

Getting influencing the key decision makers in schools down PAT.

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Abstract

The Principals and Traffic (PAT) Project is an innovative strategy currently being implemented in Victoria to encourage schools to include Traffic Safety Education (TSE) in their curriculum. The PAT project is lead by the Victorian Department of Education, Employment and Training (DEET) with significant support from the key road safety agencies. The PAT project aims to raise TSE awareness of principals in all schools during 2001/2002 by providing targetted presentations by their leading colleagues on the need for TSE, the availability of resources and support for curriculum implementation. The project also allows for the collection of hard data on TSE teaching in schools and feedback on schools' needs. The paper describes and considers the latest findings on the resources developed, methods used to influence principals, the initial outcomes and follow-up requirements. The paper presents how the PAT Project explores new ways to approach schools that result in greater imprimatur to establish sustainable, appropriate TSE within school programs.

Keywords

Principal, Traffic Safety Education, Clusters

Introduction

Getting schools to voluntarily include and maintain Traffic Safety Education (TSE) in their curriculum is neither an easy nor a simple task. Identifying whom, in the first instance, to approach in the school is neither an easy nor a simple task. Having curriculum advice from an outsider accepted and adopted by a school is neither an easy nor a simple task.

The Principals and Traffic (PAT) Project aims to address all these situations by empowering leaders in schools to inform each other about the value, rationale and support for TSE in schools.

Principals and Traffic (PAT) Project

The focus audience is all principals as the key decision makers in Victorian schools to consider including Traffic Safety Education in their school curriculum.

Principals will be addressed statewide through principal clusters. There are 30-50 Principal clusters across all sectors (Government, Catholic and Independent); exact numbers and locations will be determined with the assistance of departmental regions. Principal clusters are usually long term groups that can last from 2-20 years. Principal clusters are locally created and run by principals on the basis of common interests, geographical convenience, district location, feeder school arrangements, educational priority areas and the like.

The Learning and Teaching Innovation Division of DEET manages and co-ordinates the project. DEET has established a working party/advisory group with representatives from VicRoads, Transport Accident Commission, Victoria Police, the department of Infrastructure, Royal automobile Club of Victoria, Principals' associations and Regional Principal Consultants. The advisory group provides support and guides all aspects of the project, including development of materials, selection and training of presenters and implementation across principal cluster groups.

A video for principal audiences, outlining the rationale and debunking the blockers for inclusion of TSE in the school curriculum, has been developed. The video uses principals, parents and students to provide testimonials of how schools have faced and resolved issues by the inclusion of TSE in their curriculum. The video is intended for use as part of the presentation to principal clusters. DEET also manages the development of the video.

A power point presentation has been developed into which the video has been embedded. The power point presentation provides the slideshow that Leading Principal Presenters will use in addressing principal cluster groups.

The presentation will contain the slide show, handouts and presenter's notes. DEET manages the development of the presentation.

The selection of presenters to the cluster groups, Leading Principal Presenters (LPP), is crucial to the success of the program. Their colleagues should see LPPs as leaders amongst their peers. After advice from Regional Principal Consultants, Principal associations and VicRoads and DEET regions, DEET has initially invited selected principals (15) to take on the role to present to principal clusters they know and belong to within their own regions. VicRoads regional co-ordinators could assist presenters at the cluster meetings, because their role now includes influencing key decision-makers in schools. The guiding criteria for invitation to be an LPP is:

- ?? the commitment of the presenter to TSE in school programs
- ?? the credibility/reputation of the presenter amongst principals in the region
- ?? the availability of the presenter.

9 LPPs from across the state were trained in the initial program in August this year. The training seminar aimed to:

- ?? familiarize presenters with the video and the PowerPoint presentation
- ?? explore with presenters the context and nature of the presentation
- ?? develop and agree on strategies for coverage of all principal clusters.

The 9 LPPs will deliver presentations over term 4. Feedback from their presentations will inform further refinement of the presentations themselves and additional training of LPPs late in 2001.

LPPs are provided with support for school and staff PD and resources and funding for travel costs where distances over 150 km are involved. A few LPPs have asked for CRT and course costs for staff attending TSE professional development and a new TSE resource as sufficient recompense.

A valuable part, and potentially a strategic tool for TSE planning in general, of the project includes database development and maintenance. The database could be developed to be accessed on-line by designated members of all the road safety agencies that support schools. SOFWeb and the Project Manager responsible for TSE within DEET have explored and confirmed the capabilities of developing a modified version of the existing IdeaBank on-line database used in DEET's curriculum area (URL – <http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/ideabank>). DEET will develop the database and in conjunction with VicRoads will manage the ongoing input of data and report extraction. At the presentations principals will be asked to complete a brief form indicating:

- ?? details of the TSE contact person in their school
- ?? whether or not the principal wishes any TSE assistance in the school
- ?? the level(s), type(s) and resource(s) used for TSE in the school.

This information will be entered into the database and VicRoads Regional Co-ordinators in conjunction with TSE Network Leaders will determine follow-up.

The project is lead by DEET and jointly funded with VicRoads and the TAC.

Intended Outcomes

LPPs will complete delivery of presentations to all principal clusters in all sectors by the end of 2002.

- ≠≠ Continuous update of a database of schools with TSE and an ongoing consistent measure of the level of TSE in schools
- ≠≠ Increased demand by schools for:
 - ?? TSE programs and resources
 - ?? TSE learning and teaching support.
- ≠≠ All Principal clusters groups awareness of TSE raised

Evaluation

The project will be evaluated both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Effectiveness of the project may be reflected in local increase in demand for TSE products and programs and TSE PD Leader learning and teaching support as well as in the levels of TSE in schools. Efficiency of the project may be indicated by better statewide coverage of TSE support for all schools, coverage of all principal clusters in all sectors and by the type of relevant TSE programs in the database developed.

Performance indicators for presenters may include:

- ?? the no. of presentations made
- ?? database information of principal cluster schools submitted
- ?? direct feedback from principal clusters.

Conclusion

The PAT Project ensures that leaders in schools are talking to and assisting other leaders in schools about TSE. The PAT Project is a top down approach to curriculum change, but assisted from within school organisation. The PAT Project complements bottom up approaches already operating at the local levels.