



National Practices for Early Childhood Road Safety Education: Learning Environments

The early years are a critical time to introduce key concepts for lifelong learning. Road safety education is an important component of early childhood education as it lays the foundation for children to become safer road users. The National Practices for Early Childhood Road Safety Education have been developed by early childhood education and road safety experts across Australia and New Zealand. The eight national practices are aligned with the Early Years Learning Framework.

National Practice No. 5 – 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.

What is it? Environments that support learning are vibrant and flexible spaces that are responsive to the interests and abilities of each child. The learning environment is a visible representation of educators' reflective practice, and demonstrates educators' values in the learning spaces and materials offered. A learning environment that values road safety education signals its importance visually and offers children the opportunity to learn in a safe and healthy way.

- Learning environments conducive to road safety education might include intentionally created indoor and/or outdoor spaces within a program, and in real road environments - for example, during excursions and practice emergency evacuations.
- Develop partnerships with families to support road safety education through program participation and the sharing of information. Invite families to supply photos of their travels or adventures and include them in learning spaces, thereby embedding them into the learning process.
- Take photos of the local neighbourhood areas that children might see on their way to and from the service. These photos can be displayed with block construction toys or around the room to provide opportunities for children to recognise features of the road environment.
- 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 toy cars, bicycles and scooters in imaginative play areas.
- Provide dress ups for a variety of occupations including emergency workers, police 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 in a park. 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.
- Provide opportunities for children to use online maps to extend their understanding of roads and traffic, or use preloved road maps to support children to create their own maps of the journey to preschool.