National Transportation Safety Board Forum
Driver Education and Training

October 28-29, 2003
Washington, D.C.

David C. Huff
MONTANA

The Role of Driver Education

Does United States society prefer a driving culture characterized by survival of the fittest or a culture marked by civil adherence to agreed norms? Driving is a very complex social/cultural system. As such, solutions must span the matrix of the system.[1] Where does driver education fit in?

Driver Education/Training is the foundation upon which a safe driving culture and crash reduction interventions are built. How can crash reduction efforts be successful if individuals do not know what is expected nor possess the skills needed to perform the expected behavior? And if the beginning driver has been immersed in a less than desirable driving culture since the time he or she was aware, how can it be expected to quickly overcome that individual's predisposition to an inferior culture (Insurance Institute for Highway Safety [IIHS], 1999)?[2]

Therefore, solutions for the necessary educational foundation must address both driver education for teens and lifelong education for the parents and neighbors who define and perpetuate the culture. Most importantly, effective educational efforts cannot be engineered and delivered until we, as a society, agree upon the desired knowledge, skills and behaviors—the model driver. Further, building a new foundation for a safe driving culture through education and training is a long-term commitment for and with a long-term solution. Up to this point most highway safety measures have focused on relatively short term but quick-return fixes like installing airbags and straightening out corners.

Montana is one of the few states that still invest in foundation building through driver education in the public school system. While newer materials and techniques have been developed for building stronger foundations, the Montana program still remains somewhat tied to older technologies. The program has changed little since 1968 when it first began providing financial assistance to public schools for driver education. The one major deviation has been the unfortunate migration from in-school instruction to after-school and summer programs. Tighter school schedules, increased costs and reduced funding are the primary reasons for this shift. In many cases, wages for after school instruction are less than during the school day.

[1] "…it should come as no surprise that the unhealthiness of our world today is in direct proportion to our inability to see it as a whole. Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes" (Senge, 2000, p. 68).
[2] "Because learning involves transfer from previous experiences, one's existing knowledge can also make it difficult to learn new information" (National Research Council [NRC], 2000 p. 70).

Montana's Driver Education Program (See Appendix A.)

- Students
  - Can obtain a license at age 16 without driver education.
  - Can obtain a license at age 15 after successfully completing a state approved driver education program.
  - Must be at least 14 ½ years old at the completion of the approved driver education class.
  - Approximately 78% of eligible students obtain driver education.
- Teachers
  - Must have a current Montana public education teacher license.
  - Must have a minimum of 8 semester credits of traffic safety education and working on completing a 20-semester credit minor/endorsement.
  - Must have a valid driver license with an acceptable driving record.
  - Approximately 303 teachers are actively teaching traffic education.
  - The vast majority of traffic education teachers (278) teach other subjects and are therefore part-time traffic educators.
- Program
  - Must consist of at least 60 hours of structured learning experiences, six of which must be in-traffic behind-the-wheel instruction. Up to 12 hours of in-vehicle observation can count toward the hours. Twelve hours of simulation may be substituted for two hours of behind-the-wheel instruction.
  - Classroom and behind-the-wheel instruction must be integrated or concurrent.
  - Must consist of at least 25 student contact days. Behind-the-wheel instruction must consist of at least 6 student contact days.
  - Must be based upon the Montana driver education curriculum guide.
  - One hundred forty seven of the 166 high school districts provide driver education. Reasons for the lower number are some smaller rural schools combine for one class, or one year the program ends in June and the next year it ends in July making it appear like the school did not run a program in the second year (fiscal/program years run from July 1 until June 30).
- Funding
  - Average statewide cost is $290.29 per student.
  - State administration and reimbursement to schools is funded by a percent of the driver license fees. In 2003, reimbursement to schools amounted to $73.66 per student. (See Appendix B.)
  - Schools make up the difference by charging students and/or through other revenue streams available to the school district.

Strengths

- Established standards for programs, teachers and curriculum.
- State staff for administration of driver education.
- Active professional development for teachers through the Office of Public Instruction, higher education, and the Montana Traffic Education Association.

- Higher than normal required program hours.[3]
- State funding support.
- Positive professional culture amongst traffic educators.
- A positive inter-disciplinary professional culture exits between enforcement, engineering, education and ancillary groups (health and prevention).
- A Cooperative Driver Testing Program whereby driver education teachers are trained and authorized to administer the knowledge and skill test on behalf of the state driver license bureau.

Weaknesses

- State fiscal support represents 26 percent of actual costs. Ten to 15 years ago that percentage was 50 to 60 percent of actual costs. (See appendix B.)
- High costs to parents. Costs range from nothing (in smaller rural districts) to $340 in Missoula (Montana's second largest community).
- There are no full-time traffic education professors at any Montana institution of higher education. Adjunct staff teach all traffic education specific classes.
- A driver license exam that is woefully inadequate to assess driver readiness and is not aligned to learner goals. (It is the same for all states).
- Driving culture that dismisses importance of stronger measures proven to reduce crashes, i.e., open container, primary seat belt and graduated driving license. Pressure continues to legalize even younger drivers for ranch and farm work.
- Ability to obtain driving license at age 15 with driver education and 16 without driver education.
- Advanced driving schools for experienced drivers reach only a fraction of adult drivers.

Compared to some states, Montana is in pretty good shape. Missouri is one of several states that has no state driver education staff, and hence no state administration of programs and collection of data. Are there driver education programs in these states? It's understood there are, but beyond that no one knows much. With so much disparity in state programs, and with huge lapses in data collection, it is nearly impossible to gather sufficient information to develop a comprehensive national picture of driver education.

The Challenge

The author is on record as stating that driver education in the United States is deplorable (Appendix E). Focus is usually on the unacceptable teen crash rates (see Montana data in Appendix C) but the issue of this forum is driver education—is it all it can be? The answer is no; not in any state. The question the author asks himself about this discipline is, "What will it take for individual states to adequately address the novice driver safety challenges?" The answer to this question is the same answer to what it will take for Montana to adopt a graduated driver license program consistent with the recommendations of the NTSB (2002). But first, what are the major obstacles?

[3] Most state programs are still based on a 30-hour classroom and six hours behind-the-wheel instruction model designed in the mid 1900s.

- ***We don't admit to or understand the problem.*** We underestimate the significance of those things with which we are most familiar. Most Americans drive. Most drivers think they are fairly good drivers. At Montana's advanced driving school, the author consistently hears from seasoned, experienced drivers that they had no idea they had so many bad habits. This translates to state legislatures that fail to provide the support, policy and resources needed to provide the educational foundation—especially when dollars are tight, as we have seen in recent years. Effective and credible advocacy ceases in the absence of educated, informed driver education leadership in all states.

- ***The normal refining dynamics of free enterprise are absent***. It is the author's observation that the driver education/training business suffers from a lack of timely and healthy feedback. 1) Customers are not very knowledgeable consumers when it comes to driver education, and 2) driver education, as it is today, is not a return business venture. Hence driving schools do not experience dissatisfied customers taking their business elsewhere. This is true for public and private driving schools. Public schools, however, are more accustomed to submitting to standards as a means of improvement. When standards and necessary monitoring are lacking the same deleterious effects prevail for both venues. Without standards and monitoring the only real feedback is the driver license test, and teaching to this inadequate assessment of driver readiness has become the norm of success.

To overcome and improve educational efforts, there must exist;

- A definition of **model driver** in terms of knowledge, skill, behavior and habits (student competencies/performances);
- A learner centered **curriculum** that pays "…careful attention to the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs that learners bring to the educational setting" and is designed and aligned with the expectations of a model driver. It must addresses content, methods and formative student assessments "congruent with the learning goals" (NRC, pp. 133, 140)[4];
- Standards for **teacher preparation** programs that fully prepare instructors to model and teach the knowledge, skill, behavior and habits needed, and which includes requirements for ongoing professional development. "Both subject-matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge are important for expert teaching because knowledge domains have unique structures and methods of inquiry associated with them" (NRC, p. 242);
- A **licensing process** that measures driver readiness as defined by the model driver (summative assessment [NRC, p. 140]) and employs a process that facilitates the safest means to merge the learning driver into mainstream driving (i.e., the Graduated Driver License and a defined and appropriate parental component);
- **Program standards** that apply to every driver education/training program/school;
- **State oversight and management** standards;
- **Accountability** measures and standards (feedback loop) that
    - Encourage quality;
    - Require adherence to standards; and
    - Answers the questions

[4] "Without carefully considering the knowledge that students' bring to the learning situation, it is difficult to predict what they will understand about new information that is presented to them" (NRC, p. 136).

        - are teachers prepared to teach what is needed;
        - do they teach it;
        - did the students get it?[5]
    - Employ appropriate corrective measures and/or consequences if standards are not met.
- **Lifelong**
    - Learning opportunities for adult drivers; and
    - Periodic assessment of driver knowledge, skill, behavior and habits as defined by the model driver.
- **Other education based measures** that contribute to reducing injury and death on the highways.

The following and last bullet answers the question posed in this section, "What will it take for individual states to adequately address the novice driver safety challenges."

- **Federal Policy and fiscal support** that ensures that each state participates and facilitates approved, standardized programs for every eligible teen and assures the eligible teens complete the program before being fully licensed.

The National Solution—An Interstate License

In order to implement the above, there needs to be a completely new model to license drivers. Some things are so broken they cannot be fixed and need to be replaced. For this model, the author proposes the present commercial driver license model be improved and expanded to all drivers. Any driver who wants to have a license that is valid in states other that his or her state of residence must obtain an **interstate license.** For those who do not want or need to cross state lines they can obtain an **intrastate license**. Federal policy will govern the standards for the interstate license and state policy will govern the intrastate license.[6]

Novice and/or New Drivers

In this model, if a new driver wishes to acquire an **interstate license**, he or she must;

- Meet age requirements set by the national standard;
- Pass an approved driver education class that meets national standards of best practices;
- Participate in a graduated driver license process that meets national standards of best practices;
- Pass a rigorous driver readiness assessment based on the model driver.

Experienced Drivers

In addition, if an existing driver wishes to keep his or her existing interstate license, he or she must submit to a **periodic re-assessment** of their knowledge and skills. The periodic cycle

[5] "Accomplished teachers … assess their own effectiveness with their student" (NRC, p. 242).

[6] Some may question the federal government's authority to do this? In this present age, regular citizens crossing state lines have become an important part of commerce. Many businesses and state economies are dependent upon the out-of-state customer whether it is business or pleasure; this translates to interstate commerce. In addition, if society is to embrace a systems-wide solution to traffic injuries and fatalities the solution must ensure the drivers are adequately prepared for the diverse driving conditions and challenges they will encounter in the various states. And finally, homeland security is dependent upon a quick, accurate and efficient means of individual identity; an improved interstate license system will go a long way to helping with that challenge. The author suggests the time has come for the federal government to establish uniform standards for driver education and licensing and that legal authority to do so does exists.

should be appropriate and determined by the frequency needed to update drivers on changes in vehicles and the highway transportation system changes and to assure adequate retention of desired driving knowledge, skills and behaviors.

This periodic re-assessment is critical in assuring appropriate lifelong learning. These assessments must be based on the model driver and be age appropriate. The test must assess driving scenarios and conditions found in every state, assess knowledge, safe driving habits and skills. Such a periodic assessment will stimulate opportunities for lifelong learning, which will build a more appropriate knowledge and skill foundation for the whole population and thereby fuel a shift toward a safer driving culture.

Senior Drivers

Much interest has emerged relative to the abilities of aging drivers. The need to deal with this issue continues to increase as the baby boom generation enters their silver years. If an appropriate driver readiness test is developed it can be used to determine whether a senior has sufficient skills for the many various driving conditions experienced in the various states. If the skills are deficient, the assessment will guide the states in deciding whether an intrastate license with restrictions is appropriate.

The Key—An Appropriate Assessment Tool

The reason most states provide license renewals without periodic assessments is the cost associated with re-assessing the entire driving population during the period of the renewal cycle. This hurdle must be overcome. It is therefore proposed that this assessment be **computer simulator** based and administered at approved third party license test stations. Many professions and trades depend upon this third party assessment process now. The results of the assessment can be transmitted electronically to the state driver license bureau.

Personal computer based simulators have come of age and their present capabilities are ready for the assessment challenge this model proposes. On the horizon, the staff of DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency), visionaries of the Internet, using off-the-shelf computer components are working on computers that can train judgment and cognitive performance under stress (American Society for Training and Development, 2003, p. 48). When this is a reality, these tools will make appropriate supplements to a well-trained live instructor in novice driver training and a focused refresher for the lifelong learner.

Personal computer based simulators designed to provide assessment of driver readiness can assess knowledge, skill in all kinds of driving conditions, eye movements to ensure appropriate vision skills, judgment, adherence to defensive driving principals and just about anything determined to be an appropriate component of the model driver. Further, if it is determined that different age drivers have different driving challenges, the computer can provide an age-appropriate assessment. In real-time it can also adjust the questions based on the skill level of the person being tested to provide a more precise measurement of their abilities, and if remediation is required, provide a list of needed improvements.[7] Basing these in approved third party testing facilities will keep the resource burden at the driver license office minimal.

[7] These assertions are based on the author's general knowledge of computerized testing and trade-show driving simulators.

Conclusion

Montana's driver education program is a commendable program when viewed against many state programs. However, present day American society is capable of so much more. Most of the research studies done to date are assessing a driver education system that is archaic and rife with inconsistencies. These studies should and must not be the basis of determining the value of education in the complex matrix of highway safety. Indeed, it is futile to expect significant crash reductions on our highways without a knowledgeable, skilled and safety-committed driving populace. It takes key leaders, such as yourself who have the keen sense and vision to understand this important fundamental concept, to stimulate the revolution needed to shape a civil and safe driving culture. That culture is only possible with the right foundation and that foundation is a knowledge and skill base obtained through education and training. The proposed licensing model will provide the platform to establish uniform standards for driver education and training and the tools needed in this era to build that foundation.

References

American Society for Training and Development. (2003, October) *T+D. "SimsSimsSims".* Alexandria, VA.

Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. (1999, July 17) *Status report.* Volume 34 Number 7. Arlington, VA.

National Research Council. (2000). *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school.* Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

National Transportation Safety Board (2002, November 8) Safety recommendation H-02-31 and –32. http://www.ntsb.gov/Recs/letters/2002/H02_31_32.pdf

Senge, P.M. (2000). *The fifth discipline.* New York: Currency Doubleday.

Appendix A

Office of Public Instruction
Linda McCulloch, Superintendent
PO Box 202501
Helena, MT 59620-2501

Statewide Summary of Montana's 2001-02Traffic Education Programs*

(From the period of July 1, 2001– June 30, 2002)

PROGRAM ENROLLMENT:	
166	high school districts were **eligible** to offer a traffic education program.
147	high school districts **offered** a state-approved traffic education program.
13,004	students were **eligible** to enroll in traffic education.
9,999	students **completed** traffic education.
WHEN OFFERED:	
34	districts offered the program during **regular school hours**.
74	districts offered the program **after school hours**.
98	districts offered the program in the **summer**.
PROGRAM FEES:	
49	high school districts charged a **fee** during the **first semester; 65** during the **second semester**; and **96** during the **summer**. The **minimum** fee charged was **$20.00**. The **maximum** fee charged was **$340.00**. The **mode** fee charged was **$100.00**.
28	**plan**, for the upcoming school year and summer, to **increase the fee** charged students.
PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS:	
56	district **granted credit** for successful completion of traffic education.
132	districts **screened students** for visual acuity.
74	districts employed a traffic and safety education **coordinator and/or supervisor**.
72	districts offered **pedestrian** safety instruction in the elementary and middle schools.
99	districts offered **school bus rider** safety instruction in the elementary and middle schools.
76	districts offered **bicycle** safety instruction in the elementary and middle schools.
64	districts offered traffic education for **adult** beginners.
135	districts provided traffic education for **students with disabilities**.
132	districts taught an instructional unit on sharing the road with **motorcycles**.
142	districts emphasized and required the use of **seatbelts**.
138	districts used Montana's current Traffic Education **Curriculum Guide** for its high school program.
23	districts conducted **follow-up research** on student performance (violations/accidents).
143	districts taught an instructional unit on the effects of **alcohol/drug** use in driving.
82	districts involved **parents** in the Traffic Education program.
107	districts participated in the **Cooperative Driver Testing Program (CDTP)**.
71	districts utilized **computers** in their program.
102	districts used **OPI Web Site** to obtain traffic education information.
NUMBER OF TEACHERS AND RATES OF PAY:	
25	**full-time** teachers were employed.
278	**part-time** teachers were employed.
$12.00	per hour is the **minimum** rate paid.
$36.00	per hour is the **maximum** rate paid.
$15.00	per hour is the **mode** minimum rate paid.
$15.00	per hour is the **mode** maximum rate paid.
VEHICLES:	
296	**vehicles** were used in the program.
8	districts obtained their vehicles on a **free loan** basis.
10	districts obtained their vehicles on a **daily fee** basis.
58	districts obtained their vehicles on a **lease** or **rent** basis.
82	districts **owned** their vehicles.
1	**instructors owned** and provided vehicles.
2	districts used **other** means to obtain vehicles.
ACCIDENTS:	
11	traffic **accidents** occurred involving a student driver while in the traffic education vehicle.
0	persons were **killed**.
0	persons were **injure**d.
$15,239.97	**property damage** costs incurred.
COST PER PUPIL:	
$290.29	is the **average** per pupil cost. (District costs were partially offset by state reimbursement amounting to **$75.00**per pupil)

* This information was compiled from the 2001-02 Traffic Education Program Surveys completed by all high school districts conducting state-approved traffic education programs during the summer of 2001 and the school year 2001-02. It is regrettable that information from fiscal year 2002-2003 was still being collected and not available for this report. If you have questions, please contact David Huff at (406) 444-4432 or email at dhuff@state.mt.us.

Appendix B

Linda McCulloch, Superintendent
Office of Public Instruction
Traffic Education Programs
PO Box 202501
Helena MT 59620-2501
(406) 444-4432

Statewide Summary of the Traffic Education Funds
REIMBURSED MONTANA SCHOOLS
FOR HIGH SCHOOL TRAFFIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS

FISCAL YEAR	DOLLAR AMOUNT OF REIMBURSEMENT PAID	NO. OF STUDENTS PAID BY REIMBURSEMENT	% OF ELIGIBLE STUDENTS PARTICIPATING	AVERAGE SCHOOL COST PER PUPIL	PER PUPIL RATE PAID BY REIMBURSEMENT	% OF AVERAGE PER PUPIL COST PAID BY REIMBURSEMENT
1968-69	$53,265.00 66,507.22	9,140 3,591	NA	$64.48	$5.82 18.52	38%
1969-70	316,125.68	9,560	NA	73.00	33.06	45%
1970-71	344,862.92	10,632	NA	73.12	32.44	44%
1971-72	396,854.47	11,403	79%	76.17	34.80	46%
1972-73	486,978.40	12,847	87%	89.17	37.90	43%
1973-74	521,292.42	13,468	85%	84.50	38.70	46%
1974-75	564,193.78	13,083	84%	90.77	43.12	47%
1975-76	630,762.55	13,414	90%	104.62	47.02	45%
1976-77	723,541.58	13,405	89%	117.86	53.97	46%
1977-78	808,759.00	13,551	94%	127.45	59.68	47%
1978-79	864,987.00	12,130	89%	143.13	71.31	50%
1979-80	905,380.07	11,784	92%	153.26	76.82	50%
1980-81	906,044.73	10,655	88%	169.59	85.03	50%
1981-82	1,047,981.57	10,320	89%	184.55	101.55	55%
1982-83	1,169,235.84	10,108	89%	203.57	115.67	57%
1983-84	1,041,387.98	10,459	88%	203.69	99.57	49%
1984-85	1,092,754.03	10,774	89%	226.78	101.43	45%
1985-86	1,134,231.93	11,040	89%	213.25	102.73	48%
1986-87	1,146,730.97	10,808	96%	242.52	106.10	44%
1987-88	1,224,180.49	9,600	90%	235.43	127.52	54%
1988-89	1,199,999.69	9,909	94%	245.25	121.10	49%
1989-90	1,100,000.03	10,084	93%	237.22	109.08	46%
1990-91	1,386,280.00	9,902	87%	256.98	140.00	54%
1991-92	1,408,540.00	10,061	86%	272.34	140.00	51%
1992-93	1,240,195.00	10,567	87%	*189.67	117.36	62%
1993-94	1,238,580.12	12,246	96%	202.85	101.14	50%
1994-95	790,708.26	10,293	77%	190.24	76.82	40%
1995-96	961,784.95	10,745	77%	240.02	89.51	37%
1996-97	999,964.14	10,234	73%	251.78	97.71	39%
1997-98	999,914.16	10,676	78%	246.64	93.66	38%
1998-99	999,942.80	10,729	78%	249.35	93.20	37%
1999-00	1,000,000.00	10,497	78%	248.29	95.26	38%
2000-01	725,855.00	10,471	79%	251.25	69.32	28%
2001-02	750,000.00	9,999	77%	290.29	75.00	26%
2002-2003	723,000.00	9,816	**	**	73.66	**

*Beginning with the 1992-93 school year the formula used to calculate the Average School Cost Per Pupil was modified to provide a more accurate per pupil cost average.
**Unknown at time of NTSB report.

Appendix C

Montana Teen Crashes in 2002
Compiled by the Montana Highway Safety Office

Teens Killed and Injured

During 2002 in Montana, 37 teenagers (age 15 to 19) were killed and 1,976 were injured in traffic collisions. The death rate (persons killed per 10,000 population) was more than 1.75 times the rate for all ages, and the injury rate was more than 2.7 times the overall rate.

Collisions Rates by Age

Drivers age 15 to 19 had collisions rates 2.7 times the rate for all drivers. The rate of fatal crash involvement for teen drivers was more than 1.6 times that of all drivers. An average of one out of every eight teen drivers was in a crash in 2002.

Male and Female Drivers

During 2002, 54.8 percent of drivers age 15 to 19 in traffic crashes were males and 45.2 percent were females.

Light, Weather and Road Conditions

Over two-thirds (69.6 percent) of collisions occurred in daylight, 25.9 percent occurred during darkness and 4.5 percent occurred during dusk or dawn. The majority of crashes (54.1 percent) occurred between 12 noon and 7:00 p.m. Seven of every eight crashes (87.8 percent) occurred when there were no adverse weather conditions. Only 31.2 percent of crashes occurred where road surfaces were wet, snowy or icy.

Day of Week

Only 32 percent of the crashes with young drivers occurred on Friday and Saturday. But, 60 percent of the crashes involving a fatality occurred during these weekend days.

Five-Year Trends

Over the last five years (1998-2002), the fatal collision rate (fatal crashes per 10,000 licensed drivers) for drivers 20 and under in Montana has increased from 7.0 to 7.4 although it hit a high of 8.7 in 1999. The rate for total collisions for this age group has increased from 1190 in 1998 to 1290 in 2002.

National Data

Nationally, when driver fatality rates are calculated based on annual vehicle miles driven, NHTSA has found the following. Young drivers from 16 to 19 have fatality rates that are about four times higher than rates for 25-69 year old drivers.

Appendix D

Resolution
Adopted by ASSSDE
(Association of State Supervisors of Safety and Driver Education)
July 27, 2003

Whereas personal mobility is an integral aspect of contemporary society and necessary for an individual to fully benefit and contribute socially, educationally, economically, and recreationally;

And whereas in the cultures of contemporary North America, exclusive of cities with highly developed mass transit, personal mobility is primarily dependent upon the automobile;

And whereas the highway transportation systems of North America are complex systems providing mobility services to individuals, families, businesses, government and industry with continually increasing demands upon the systems;

And whereas the safe, orderly, and efficient movement of people, goods and services in the highway transportation system is dependent upon the vehicle operators being knowledgeable and skilled in driving and interacting with other drivers;

And whereas it is the role of public education in North America to prepare the youth of today with the knowledge and skills needed to fully contribute, benefit, and integrate into a highly educated, technical, and complex society;

And whereas the National Education Association (NEA), in its 1993 B-42 resolution stated that it "believes that fully funded classroom and behind-the-wheel driver education courses taught by a certified teacher should be part of the basic education of all its students" and "urges its affiliates to support legislation that requires these courses in the curriculum."

Therefore be it resolved that the Association of State Supervisors of Safety and Driver Education (ASSSDE) believes that fully funded classroom and behind-the-wheel driver education courses taught by a certified teacher should be part of the basic education of all students and urges its members to advocate and support legislation that requires courses in the public school curriculum.

Be it further resolved that the ASSSDE pass this resolution on to the American Driver And Traffic Safety Education Association (ADTSEA) for consideration of adoption as an ADTSEA resolution.

Be it further resolved that this resolution be posted on the ASSSDE web page and be forwarded to appropriate entities that could facilitate the widespread adoption of this policy.

Appendix E

WHERE IS DRIVER EDUCATION GOING?

David C. Huff[i], President
Association of State Supervisors of Safety and Driver Education (ASSSDE)

The current state of driver education in the United States of America is deplorable. We do not know where we are or where we are going.

This is a report on the condition of national driver education efforts. It should not be generalized to individual states. Some states are doing valiantly amidst unfair odds. These states should be supported and encouraged; they should not be cut back or eliminated because of poor reports about driver education in general.

In general, our line of sight (LOS[ii]) is blocked. We have no idea how many youth complete driver education in the United States, nor how it is delivered, nor who is delivering it. It has been years since a complete status report on driver education has been completed. State funding for driver education has suffered and as a result only a few states have a centralized and focused effort to attempt an adequate driver education program. State efforts are un-funded or under funded, and are fractured and increasingly incapable of addressing a solution. Some state efforts are in name only and provide no leadership and do not collect any data.

Our path of travel (POT[iii]) is unknown. Traffic education is presently designed to deliver knowledge and minimal skill, but we judge its effectiveness based on behavior (reduced crashes). We talk about life-long learning in traffic safety, but have no uniform and national mechanism in place to offer additional education to the experienced driver. We talk about the need for life-long safe driving habits, but continue to license new drivers based on a knowledge test that tests a fraction of what a driver needs to know, and assesses the skill of a driver based on ten minutes of observation in only one of the many driving conditions that exist (weather, light, etc.). It does not assess driver readiness based on experience, attitudes or behavior.

The way we introduce new drivers to the driving task can be compared to approving a new commercial airline pilot based on one 30-question knowledge test and completion of one successful takeoff and landing in only one weather condition. New drivers often encounter more people on the highways in a typical drive than one pilot assumes responsibility for in one flight.

The delivery vehicle of driver education is broken down and has no inspection criteria. There is no agreement federally or amongst states as to what constitutes the minimum expectations for completion of driver education other than passing the inadequate driver exam. Nor is there agreement as to what should be the minimum requirements for a driver education instructor. Recent and ongoing educational research provides us valuable tools to apply to this task, but efforts to adopt appropriate standards are stalled. The Highway Safety Standards of 1966 (4.4.4) called for model standards for driver education curriculum and teacher credentialing. Efforts to establish uniform standards in individual states have been thwarted as witnessed in the state of Washington where it was decided the needs of the state budget and small business outweighed

the needs of public safety[iv]. Model standards developed by the American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association (ADTSEA) have been submitted to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), but sources report that NHTSA does not plan to act upon the standards.

During each of the last six years of the Millennium, 43,000 or more people died on our highways. It is the single largest reason for death in people ages 1 to 34. It is higher than suicide, homicide, heart disease, or any other cause of death.

Highway fatalities are the number one public health issue in the United States. This number one public health issue is even more onerous for our youth. During year 2000, motor vehicle highway fatalities claimed 10,026 youth age 15 – 24. Their highway death rate of 16.0 is the highest of any age group; nearly double the next highest age group of 25-34[v].

We kill more youth on our highways than people were killed in the World Trade Tower/Pentagon terrorists attack. Our national responses to the terrorists' attacks were appropriate. Our national responses to the death on our highways are not.

Our public policy regarding new drivers is reprobate. We are like a dysfunctional alcoholic parent who regularly beats and abuses their spouse and children, yet no one in the family admits there is a problem, and therefore no interventions are made. Driver education and licensing practices require a strong and appropriate intervention or we will continue, as a nation, to abuse our youth and other highway users.

However, just as there is hope for a dysfunctional family, there can be hope for driver education. There are promising practices and policy directions that need to be recognized and supported, more fully developed, and integrated into a comprehensive program.

In recent years, state efforts to address the young driver problem have focused on the graduated driver license (GDL). This program places driving restriction upon the new driver until additional experience can be gained. Initial reports indicate significant reductions in the death rate of sixteen year olds.[vi] Most states have adopted some form of this program, but many fall short of the recommended design, implementing only some recommended measures. Additionally, there are reports that several state's, due to lack of resources, are failing to enforce parts of the law and are considering rolling back some measures of the law. This program has tremendous potential to assist in a goal of reduced crashes, but will not reach its full potential without appropriate support and a properly designed and administered educational component.

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IHHS) has stated "A good driver education course, emphasizing on-the-road driving, is an effective way to learn basic vehicle control skills. Extensive research indicates that high school driver education doesn't lead to lower crash involvement compared with other ways of learning to drive. Attitudes, decision-making skills, risk-taking tendencies, and other factors contribute in an important way to crashes and may not be affected much by driver education."[vii] This observation is based on our current driver education models and policies, which were designed over 30 years ago. The IHHS offers no constructive suggestions on improving the educational component. However, the National

Research Council has published a book on "How People Learn."[viii] Brain based research and other new findings offer promise for educational programs to overcome the challenges the IHHS has identified.

For instance, a 16 year old has no problem learning knowledge and skill, but because the cerebral cortex is not fully developed until age 22-25 years of age, we must rethink how we approach training good judgment. Judgment functions occur in the cerebral cortex[ix]. Education must not stop at the mastery of knowledge and skill. New technologies to teach driving are available. Those developed by Fred Mottola[x] emphasize safe driving habits[xi]. The development of safe habits has the potential to partially compensate for less than ideal judgment.

Several national organizations[xii] have developed model program standards, driver education delivery standards as well as teacher preparation standards. These are worthy documents and can provide valuable assistance in the development of national standards, but because of present political realities, models don't fully incorporate the breadth of program changes needed, nor do they fully embrace the findings of recent brain research on learning.

The reported failure of driver education to significantly contribute to the reduction of crashes for novice drivers is not the fault of education as an effective tool. Education is the cornerstone to America's greatness. The problem is a failure of the nation to identify traffic safety as our number one public health problem and to take sufficient measures to deal with it appropriately, including the design and funding of appropriate education measures and assessments. Law enforcement and road and vehicle engineering cannot solve the problem alone. It takes all three. Appropriate measures will require significant change in present policy similar in scope and breadth to the following recommendations.

1. It's time Congress establish mandatory national standards for driver education/training and assessment. We have national standards for road design and vehicle construction (engineering), and national standards for traffic laws (enforcement), but none for driver education and assessment. The standards upon which we base driver exam tests need to be revisited and aligned with behavior and experience based education and assessment standards. Does Congress have authority for this? Yes. Because the driver license is a primary form of identification, it is a national security issue. Because it is big business to attract visitors across state lines, it is an interstate commerce issue. This may not be the present interpretation of law, but it would be hard to prove that driving across state lines for business or pleasure is not a function of interstate commerce since it is a necessary transaction for many state and corporate economies. Standards for education and driver readiness, linked with standards for identity and residency, are appropriate and needed.

2. Congress must assume financial obligations for training and licensing drivers. Many states are constitutionally bound to balance their budgets. In years of economic uncertainty, states balance their budgets by elimination of what is currently considered "discretionary" services. Driver education and other traffic safety measures are often cut. This is not an appropriate response to our nation's number one public health issue.

3. Congress should authorize a joint effort of the NHTSA and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to address the death and injury on our highways.[xiii] Authorization must provide sufficient authority and resources to develop and enact appropriate measures. One minor element would be to set driver education, both novice and life-long, as a priority for the "402" funds provided to states to address traffic safety issues. Under this joint initiative, the following must be addressed.

    3.1. Determine the current status of driver education, and develop a mechanism to publish an annual status of driver education. Work with existing driver education programs and interested parties to determine the scope and breadth of data needed, and a means to collect the information.

    3.2. Using current research based information and experts in traffic safety education, design a comprehensive traffic safety program, including motorcycle safety education. All driver education delivery mechanisms, including small commercial schools must be required to comply. It is a public safety issue, not a matter of small business economics. (However there is a significant positive economic side to reducing crashes.[xiv]) The comprehensive program should include:
        3.2.1. Novice driver education that leads to safe driving habits, with direction for
            - Student competencies/performances;
            - Program standards;
            - Instructor training standards, including ongoing professional development; and
            - Curriculum standards addressing content, methods, and assessments.
        3.2.2. Assessments of driver readiness that measure learner experience and development of safe habits. These will be used to determine completion of educational activities and readiness for permit and license.
        3.2.3. Life-long learning opportunities for experienced drivers.
        3.2.4. Other education based measures that contribute to reducing injury and death on the highways.
        3.2.5. State oversight and management standards.
        3.2.6. Accountability measures and standards.
        3.2.7. Affordably accessible programs for all teens eligible to drive, with appropriate measures to ensure all eligible students complete the program and acquire the needed knowledge, skill and habits prior to being licensed to drive.

    3.3. Research and identify reliable funding for traffic safety education measures that states can draw upon.

Until such time as Congress acts upon the above items, the author recommends two short-term actions.

1. The ASSSDE and the ADTSEA continue to seek funding for the driver education status report project.[xv] This will provide an interim status of driver education in the nation.

2. The ASSSDE, ADTSEA, and the NIDB collaborate on developing and submitting a grant proposal to the NHTSA for a life-long learning traffic safety project. The project will

develop and make available materials for use in local, state, and national traffic safety campaigns.

The program will develop materials that focus on four to six essential defensive driving principles. The campaign materials should include billboard material, radio spots, TV spots, and a web site that provides information about the campaign and additional defensive driving information. The program should be designed to appeal to populations most at risk for crashes.

---

[i] The author is state director for traffic education programs in Montana. The ideas and opinions expressed in this paper do not necessarily represent the ideas or opinions of the Montana Office of Public Instruction.
[ii] LOS-POT is a teaching concept created by Fred Mottola of the National Institute for Driver Behavior.
[iii] Same as [ii].
[iv] Washington 2002 Special Session, as reported by David Kinnunen, director of traffic safety education, Washington Office of Public Instruction.
[v] Rate is death per 100,000 population. National Safety Council. (2001). *Injury Facts*.
[vi] The Chronicle of the American Driver and Traffic Education Association. (Spring 2002). *Graduated driver licensing in Michigan: Early impact on motor vehicle crashes among 16-year-old drivers; and, Initial effects of graduated driver licensing on 16-year-old driver crashes in North Carolina.* Greensburg, PA: Laurel Publishing Co.
[vii] http://www.iihs.org/safety_facts/qanda/gdl.htm#14. 8.14.2002.
[viii] National Research Council. (2000). *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school.* Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.
[ix] Amen, G. (2000). *Change a brain, change your life*. Times Books.
Sprenger, M. (1999). *Learning and memory: The brain in action.* Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. (Additional books on subject).
[x] http://www.nidb.org/
[xi] Others include Warren Quensel's Perceptual Driving Program, and AAA's Managing Time, Space, and Visibility.
[xii] National Institute for Driver Behavior (NIDB) and the American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association (ADTSEA) are two such organizations.
[xiii] The NHTSA has experience with traffic issues. The CDC has experience dealing with education counter measures for risky behaviors and is responsible for national public health issues.
[xiv] It is in fact an economic issue. The cost of the 5,700 teen (15-19) fatalities in 2000, according to NHTSA calculations amounts to $5,586,000,000. This does not include the costs associated with injuries and permanent disabilities.
[xv] This project was proposed to an insurance company but turned down.