

# Transport as a context for encouraging skilled and active citizenship

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**The Safe System approach to road safety is used as a context for active citizenship in the NZ Transport Agency’s education resources.**

## Strengths-based curriculum

Any action intended to enhance the common good can be construed as an act of citizenship. To develop democratic imagination, motivation and involvement (Hayward 2012), students need a context for these actions in which they have a voice and feel they belong, matter and can make a difference.

NZ Transport Agency education resources enable students to contribute to a safer road network, through seeking community-based solutions. This aligns with the NZ Curriculum vision for young people as active participants and contributors to the well-being of New Zealand.

The resources take a “strengths-based” approach to developing knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours. In this viewpoint, every student has personal resources to imagine and manage safe outcomes for themselves and others. Alternatives are less effective – arousing fear appears to be less critical than helping young people understand how they are vulnerable and then learning coping strategies to stay safe. (Lewis, Watson, Tay and White 2007).

## The road as a commons

When the road is framed as a commons, students can develop deeper, more flexible perspectives of citizenship. All students are road users and have personal experience of why road use must be fair. They have an authentic model for citizenship embedded in their own experience; they have agency. The big idea for students is that all people using roads are precious so we need to think and act together to create a safe system.

The Official New Zealand Road Code and the Official New Zealand Code for Cyclists can be introduced as guidelines and rules on how to work together for safer journeys. The agency’s primary resources and secondary literacy and numeracy resource do just this.

## Safer Journeys: a broad context

The New Zealand Government’s Safe System approach offers educators a broad contemporary social issue for learning about, for and with citizenship. The Safer Journeys strategy is based on four principles, which provide valuable contexts for learning.

Principle	Learning example
Human beings make mistakes, crashes are inevitable	Describe, explain, analyse and evaluate mistakes that make crashes inevitable
The human body has a limited ability to withstand crash forces	Explore ways to manage forces on the human body in a crash
System designers and road users share responsibility so death or serious injury do not result	Demonstrate strategies for road users and system designers to work together to manage crash forces
A whole-of-system approach is needed	Demonstrate ways for working together in a whole-of-system approach

## Exploring citizenship

The NZ Curriculum principle of future focus can mean preparing students for future roles by describing citizenship, legal rights and political order (declarative knowledge). It may also mean providing opportunities to experience and demonstrate skilled and active citizenship (functioning knowledge or performance). Both approaches require a series of learning experiences that bring in ideas, relate ideas and extend ideas (constructive alignment using SOLO Taxonomy).

Both approaches feature in Transport Agency resources. Teaching about citizenship: *describing* acts of citizenship, *explaining* the techniques of citizenship, *explaining* the purposes of citizenship. Teaching *with* citizenship: *working* for the common good, students taking action in the context of safer journeys.

Learning outcomes can be mapped against citizenship types (see Westheimer and Kahne):

*Personally responsible*: act responsibly, obey rules and laws, volunteer.

*Participatory*: skilled and active work for the common good, effective collaboration.

*Justice-orientated*: seek social justice, equity, human rights and moral rightness, skilled action for social change.

See examples by school level in the table below.

### Effective learning design

Issues of active citizenship extend beyond the social sciences; they can be explored, experienced and demonstrated at any level including NCEA, and for any key competency, any value and through any learning area.

Transport Agency resources use SOLO Taxonomy to make the level of complexity of learning tasks and success criteria visible to students. This builds versatility and autonomy. As pedagogical activism, it helps prepare students for more challenging, self-directed, collaborative research and knowledge production when they tussle with “wicked problems” for safer journeys in their local communities.

In this way the curriculum resources allow us to re-think school; to see local schools as places where the community can go to find out things about local transport and safer journeys.

We should ensure the problems (or challenges) students focus on provide opportunities for sustained and active citizenship; that these have the potential to move students past the honeymoon period of initial engagement, into behaviours where enhancing the common good becomes “the way we do things around here”. As educators, we must address barriers that may frustrate their initial efforts.

### Assessing if we’ve made a difference

It has not been easy to measure changes in student learning about skilled and active citizenship.

An important part of the resources comprises the measures to assess prior knowledge, capabilities, attitudes and behaviours and measures to monitor and evaluate any changes. These include SOLO differentiated self-assessment rubrics.

The New Zealand Government’s Safe System approach provides a context when designing learning for skilled and active citizenship. Road safety education and building democratic imagination matter. Also important are our efforts to improve student knowledge, capabilities, attitudes and behaviours to achieve safer journeys for all road users.

Downloads: [www.education.nzta.govt.nz](http://www.education.nzta.govt.nz)

### References

- Biggs, J. and Collis, K. (1982). *Evaluating the Quality of Learning: The SOLO Taxonomy*.
- Hayward, B. (2012). *Children, Citizenship & Environment: Nurturing a democratic imagination in a changing world*.
- Lewis, I.M., Watson, B., Tay, R. and White, K.M. (2007). The role of fear appeals in improving driver safety: A review of the effectiveness of fear-arousing (threat) appeals in road safety advertising. *International Journal of Behavioral and Consultation Therapy* 3(2).
- Westheimer, J. and Kahne, J. (2004). *Educating the “Good” Citizen: Political choices and pedagogical goals*. American Political Science Association

Student at...	Personally responsible citizenship	Participatory citizenship	Justice-oriented citizenship
Primary school	Acts responsibly when walking to school.	Helps organise a class buddy system for new students walking to school.	Explores why we need “buddy system” to keep safe on local roads, takes action to change other factors.
Middle school	Acts responsibly when waiting for and using school buses.	Joins school council, lobbies for improved supervision and monitoring of student behaviour on buses.	Explores why we need to supervise student behaviour on buses, takes some action to change the underlying causes.
Secondary school	Adopts a “sort it and report it” approach to unsafe road use by others.	Contributes to student-led social media campaign on road safety.	Explores why youth road crash statistics are high, takes some action to change systems or structures that contribute to this.