important to them and their families, and the context of their community, we are better able to extend their understanding, knowledge and interests.”

Road safety education experiences that reflect what children know and who they are, equip them and their families to participate safely in their own communities.

Becoming responsive enables educators to make meaningful decisions about how to embed road safety education into the daily curriculum.



CONNECTIONS

Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)

“Educators are responsive to all children’s strengths, abilities and interests. They value and build on children’s strengths, skills and knowledge to ensure their motivation and engagement in learning” (Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, 2009 p.14).

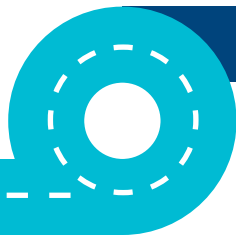


National Quality Standard

Quality Area 5: Relationships with children:

5.1: Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child.

5.1.1: Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.



ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION IN PRACTICE



Responsiveness can also include modifying existing approaches to make programs more accessible and safer for children to attend.

A children's service in a busy country town was supporting William, a child with additional needs, who found arrival and departure particularly stressful. William's parents had informed the service of his challenging behaviour and that he had escaped several times as they were leaving friends' houses and had run off down the road. William had also managed to free himself from his child car seat while in the car, adding to his parents' anxiety about keeping him safe.

Educators worked with William's parents to design an arrival and departure procedure to help manage these times effectively. It was agreed that William's parents would arrive at the service slightly later in the morning, and at departure time, educators would help William to choose toys that he could borrow to continue his play at home. The service's educators also contacted a local specialist support agency to seek assistance for William's family to help support his behaviour in the car and to discuss child car seat options.

Responsiveness is essentially about listening to the needs and interests of children and working with them to maximise learning opportunities. A good example occurred at a sessional kindergarten program with a group of four-year-old children.

A child arrived one morning with a real estate brochure advertising the new house his family had just purchased. With the help of a local map, the educator led a detailed discussion about where his new house was in relation to his old house and the kindergarten, and how he would travel to kindergarten once he moved. The other children were also engaged in this discussion about the local community and used the map to try to locate their own houses.

The educators responded to these conversations by visiting a local real estate agent to collect additional housing brochures. The children then used these brochures to create a collaged map of their local neighbourhood. The project expanded to include mapping of children's houses, traffic lights and crossings, and important local places such as shops and the school. The educators and children then decided to visit the neighbourhood they had mapped and took excursions to children's homes, local shops and the school. These experiences helped to develop the children's road safety awareness, knowledge and behaviours as well as their understandings of community and citizenship.

PRACTICE SUGGESTIONS



Being responsive to children is enacted in many different ways.

Sometimes, it means actively joining with children in play, while at other times it can be about providing materials and resources to support ideas and extends thinking. Responsiveness can also be the quiet interaction made with children that draws them into the program and enables their participation. Being responsive in early childhood road safety education might be enacted in the following ways:

- Listen to children, especially their understanding of their own experiences as road users in their local community. This is a powerful opportunity to learn more about what children know, to support the development of new skills and to provide timely learning opportunities that reflect children's interests.
- Make time to speak with families about their child/ren's experiences at home and with extended family. This may provide information to inform curriculum decisions.
- Consider opportunities in the enrolment process (interview questions, enrolment information or forms) to gain information about how families arrive at and depart from the service, and any particular challenges that this might present, e.g. children with additional needs, involvement of grandparents etc.
- Educators, children and families could work together to develop community-specific resources that reflect road safety messages relevant to their community context and share this with families, e.g. 'slow down' signage for the service's car park.



FURTHER INFORMATION >

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NATIONAL PRACTICE:

Intentional teaching

Engage in intentional teaching which extends and expands children’s learning about road safety.

Purposeful support from adults enriches children’s learning. When describing intentional teaching as deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful, it is important to recognise that rather than a structured or formal teaching strategy, intentional teaching occurs every day through inviting learning spaces, in respectful and emotionally nurturing environments, and in the uninterrupted time educators provide for children to play.

To achieve this, educators require knowledge of road safety strategies as well as an understanding of children’s strengths, abilities, interests, past experiences and dispositions. Educators use this understanding to intentionally include road safety in their curriculums.



“Road safety education is reinforced when educators make deliberate decisions to include materials/resources and teach specific skills that support children to become safer road users.”



CONNECTIONS

Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)

“Intentional teaching involves educators being deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful in their decisions and actions. Intentional teaching is the opposite of teaching by rote or continuing with traditions simply because things have ‘always’ been done that way”

(Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, 2009 p.45).



National Quality Standard

Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice

1.2.2: Educators respond to children’s ideas and play and extend children’s learning through open-ended questions, interactions and feedback.

Quality Area 5: Relationships with children

5.1.1: Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.



ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION IN PRACTICE

Intentional teaching is an effective way to extend children's learning about road safety.

As a Family Day Care (FDC) educator greeted one of her regular families, she was bombarded with stories of the weekend's events from enthusiastic three-year-old twins. Their parent joined in and explained that they had been involved in a small crash in the car park of the shopping centre. Everyone was safe but it was unnerving and had since been the focus of much of the family's conversations.

The educator took the opportunity presented by the children's interest to intentionally explore the impact of the incident. A road mat, car, lego people and blocks provided a back drop to talk with the children about what had happened in the car park. The educator learned that the twins and their baby brother were in the right child car seats for their size and their mother was wearing a seatbelt, and that this kept them safe when they had the crash.

The conversation continued later that day when the FDC educator took the children by car to the library. As they got into the car, the educator asked the children what they needed to do to keep safe. The children discussed the importance of sitting in your child car seat and keeping your arms in the harness. The educator then spoke about the importance of her role in checking that the children were secured correctly in their child car seats. This conversation built on the discussion earlier in the day, reinforcing the children's learning about being safe passengers.

Being intentional can also extend to the families who use early childhood services.

The team of educators at a newly-built integrated service next door to a school identified that the car park/drop-off area was creating problems, especially for families with young children in prams. The design and layout meant that entrances were hard to navigate and the car park was extremely busy at the beginning and end of each day.

Having noticed and discussed that this was an issue for children's safe arrival at the service, the team made deliberate and thoughtful efforts to discuss the issue with parents and elicit their ideas for how they might arrive and use the car park more safely. Their ongoing intentional action on this issue resulted in educators providing clearer parent information, being present in the car park to give directions and taking children out into the car park with their families, where possible, to learn more about how to keep safe in that environment.



PRACTICE SUGGESTIONS

Being intentional is about educators being thoughtful, deliberate and purposeful.

The following ideas can help strengthen this practice.

- Engage in authentic, meaningful conversations with children that purposefully include key road safety concepts and vocabulary. The following are some open-ended questions to use when talking to children about road safety. You might also develop additional questions.
 - How did you get here today?
 - Why do you sit in a booster seat or use a child car seat in the car?
 - Can you think of any other ways you could get to preschool?
 - How will you know when it's safe to cross the road?
 - What do we look for when we cross the road together?
 - What sounds are we listening for when crossing the road?
 - I wonder what might happen if I didn't wear a helmet?
- Plan experiences that offer children an opportunity to explore concepts related to being a safe road user e.g. games that feature learning about spatial relations (inside/outside, up/down), colour, shape, size and number.
- Provide materials that deliberately invite children to think about becoming safer road users e.g. hang posters displaying appropriate child car seats / booster seats, supply seatbelts and other props for dramatic play and create a storage space for bicycle helmets. Choose storybooks that provide an opportunity to discuss road safety.
- Invite older children to be involved in helping to plan excursions for themselves and younger peers where appropriate, and use opportunities in this planning to discuss road safety issues and solutions.
- Encourage children to be active in advocating for their own safety. Children could discuss safety issues/ incidents within their own community and decide how to take action to keep themselves and the people they know safe. Actions may include writing to the local government or making signage for their street.
- Educators might invite children to engage in the risk assessment process before venturing out of the service. Children could use discussion, images and props to identify what to be mindful of and how to keep safe.

FURTHER INFORMATION >

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NATIONAL PRACTICE:

Holistic approaches

Recognise that children’s learning is integrated and interconnected when making curriculum decisions about road safety education.

Holistic approaches ensure that children’s learning is interconnected and supports growth across all domains: cognitive, physical, social, emotional, linguistic and spiritual. This approach recognises that learning in the early years is most effective when educators attend to the whole child and weave together learning opportunities that connect different aspects of a child’s identity.

Making holistic curriculum decisions related to road safety education requires educators to consider multiple aspects of children’s learning. Road safety experiences that connect, for example, children’s physical, personal, social and cognitive aspects of learning provide for more meaningful learning.

“Using a holistic approach is fundamental to early childhood education. To be effective, road safety education for this age group must also adopt this approach.”



CONNECTIONS

Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)

“Holistic approaches to teaching and learning recognise the connectedness of mind, body and spirit. When early childhood educators take a holistic approach they pay attention to children’s physical, personal, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing as well as cognitive aspects of learning... they see children’s learning as integrated and interconnected”

(Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, 2009 p.14).



National Quality Standard

Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice

1.1.3: All aspects of the program, including routines, are organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child’s learning.

Quality Area 5: Relationships with children

5.1.1: Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.



ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION IN PRACTICE

Road safety education is about connectedness and community: about the way that children think about their becoming and feel about their belonging.

In a small rural town, a team of educators in a sessional kindergarten program wanted to strengthen the connection between children and their community. As they discussed ways to do this, it became clear that in order to enable children to experience their local community through outings, they first needed to engage in road safety education. Educators explored available resources and noticed that they included references to walking along the footpath, using traffic lights and managing pedestrian crossings. However, their service was located on a dirt road with no footpaths and the town had no traffic lights, so the team of educators developed a range of holistic opportunities for the children that engaged their minds, bodies and spirits. An example of this was to walk to a place of local significance. These experiences supported children's thinking on how to navigate and be safe on their adventures; acknowledging their bodies in the process of walking in all weather and on different terrain, and their imaginations in the excitement that was generated throughout the project.

A holistic approach to road safety education engages children's minds, bodies and spirits.

A long day care service in a large regional town considered the possibility of taking children to visit the elderly citizen's home across the road as part of their regular weekly program. The educators were keen to include younger children in addition to the three and four-year-olds. They planned a series of conversations with the older children about what these visits would involve, how they could get there and back safely, and what they might need to bring with them on their visit. What happened over the next six months surprised everyone. The older children became increasingly skilled at looking out for the safety and wellbeing of their younger peers and advocating for crossing the road safely and holding hands with the adults. In addition, the relationships formed with the residents of the home brought great joy to everyone, including some of the parents who made a regular effort to be part of the visits.

Here, road safety education was an embedded strategy that enabled children's connectedness to the community and to each other.

PRACTICE SUGGESTIONS

Making holistic curriculum decisions engages a variety of learners and strengthens outcomes for children.

There are a number of ways educators can make holistic road safety curriculum decisions. The following are some suggestions.

- Connect with children to gain insight into their interests and approaches to learning. Some children learn by doing (kinesthetic learners) while others are motivated by the stories that surround concepts or ideas (linguistic learners). Understanding the nature of individual children supports holistic approaches and informs effective curriculum decisions.
- Choose road safety education opportunities that invite children to use their minds, bodies, spirits and imagination. Consider adding elements to play spaces that connect these aspects. For example, read a story about travelling by car and then invite children to construct a car with blocks. Extend this approach by supporting children to imagine where they might go in their car and what they need to do to stay safe in the car.
- Add physical elements to road safety teaching opportunities. For example, when children learn about how traffic lights work and what the different colours mean, provide an opportunity for children to act out their new understanding. Include a traffic light in the outdoor play area and ask children to practise walking, stopping, waiting, looking, listening and thinking. Then take children to a real set of traffic lights and experience the process first hand.
- Music, movement and games will assist children to engage more fully with concepts important to road safety. Spatial relations (inside/outside, up/down), as well as listening (loud/soft) and moving (quick/ slow) opportunities, support children to become more confident road users.
- Engage children's imagination and sense of awe and wonder. This might seem an unlikely connection, but consider that teaching children about road safety might enable them to experience the wonder of their world.



FURTHER INFORMATION >

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