

A-Z of Traffic Tales - IHT Awards 2008

A-Z of Traffic Tales Summary

The A-Z of Traffic Tales is an educational programme for schools to use with their Key Stage 1 pupils (4-7 year olds). It teaches road safety, PSHE and Citizenship messages through all subjects of the curriculum and promotes partnership between road safety and teaching professionals.

The delivery of the resource via the school as well as home environment provides a platform for learning life saving messages through literacy, citizenship and PSHE (personal, social and health education), at a time when children are particularly receptive to behavioural influences.

Background research

In the year 2000 the government set a target to reduce fatal and serious road casualties by 40% by 2010, of which 50% must be child casualties, measured against the average for 1984-1998.

Great Britain has a good road safety record, but our record for child pedestrian casualties does not compare well with the European average. Around 5,000 children are killed or seriously injured on our roads annually. This is an area of growing concern for parents, teachers, road safety professionals and national and local governments.

Therefore communicating basic road safety information to all is of vital importance, but particularly to the young, where developmental psychology shows that early behavioural lessons and influences will be carried through all of life.

The A-Z of Traffic Tales is a resource aimed at Key Stage 1 children (aged 5-7) and provides a structured education programme for road safety and teaching professionals, parents and other carers such as Sure Start and Child Information centres.

Approaching the target group through their school increases the spread of children reached by the resource, whatever their socio-economic grouping, environment, race or ability.

The main communication objectives are to:

- Influence the long term behaviour of the target group, both as road users and as good citizens
- Reduce casualty rates of the target group, not just on our roads but through all aspects of their lives
- Indirectly influence other family members
- Provide teachers with sound, valuable road safety material through a literacy approach that fits cross curricular and suggests easy extension work.

Innovation

Launching the resources with Road Safety Professionals before disseminating to schools in London promoted partnership working at the outset of the project, and encourages maximum spread of the messages.

The Resource is composed of a mix of printed material, an interactive CD and a website. It centres around a suite of 26 short stories, one for each letter of the alphabet; bringing together all the relevant road safety messages, along with personal, social, emotional and citizenship issues, and presenting them in a lively, realistic way. Each story is written in the past tense to allow greater variety of vocabulary, and also encapsulated in simple sentences in the present tense to allow flexibility of use with less able readers.

The characters that appear in the Traffic Tales have been developed to cover as wide a cultural and ethnic range as possible. The central family, around whom all the stories revolve, are deliberately ordinary – living in a small terraced house, set amid busy streets in an unspecified urban setting.

We see the family deal with a variety of ordinary situations; and get to know them and their extended family of uncles, aunts, cousins and grandparents, meeting their friends and neighbours in the community, from a variety of religious and racial backgrounds.

In this way every child who encounters these stories should find something that is familiar to them, that stimulates them and they can identify with, helping motivate them to be safe, caring, sharing citizens.

Road safety success to date

The *A-Z of Traffic Tales Big Book Resources* was in development for over two years. The stories, copy and content, the illustrations, the messages and the teacher extension notes for suggested activities were all tested, trialled and amended in collaboration with teachers, advisors, health and safety professionals together with road safety professionals throughout that time, before the product was published.

In November 2005 The Big Book Resource was launched in London and supplied free to all London primary schools, funded by Transport for London (TfL), and each school was allocated three free copies.

Due to the nature of the resource, it is difficult to obtain precise statistics regarding its effectiveness in reducing numbers of children killed or seriously injured on the road. We do know that it is increasing children's awareness of road safety and putting this into practice. We hope that the safer behaviours learned through A-Z of Traffic Tales will remain with them throughout their lives.

Quality of evaluation

Included in each pack was a full questionnaire that sought both quantitative and qualitative evaluation, in order to assess the resource's appeal, quality and educational usefulness.

The overwhelming conclusion of the questionnaire was that The A-Z of Traffic Tales resource was received outstandingly positively by schools, and even at this early stage had been found by teachers to be an excellent resource, achieving its objectives of providing a stimulus to key road safety and citizenship issues through literacy, and enabling them to actively include follow-up work within the curriculum.

During 2006/7 extension resources were developed, and were despatched to all London primary schools, again funded by TfL. Following further research, the Work Card set was developed and tested, and despatched to all London schools. Dbda Ltd continues to evaluate and improve the resources according to users' recommendations.

List of resources

Big Book Resource Pack:

6 Big Books containing the stories; Teachers' Notes covering Road Safety, PSHE and Citizenship through literacy; an alphabet frieze; all in a polypropylene wallet.

Cross Curricular Guide:

Supports the Teachers Notes in the Big Book Resource with extension ideas, covering maths, science, geography, history, art and design, and ICT.

Little Book Set:

The 26 stories in individual little books, to be used in school or as home-readers, with a section for parents in each book.

Work Card Set:

A guide to support teaching assistants and supply teachers, with supplementary material to encourage group and individual discussions.

Interactive Whiteboard:

Carefully designed to be used either for whiteboard or PC, this CD, with accompanying guide, brings the 26 stories to life, with a range of fun interactive literacy activities.

Hear the stories read aloud, both the long version and the less able reader version, whilst following the words on the screen, or play the 'Letter Jumble' game with its accompanying road safety messages.

Website (www.a-zoftraffic.co.uk):

To inform teachers and road safety professionals of the resources available, with suggested uses and useful links.