



Title: “It makes you feel how it is”. An evaluation study of “S’Cool to be Safe: On the Road” - a Theatre-in-Health Education project

Authors: Dr Jennifer McWhirter with Corrie Pegg and Karen Charles

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<http://www.rospa.com/roadsafety/info/scool.pdf> (accessed July 15th 2010)

SCS topic headings: Travel Safety, Personal Safety, Safety of Vulnerable Groups

This document is a REPORT of an effective intervention project.

Summary of the intervention’s aim

‘On the Road’ is school-based intervention project for pupils aged 9-11 years devised and delivered by a Theatre in Health Education (TIHE) company called ‘Catalyst’. The project was but one in a three-year programme with a different TIHE programme each year. The overarching aims and objectives of this series of TIHE projects were to:

- provide an interactive learning experience to assist Key Stage Two (pupils) develop their knowledge, skill and understanding of attitudes needed in order to assess and manage risk
- reduce the number of accidents and casualties.

The programme was funded by Toyota, designed and managed by RoSPA. Local Authority Road Safety Officers targeted the schools in their areas to receive the programme.

The programme evaluated in this study is ‘On the Road’ and there is a detailed programme outline in Appendix 4 of the document. ‘On the Road’ is a forum theatre production based on a multi-layered scenario, taking into account accident statistics and developmental characteristics for the age group. The programme has a specific focus on road safety but also includes references to derelict buildings, misbehaviour and peer pressure: factors which are known to be associated with risk taking and risk perception for pupils in Key Stage 2.

‘On the Road’ aimed to address the aims of the overall project by:

- Helping children to explore what hazards pose a risk to their safety, and how risk can be eliminated, reduced or managed
- Exploring behaviour that contributes to, or reduces risk
- Enabling children to explore reasons why people take risks
- Equipping children with the skills needed to resist peer group influence and individual justification to take unnecessary risk
- Placing risk and safety within the wider context of children’s lifestyles.

Outcomes

This evaluation did not attempt to evaluate the long term outcomes of the programme in terms of accident reduction, but focused on the intended learning outcomes incorporated in the first aim: to help children develop their knowledge, skill and understanding of attitudes needed in order to assess and manage risk.

A thorough context about Theatre in Health Education is presented whereby a comprehensive literature review is made on the reported and perceived pros and cons of undertaking, evaluating and about the impact of TIHE activities with young people. All sources are referenced.

To summarise the TIHE practice of the ‘On the Road’ programme (page 3):

- Theatre in Health Education has become a popular approach to raising awareness of health and safety issues. TIHE differs from drama as an educational tool in Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and from the use of video, whether specifically devised for health education/health promotion or using clips from popular TV programmes
- In TIHE the performance is frequently supported by interactive workshops, facilitated by the performers, or by various techniques also used in drama teaching such as hot-seating, where participants can question the actors whilst they remain in character
- TIHE provides an opportunity for development of the language of risk, thorough articulation of questions for the characters, development of scenarios and group discussion. The objectives of TIHE are often less concerned with imparting factual knowledge than with the exploration of social and personal responses to sensitive issues
- The educational aims and objectives of the performance are usually made explicit in materials available to funding bodies and participating schools. Such materials may include suggestions for preparatory or follow up work to be carried out by teachers with pupils at a later date.

The report itself details in-depth discussion regarding feedback gathered from staff and pupils through a range of different methods (explained in later sections of this evaluation). Importantly and usefully, the report's discussion section (pages 25-28) relates the programmes specific findings to the wider literature and findings that already exist on TIHE and compare results and conclusions. The selected outcomes emphasised below are a summary of what six teachers who had observed their classes during the performance and workshops were interviewed.

- Advantages of TIHE over other teaching methods included having fun, and having an opportunity and alternative way for pupils to express themselves. TIHE was also seen as developing confidence in the pupils.
- Teachers' perceptions were that pupils were rehearsing well-learned rules in more complex and challenging situations than can usually be provided in school
- They perceived many benefits of pupils being able to work in this way including having the opportunity to see an incident from different points of view
- Teachers also recognised many key features of TIHE identified in previous studies (highlighted in the document's literature review) such as working with trusted outsiders, developing pupils' confidence and reflective skills (page 25)
- Other teachers spoke of the advantages of having an outsider to stimulate interest and motivate the pupils
- One teacher expressed the view that TIHE would not be effective as the only method for teaching about road safety. Another teacher felt TIHE provided opportunities for reinforcement of messages already learned
- What teachers perceived as 'safety education' seemed to be a lower priority than education about drugs and alcohol or bullying.
- One teacher perceived road safety education to be more appropriate for younger pupils, reflecting what had already been done in school through contacts with other agencies e.g. the police while another suggested that safety was the norm for younger children
- Some teachers suggested that safety education may be more reactive than proactive.

Summary of evaluation conclusions

The project was considered successful in reinforcing road safety messages and in providing opportunities for pupils to try out situations from different points of view. To enable pupils of this age to develop a deeper understanding of the relative probability of different hazards causing harm could require a wider programme specifically targeted at this issue.

Summary conclusions include:

- **Teachers** felt that the pupils were able to rehearse well-learned rules in more complex and challenging situations than can usually be provided in school. They felt it was an appropriate way to reinforce important messages about road safety

- **Teachers** also recognised the benefits of the participatory nature of TIHE (“It is interactive and also making it a real experience... it’s not something they are just having to visualise, it is something they are going to act”).
- **Pupils** enjoyed the experience and remembered details of the performance and of their involvement. Pupils who had experienced the programme were more aware of the association between road accidents and risk.
In this respect **pupils** appeared to be able to apply the risk assessment process in relation to a familiar context. However, pupils were best able to talk about risk when they could use concrete examples, either from their own experience or fictionalised in the form of the draw and write activity
- Neither experienced or inexperienced **pupils** were able to identify or articulate the steps in the risk assessment process, a stage which would be necessary if they were to encounter an unfamiliar hazard or set of circumstances. They were also unable to construct a meaning of risk which incorporated ideas of probability as well as severity of outcome. There are many possible reasons for this. It is possible that there are developmental barriers which prevent pupils of this age group from understanding abstract concepts, or related linguistic difficulties which make it more difficult for them to explain what risk means
- Each **stakeholder** identified how the TIHE programme related to the aims of their organisation.
 - The aims of RoSPA were described as ‘improving quality of life, acting as a powerful influence for accident prevention’.
 - The aims of the theatre company were to ‘inspire and excite young people and use the arts to enable them to make sense of the world they live in’.
 - The aims of Toyota corresponded to the need to be perceived as a good ‘corporate citizen’, through promoting the safety and well being of children.

Both Toyota and RoSPA, had a national focus to their work. Road safety officers acted as local agents, identifying schools which would benefit from the TIHE experience. RSOs were each asked to target 2 schools in their local authority where accidents statistics suggested there was a high risk for pupils in the target group.

How the evaluation gathered information for findings and conclusions

Interviews, either with individuals or groups provided an opportunity to explore the relevance and meaning of their experiences relevant to TIHE. A number of adult stakeholders were consulted by interview as part of the preparation for this study. These included:

- Staff at RoSPA road safety unit involved in the commissioning and organisation of the TIHE programme

- A member of Toyota responsible for funding the study
- Road Safety officers, involved in identifying participating schools across the UK
- The director of Catalyst, the theatre company responsible for devising and delivering the TIHE programme
- Teachers in participating schools.

Six teachers who had observed their classes during the performance and workshops were interviewed. The interviews with adult stakeholders sought to establish the aims and objectives of the project from their perspective and the relationship of these aims and objectives to the various organisational aims.

These interviews also helped to clarify the roles of the different organisations in commissioning, devising and managing the project. Interviews with teachers also focussed specifically on the opportunities presented by the TIHE to develop pupils' understanding of risk. Interview schedules for teachers can be found at Appendix 1 of the document.

Pupils were involved in the evaluation by taking part in focus group discussions (see Appendix 2) and in a draw and write activity (Appendix 3). Focus groups were conducted by an interviewer and an observer, with small, single sex, groups of pupils as recommended by Vaughn, Schumm and Sinagub (1996).

Focus Groups

The aim of the focus groups was to explore the pupils' understanding and language of risk. The focus groups began with pupils describing their pictures, and moved on to put them in the position of experts on risk and how they could learn more about risk. They also spoke about what risk meant to them and whether risk was always 'bad'. Finally pupils were asked to think of a name for the performance which had been the starting point for the day's activities (page 19).

Draw and write technique

A total of 160 experienced and 159 inexperienced pupils aged 9-11 participated in the draw and write activity and 72 experienced and 78 inexperienced pupils from 8 schools took part in the focus groups.

In draw and write investigations participants are asked open ended questions which gradually focus in on specific aspects of a health related topic. Responses are not predetermined as in a questionnaire, but response categories can be derived from the data using an iterative process. The number of responses which fall into each category may then be counted.

Ethical issues

Pupils and teachers were informed about the reasons for the study and asked if they were willing to participate. It is recognised that it is difficult for pupils to respond negatively to a request from a teacher or other authority figure. However, the research tasks and focus groups were carried out by researchers from RoSPA, who

emphasised the importance of pupils being able to withdraw from participation at any stage. All responses were anonymised.

**Further details about the SCS evaluation of this report are available on request.
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