



## OUTSIDE THE GATE: ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION EMBEDDED IN THE CURRICULUM

ARTICLE BY LOUISE DORRAT – EARLY CHILDHOOD CONSULTANT AND FACILITATOR FOR ELAA'S STARTING OUT SAFELY ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION PROGRAM.

*Do you take the children outside your early childhood service's front gate? If not, why not? Is one of the reasons listed below?*

- parents would worry
- the director/owner will not allow us to
- too much risk
- not enough adults
- we have children who are runners
- we have children with additional needs
- our centre is on a main road
- our centre is on a dirt road with no footpath
- there is too much paperwork
- we are busy enough with a full curriculum
- just too hard with everything else we have to do.

If you think it is important, you will overcome the barriers.

*Why is it a priority to take children outside the gate?*

- equips children to become active participants in their communities
- connects children to the local community surrounding the service
- broadens their understanding of the world in which they live (EYLF 2009, p. 26).
- encourages children to explore, discover and be inquisitive
- allows children to be involved in making the decisions of where to go and how to get there
- and above all, reduces the risk of serious injury and death among young children by assisting them to develop skills, knowledge and behaviour to become safe road users (ELAA 2012)

When I was initially approached to deliver Starting Out Safely professional development sessions, I thought "Oh no, not another thing these educators have to include in their very full curriculum".

I also thought; "No way am I delivering boring Road Safety sessions". How

wrong was I? This is not an extra burden on educators, road safety should be embedded in the everyday program. And the sessions are far from boring. Feedback is always positive, highlighting that the sessions are practical and informative.

During the pre-training for delivering these sessions I learnt that road trauma is one of the leading causes of death among young Australians (AIHW, 2012). Most children are driven everywhere and have very little experience of riding bikes on public paths and walking around neighbourhoods.

ELAA engaged Catharine Hydon to assist in the development of the 'Starting out Safely' professional development session. ELAA together with the other facilitators, Catharine Hydon, Nicole Pilsworth, Gilda Howard, Karen Glancy and myself have continued to update the presentation. The professional development sessions link to the EYLF, the law, the regulations and the NQS (2018). ELAA have even written policies and procedures for services to plan and implement excursions and regular outings.

**“** This is my sixth year delivering these sessions and my favourite part is reading the educators' faces at the beginning of the sessions: "Is this yet another thing we are required to do? How long will this go for?" Yet at the end of the session, there is usually a buzz in the room and educators are chomping at the bit to implement the practices discussed.

This is my sixth year delivering these sessions and my favourite part is reading the educators' faces at the beginning of the sessions: "Is this yet another thing we are required to do? How long will this go for?" Yet at the end of the session, there is usually a buzz in the room and educators are chomping at the bit to implement the practices discussed.

**Regular outings: spontaneous and flexible**

Regular or routine outings are the most beneficial for children. These outings can range from 15 minutes to 2 hours and only need one risk assessment and permission form for the 12 month period if there has been no change in circumstances. The more regular the excursions, the easier it is for educators and the more confident the children become.

During Starting Out Safely Professional Development sessions, educators have provided some fabulous examples of their regular outings. These include:

- walking around the block to observe the building works
- walking to the post office to buy stamps, collect or post mail
- walking to the nursery to buy plants or fertiliser
- going to the supermarket to purchase supplies for an experience
- visiting a local school to engage in school events
- visiting the local public library
- catching a tram
- watch the birds in the park
- weekly visits to the elderly citizens centre
- In FDC programs, dropping off and collecting children from kinder and school.

One educator noted that they took the children down an alley and this provoked many discussions about graffiti on the fence. Is this allowed? I wonder if they had permission. Is it street art? Do you like it? The children also noticed a lot of rubbish on the ground and the children decided

everyone should pick it up. This prompted a discussion about some rubbish being unsafe, unhygienic and the need for gloves. This discussion about rubbish and littering our streets continued back at the centre.

**The National Quality Standard (2018) and getting outside the gate.**

Children are engaged in excursions that utilise community environments and support child-directed exploration and discovery (3.2 Exceeding theme 3).

Road safety education and any active transport initiatives are incorporated into the program (6.2.1).

Educators incorporate educational excursions or incursions to develop children's understanding of their local community (6.2.3).

Community engagement is developing respectful and responsive connections with the immediate or wider community to build connections and relationships (6.2.3).

**The NQS (2018, p.266) asks us ...**

What is happening in our local community that is relevant to our work with children and families? How can we best be involved? How are we assisting children and their families to develop a sense of belonging to their local community? How are we supporting children to see themselves as active contributors to their community?

The child and your service do not exist in isolation; they are part of a much wider community. Surely, you have a responsibility to teach children about road safety education and to strengthen children's interest and skills in being active contributors to their community. Book a Starting out Safely session to make it happen.



### References

- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) (2018) Guide to the National Quality Framework.
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)(2012) A picture of Australia's children Canberra Australia
- Department of Education, Employment, and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) (2009). The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia. Canberra, ACT; DEEWR.
- Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) (2012) Road Safety and Safe Transport policy.

To contact ELAA's Road Safety Education team:  
Tel: 03 9489 3500  
e: rse@elaa.org.au