



Smart Steps

Making Safer Choices - Taking Smarter Steps

Early Years Road Safety Education Educator notes

The Department of Education acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People as the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our schools are located and where we conduct our business. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present. The Department of Education is committed to honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, sea, skies and waterways and their rich contribution to society.

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Contact details

Department of Education
Road Safety and Drug Education
Statewide Services
33 Giles Avenue, Padbury, WA 6025
rsde.rfa@education.wa.edu.au
(08) 9402 6415

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Table of Contents

Smart Steps: Making Safer Choices – Taking Smarter Steps	3
Early Childhood Road Safety Education	3
Program Overview.....	4
Professional learning and physical resources	5
Alignment to key frameworks.....	5
Alignment to the outcomes of the WA Kindergarten Curriculum	6
Exploring road safety education through the EYLF practices	7
Connecting with parents and carers.....	9
Connecting with the community	9
References.....	10

Smart Steps: Making Safer Choices – Taking Smarter Steps

Early Childhood Road Safety Education

Road related injuries to young Australian children continues to be a significant public health concern (AIHW, 2019).

Teaching road safety in early childhood is critically important due to the unique vulnerabilities young children face as passengers, pedestrians and users of wheeled devices such as bikes, trikes and scooters. Children aged 0–5 years are at increased risk in the road environment due to their developmental stage, limited physical and cognitive abilities and dependence on adults for protection and supervision (Waddell, McKenna & Skarin, 2017).

Due to these vulnerabilities, supervision and developmentally appropriate education are essential. Road safety education should be embedded within daily routines, supported through play-based learning and reinforced in partnership with families and communities. Children benefit most when educators and parents model safe behaviour and provide consistent messaging in both the early learning environment and at home (Waters, Baker & Bruce, 2012).

Road safety education requires 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 these intentional teaching decisions, educators:

- model and teach key road safety messages
- support the differentiation in the learning experiences, whilst being inclusive
- connect road safety education with parents/carers.

When implementing Smart Steps, educators are encouraged to strengthen children's engagement and be sensitive to the cultural, linguistic, cognitive and developmental needs of their students. Integrating the following measures will assist in delivering the Smart Steps program in a culturally responsive, relevant and developmentally appropriate way:



- Be mindful of the children's backgrounds and any road-related trauma they or their families may have experienced and avoid discussions that could be distressing or culturally sensitive.
- Ensure learning experiences are adapted and contextualised to meet the needs of individual children and reflect the unique characteristics of each region.
- Incorporate stories, languages and cultural knowledge from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Program Overview

The Smart Steps early childhood road safety education program supports educators to work with children and their families to develop knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes to become safer passengers, pedestrians and users of wheeled devices.

The program aims to:

- enhance an educator's understanding of the developmental capabilities of children in the traffic environment.
- focus on the key messages to teach children so that they can remain safer in the traffic environment.
- provide a range of teaching and learning experiences, activities and strategies that educators can use to build children's road safety knowledge and skills.
- promote strategies to engage parents/carers in their children's road safety education.

There are three themes in the Smart Steps Road Safety Program:

- being a safe passenger
- being a safe pedestrian
- being a safe rider.

The program is suitable for use by parents/carers and educators at home, playgroups, Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services or in Kindergarten.

Children develop at different rates, influenced by individual characteristics and environmental factors. Language, social, physical and cognitive skills will vary among children of the same age. Age recommendations should therefore be considered as flexible guidelines and adapted to support each child's unique developmental and learning needs.

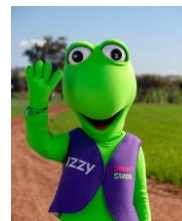


Professional learning and physical resources

To support the delivery of road safety education, educators are encouraged to access Early Childhood Road Safety education professional learning. For information on how to access professional learning email rsde.rfa@education.wa.edu.au or register through [PLIS](#).

After attending professional learning, educators will gain access to the suite of physical resources (subject to availability) such as:

- access to loaning Izzy the road safety mascot
- Izzy plush toys
- Izzy story books (3 kinds)
- large vinyl traffic mat
- conflute traffic sign pack.



Professional learning and resources are free of charge and accessible to all Western Australian education settings including schools and Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) centres.

Alignment to key frameworks

Road safety education should be informed by current research and delivered in a manner that is developmentally appropriate.

The Smart Steps: Making Safer Choices - Taking Smarter Steps program is informed by the eight National Practices for Early Childhood Road Safety Education (Waters, Baker, & Bruce, 2012).

Educators draw on their knowledge of individual children and approved frameworks, when designing learning programs and considering practices they will use. The Smart Steps program supports this process by providing teaching and learning outlines that align with the:

- Western Australian Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines
- Early Years Learning Framework – Belonging, Being and Becoming V2.0 (EYLF)
- National Quality Standard



Alignment to the outcomes of the WA Kindergarten Curriculum

The Smart Steps program provides meaningful opportunities to embed road safety experiences that promote the outcomes of the WA Kindergarten Curriculum. For detailed guidance on implementing these examples and exploring additional opportunities to embed road safety, refer to the 3 teaching and learning booklets.

Outcome 1: Identity

- Support children to recognise safe and unsafe situations using resources such as Izzy road safety storybooks, discussion photos and role-play scenarios.
- Welcome families and invite participation in learning experiences such as practising 'Stop, Look, Listen, Think' at a pretend crossing or joining helmet-fitting sessions.
- Gather information about children (e.g. how they travel to school) through surveys and use this information to plan dramatic play experiences such as building a 'safe street'.
- Model and teach problem-solving and conflict resolution during bike and trike play by negotiating turn-taking and discussing rules that keep everyone safe.

Outcome 2: Connecting and contributing

- Plan opportunities for shared decision-making by involving children in choices about road safety play setups e.g. deciding where to place traffic signs in the outdoor area.
- Look for examples of interdependence by discussing how people, vehicles and the environment interact e.g. why we need footpaths and crossings to keep everyone safe.
- Provide experiences beyond the classroom such as walking excursions to practice safe crossing or visiting a local bike safety track.
- Use digital tools to research safe routes or create maps showing safe paths to school.

Outcome 3: Wellbeing

- Teach health and safety concepts through discussions on how seatbelts, helmets and pedestrian rules keep us safe and involve children in creating classroom safety guidelines.
- Plan and participate in daily energetic physical activities that integrate road safety, such as moving and dancing to road safety songs and running bike and trike sessions.
- Provide tools and materials that build fine and gross motor skills through road safety play and craft.
- Promote body safety awareness by addressing protective behaviours in traffic contexts such as holding hands with a known adult near roads or who to ask for help if lost.

Outcome 4: Learning and thinking

- Enable inquiry processes by asking questions such as "I wonder why we need pedestrian crossings?" and supporting children to test ideas through dramatic play and construction.
- Explore mathematical and scientific concepts through road safety e.g. counting cars, comparing sizes of vehicles and the link between speed and stopping.
- Use positional and ordinal language in road safety contexts e.g. 'Stop, Look, Listen, Think'.
- Provide opportunities for construction and deconstruction by encouraging children to build and redesign safe streets using blocks, recycled materials and signs.

Outcome 5: Communication

- Read and share Izzy road safety storybooks and discuss illustrations, symbols and meanings.
- Sing and chant songs, rhymes or jingles about road safety concepts such as crossing the road to build memory and engagement.
- Draw attention to symbols and patterns in road safety such as traffic signs and link these to early literacy concepts.

Exploring road safety education through the EYLF practices

Holistic, integrated and interconnected approaches

When planning road safety education, educators should consider the whole child. This includes connecting prior experiences as passengers, pedestrians or riders with key safety messages. This approach supports their physical, personal, social and cognitive development, thereby fostering meaningful and relevant learning opportunities.

For example:

- Invite creativity and imagination: Use stories and play to explore road safety. Read *Izzy on Holiday* and then encourage children to build a car with blocks or other craft materials.
- Add physical elements to road safety teaching opportunities: When teaching about traffic lights, let children act out what each colour means. Place a traffic light sign from the *Traffic sign pack* in the outdoor area and practise stopping, waiting, looking and listening.
- Engage through music and games: Use *Smart Step* songs, movement and simple games like *When the music stops* to reinforce concepts such as spatial awareness and listening skills.

Responsiveness to children

Responsive road safety education reflects children's strengths, interests and prior knowledge. Educators make meaningful decisions to embed road safety into daily learning, therefore extending children's knowledge and ensuring relevant, engaging experiences.

For example:

- Listen to children's perspectives: Ask about their experiences as pedestrians, passengers or riders. This helps identify what they know and creates opportunities to build on their interests.
- Connect with families: Talk with families about their child's travel routines and experiences. This can guide planning and make learning more relevant.
- Gather information early: Use enrolment conversations or surveys to learn how families travel to and from the service and any challenges they face.

Play-based learning and intentionality

Through deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful play-based learning, educators create supportive environments where children can explore, imagine and engage in conversations promoting key road safety messages. Play-based experiences can expand their thinking and deepen their understanding of road safety concepts.

For example:

- Offer creative role-play options: Include dress-ups like crossing guards, bus drivers or police officers and props such as steering wheels and large boxes to turn into cars or trucks.
- Use interactive resources: Incorporate tools like the *Smart Steps traffic mat*, toy cars and figures to explore safe road behaviours through play.
- Blend play with intentional teaching: During outdoor activities, prompt children with ideas such as 'Let's practise stopping at the crossing before riding our trikes.'

Learning environments

Educators create inclusive and stimulating learning environments, both indoor and outdoor. These environments encourage children to explore and understand road safety messages through meaningful play. By engaging with the local community, families and carers, educators foster a shared commitment to safe practices in the broader environment, encouraging purposeful learning experiences.

For example:

- Use familiar visuals: Take photos of local streets and landmarks children see on their way to the education setting. Display these in dramatic play areas to help children recognise real-world road features.
- Invite community helpers: Arrange visits from a school crossing supervisor or police officer. Encourage children to prepare questions and reflect on the visit through play.
- Offer creative role-play options: Include dress-ups like crossing guards, bus drivers or police officers and props such as steering wheels and boxes to turn into cars or trucks.
- Create safe crossing scenarios: Support children to set up and practise road crossings using the *Traffic sign pack*, acting as pedestrians to reinforce safety skills.

Cultural responsiveness

Educators implement culturally inclusive road safety education that respects the diversity of children, their families and the community. By embedding cultural perspectives, educators honour varied experiences and promote a shared understanding of safe practices on Western Australian roads.

For example:

- Understand the local context: Learn about the community's road safety experiences to make informed and relevant decisions.
- Connect with community leaders: Build relationships that support shared safety goals.
- Engage with local organisations: Partner with agencies that work with children and families from diverse cultural backgrounds to ensure inclusive practices.

Continuity of learning and transitions

Educators use transitions as valuable opportunities to embed road safety education. They reinforce consistent safety messages and link prior learning to new experiences. In partnership with children, families and the local community, educators ensure these daily movements become teachable moments for promoting safe road user behaviours.

For example:

- Start conversations early: During enrolment and settling-in, engage with families and children about safe travel routines.
- Explore children's experiences: Invite children to share how they travel to and from the service and discuss ways to do this safely.
- Plan for safe departures: Encourage children to think ahead about leaving the service, including waiting in the safety spot and using the safety door when getting in and out of vehicles.

Assessment and evaluation for learning, development and wellbeing

Educators use ongoing observation, reflection and collaboration with children and families to assess and evaluate children's understanding of road safety. This process informs future learning by tracking development, engagement with complex ideas and the application of knowledge in practical situations.

For example:

- Tune into children's ideas: Listen to and record their questions and comments about roads as passengers or pedestrians. Respond respectfully and join their play to extend understanding.
- Observe and plan: Use play observations to assess children's strengths and interests, then plan experiences that build on their knowledge of road safety.
- Guide safe practices: Act as a supportive guide during play, modelling strategies such as *stop, look, listen and think* when crossing roads.
- Allow extended play: Offer time and resources for deeper exploration of road safety concepts, supporting children's thinking with relevant information and prompts.

Connecting with parents and carers

Connecting with parents is an important aspect to promoting road safety education and maximising learning opportunities.

Examples of how you can use the Smart Steps resource to connect with parents/carers include:

- Use key transition times as an opportunity to engage parents in their child's road safety journey. Specifically, how they can foster safe travel to and from the service. For example.
 - Choosing safer walking routes
 - Holding hands when crossing the road
 - Transporting children in approved and correctly fitted restraints
 - Wearing a bicycle helmet when cycling or using a scooter
 - Reverse parking in the service car park.
- In partnership with parents/carers, work to develop and implement road safety strategies specific to the local context. For example, implementing a designated 'Safety Spot' where parents/carers can model safe behaviours while traffic is moving in the car park.
- Share images, stories, videos and artworks to communicate children's voices, perspectives and experiences of road safety education.
- Invite parents/carers into the centre to participate in road safety sessions and experiences.
- Provide links to the *Smart Steps songs* and the *Smart Steps Izzy videos*.
- Use the *Smart Steps stickers* to reinforce key road safety messages with parents/carers.
- Include *Smart Steps Road Safety Storybooks* in your borrowing system or provide links to the online books.
- Provide parents/carers with the Smart Steps Safety Door sticker.
- Support parents/carers to learn more about key road safety areas:
 - Child Road Safety (Kidsafe WA) <http://www.kidsafewa.com.au/>
 - Train Safety (Transperth) [Train Safety \(transperth.wa.gov.au\)](http://train.safety.transperth.wa.gov.au)
 - Bike Safety (Transperth): [Getting your bike ready to ride \(transperth.wa.gov.au\)](http://getting.your.bike.ready.to.ride.transperth.wa.gov.au)

Connecting with the community

Examples for how to build relationships and engage with your local community include:

- **Excursions** –Taking children on excursions into their local neighbourhood is a fantastic way to teach them about road safety. Where possible, plan excursions that offer children the opportunity to:
 - Point out the key features, such as shared paths, buildings, road signs, crosswalks, traffic signals, parks and car parks.
 - Practice road safety skills, such as holding hands, stopping and listening.
 - Promote discussions about how children can stay safe as pedestrians and who can help them.
- **Invite community helpers** - Arrange visits from a school crossing supervisor, local Police, Ambulance or Firepersons for a centre incursion to talk about road safety.
- **Community Displays/Open Day/Open Night** - create displays of road safety education in action at your centre. They can be in your centre foyer, at community events such as fairs, fetes and agricultural shows.



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