



**Illinois High School & College  
Driver Education Association**

# **Support Handbook**

# Illinois High School/College Driver Education Association (IHSCDEA) Support Handbook

## Table of Contents

Foreword.....	page 1
Introduction and Purpose.....	page 2
Overview, Purpose, & Content.....	page 2
Using the Handbook.....	pages 2-3
Summary of Problems & Issues.....	pages 3-6
The Case for Driver Education.....	pages 6-7
Countering Arguments Against Driver Education.....	pages 7-8
The No Evidence Objection.....	pages 8-10
The Ineffective Programs Objection.....	pages 10-13
Campaign Objectives.....	page 13
Planning Strategies.....	pages 13-14
Involve Appropriate Individuals and Groups.....	pages 14-15
Work Directly With Decision Makers.....	page 15
Campaign Organization.....	pages 15-16
Implementing the Campaign.....	pages 16-17
Follow Up: Always Say Thanks.....	page 17
Involving the Media.....	pages 17-18
Increasing Public Awareness.....	pages 18-19
Improving News Coverage.....	pages 19-21

## Table of Contents

Key Media People to Contact.....	pages 21-22
Miscellaneous.....	pages 22-23
Driver Education Needed Now More Than Ever.....	pages 23-24
Driver Education Update.....	pages 24-26
Ten Frequently Asked Questions About High School Driver Education.....	pages 26-28
Driver Education Research and Random Samplings.....	page 28
Illinois Research.....	pages 28-29
Michigan Research.....	pages 29-30
Minnesota Research.....	pages 30-33
Missouri Research.....	page 34
Ohio Research.....	pages 34-36
Virginia Research.....	pages 36-37
References.....	Appendix

# Illinois High School & College Driver Education Association Support Handbook

## Foreword

This handbook is intended to serve as a working guide to individuals, groups, and organizations involved in efforts to support driver education. The most successful efforts are those that pursue a positive approach and seek to inform the public about quality driver education. Proponents involved in these efforts constantly try to influence decision makers to take steps to improve upon current driver education practices. Their efforts to be most effective must be continuous.

It is an unfortunate fact that controversies surrounding driver education and its funding generate unfavorable legislative proposals on a continuous basis. It is a fair assumption to say that this will continue.

Proponents of driver education cannot stand still. Each new controversy over driver education seems to generate a crisis situation. Each new legislative review of a state's education system eventually focuses, to some degree, on driver education. The highly vocal opponents of the program resurface again and again with renewed vigor.

At this point, proponents must turn their attention toward the critics and away from activities, which would strengthen and improve driver education as both an accident countermeasure and a program of instruction. It is at this point also that support is most needed.

- Information and materials to provide valid support for driver education and to overcome reservations and objections of opponents and non-supporters.
- Strategies and methods for communicating the above information to school officials, media representatives, traffic safety officials, state legislators, and other potential driver education supporters.

Emphasis is on developing effective state and local level campaigns to support driver education. In some cases, such support will be

aimed at obtaining passage of driver education laws or preventing passage of anti-driver education laws.

This handbook is designed for a variety of users, including driver education teachers, school officials, traffic safety officials, state legislators, PTA / PTO groups, and members of the general public.

The manual was prepared by the American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association (ADTSEA)

under a grant provided by the Automotive Safety Foundation, the education and research affiliate of the Highway Users Federation (HUF). This booklet was written by Robert M. Calvin, of the Federation, and William D. Cushman, of ADTSEA, with assistance from: Kenneth Blankenship, Alabama Department of Education; Owen Crabb, Maryland Department of Education; David Lawson, Oregon State University; Edward O'Farrell, Chicago Board of Education; Glenn Peavy, Texas Education Agency; and Jay Smith, Mesa, Arizona, Public Schools.

## Introduction and Purpose

For decades, local, state and national leaders in the field of education and traffic safety have been struggling with problems related to the development, improvement, and continuance of driver education. It is increasingly attacked as ineffective and cost prohibitive. In some states, public support is dwindling.

Driver education advocates have enjoyed only modest success in presenting their case to the public. Supporters have not been adequately prepared to effectively exercise their will on behalf of driver education.

*Much opposition to driver education is based on misinformation and misunderstandings of the issues.* In addition, the efforts of individuals and organizations to promote driver education or gain passage of favorable legislation have been hampered by repeated

failures to launch effective campaigns. This handbook has been prepared to help proponents correct the misunderstandings surrounding driver education and to generate public support. Additionally, it attempts to encourage and direct further and stronger efforts on behalf of improving driver education.

## Overview Purpose & Content

The purpose of this handbook is to aid individuals and organizations in states and local communities in launching effective programs of support for driver education. Information is provided to assist users in addressing the concerns and/or enlisting the support of various target audiences (e.g., school officials, state legislators, and the general public) and in working with the media (e.g. newspapers, radio, cable, and television). Information is also provided to support ar-

## Illinois High School & College Driver Education Association Support Handbook

guments made on behalf of driver education and to answer arguments of opponents.

### This handbook has three specific objectives:

- To present and summarize the most effective data and information available in support of driver education.
- To improve communications in the area of highway traffic safety - particularly related to the issues and problems confronting driver education.
- To aid individuals and organizations in states and local communities in their efforts to gain passage of legislation favorable to driver education.

## Using the Handbook

This text is written for proponents of driver education. A proponent is a person or group that recognizes the benefits of driver safety instruction. More importantly, a proponent is an individual or group willing to give the time and effort required to favorably influence others with regard to driver education. This proponent could be a driver education teacher, a school official, a private citizen, an organization, or a legislator. In summary, this handbook can be used by anyone or any group interested in initiating and implementing an organized effort to promote driver education and to secure passage of pro-driver education laws.

### To make the most effective use of the handbook, proponents should:

- Read it closely, paying particular attention to the problem areas and courses of action discussed.
- Analyze the problems and concerns relevant to their particular state or community.
- Review the handbook for suggestions and techniques appropriate to their problems and concerns.
- Assess available resources, prioritize objectives, and select an appropriate strategy.
- Develop an information database on their state or community and use these data to tailor arguments presented in the handbook.
- Initiate a continuous driver education support effort using handbook suggestions as a guide.
- Look for additional materials and ideas to

individualize and fortify your campaign.

- Seek assistance; ask for criticism and suggestions.
- Make it clear that you're advocating **quality** driver education; if your program has weaknesses, say so and indicate what is needed to correct existing deficiencies.
- Make it clear that driver education is not a magic wand but part of a total traffic safety plan.

## Summary of Problems & Issues

There is no **one** problem or issue facing driver education. Therein may lie the real problem - you can't begin to solve a problem until you can state it accurately and realistically.

In response to the question, "What do you think are the major problems or issues facing driver education today?" A group of knowledgeable traffic safety authorities offered the following:

### What needs to be done to improve the quality of driver education in our schools?

- "The primary factors insuring quality instruction in all subject areas of the school curriculum relate to the selection, preparation, and performance of the teacher."
- "Successful driver and traffic safety education programs are taught by carefully chosen, well prepared, competent teachers. ***There are no exceptions to this rule.***"
- "At the present time, driver education is essentially a process which assumes that all beginning drivers are equal. Thus, any single instructional experience may fail to provide for the individual differences inherent to the learning process. To significantly improve the overall quality of driver education, more emphasis must be placed on individualized learning approaches that are directed toward a desired level of driving competency."
- "Improving the quality of driver education is dependent upon acceptance by administrators and teachers of its place in the curriculum. Massive amounts of money have not made a great difference."

### What are the critical needs of driver education?

## Illinois High School & College Driver Education Association Support Handbook

- "One critical need in driver education today is a strengthening of the teacher selection, preparation, and certification process. Due to the fact that so much is expected from teachers that are given so little opportunity to suitably prepare for their work seems a poor reflection on the educational community.
- "The field of high school driver education should quickly decide whether or not the reduction of death and injury on the highway is an important course goal"
- *"If accident frequency is not influenced by high school driver education, the question still remains as to whether or not driver training in any form has utility as a means of combating death and Injury on the highway. Some kind of training is obviously necessary - but how much and of what kind?"*
- "I believe that if driver training were doing all it could, there would be no need to look for differences with a statistical microscope; they would be visible with the naked eye. I think such training is possible, but it will require a complete revamping of both classroom and laboratory courses, support from an effective K-9 or 10 program, and more community support for traffic safety."

### Is high school driver education worth the cost and effort?

- "When people ask the question, 'Is it worth it?' they want to be convinced. They need to know what driver education is and how it works, and what its objectives are. And they want to know they're getting good value for their money. Getting good value means providing quality instruction."
- "Is driver education worth the effort, cannot be answered until we decide what (quality) driver education is and what it should do."
- "Yes, driver education is worth the cost and effort because it is one of the vital foundation blocks upon which the nation's highway safety program is based."
- "Driver education, well taught, not only improves driver behavior but also tends to develop citizens who understand and support progress in each area of our much needed comprehensive program for

traffic safety."

- "We feel that driver education, at some schools, is poorly managed and many times the program is turned over to someone who teaches it on a part-time basis with responsibilities in other disciplines. The states set only minimum standards, and the schools look down on it because it's not "academic." But in spite of this, it has done an extremely good job in reducing accidents."
- "Many components taught in modern driver education classes cannot necessarily be measured by comparing accident and conviction rates. How can any one measure something, which does not occur because a student remembered something they were taught in driver education? Positive influences on attitudes, risk-taking behaviors, drinking and driving, and organ donation may empower youthful drivers throughout a lifetime of driving."
- "The concepts in studies which indicate that driver education is not reducing injuries and fatalities in this age bracket are flawed in that the research did not examine driving records over a long enough period of time. Thus to draw the conclusion that money spent to educate youthful drivers in this state or any other state is a waste of money, is simply an inaccurate statement. Further studies over a much longer period of time are needed to accurately determine the effectiveness of driver education."

### Why is high school driver education subject to so much criticism?

- "Criticism of High School Driver Education seems to have developed in three somewhat distinct stages. Early attacks came from educators and others who opposed its inclusion in the regular school program. Later, privately owned and operated driving schools mounted an attack often based on an 'unfair competition' theme. Currently, cries are heard that there is no research evidence to prove the value of HSDE in terms of subsequent accident-violation driving records."
- "Funding driver education at the state and local levels has become very expensive. The general legislative trend is to give power and decision-making abilities back to local jurisdictions. Due to tax caps and the years of under-funding of the

## Illinois High School & College Driver Education Association Support Handbook

driver education mandate by state government, local boards of education look at public high school driver education not as a necessary viable discipline which should be an integral part of a young person's overall education, but rather an expensive frill which can be taught elsewhere."

- "The difficulty with this concept when dealing with traffic safety throughout this state, however, is based on the fact that all drivers, youthful as well, drive vehicles not only between local communities, but throughout the entire state as well."
- "Allowing local boards of education to decide traffic safety issues ultimately could potentially lead to self-destruction as injury and fatality rates for youthful drivers might skyrocket."
- "Because driver education is still being taught using the same 30 clock hours of classroom instruction and 6 clock hours of driving instruction, *(like it has been for the past forty years)* legislators, administrators, board members, and the general public have a great difficulty in understanding that today's driver education is much different than when they received their formal instruction."
- *"Legislators need to ask them-selves this question: If we are going to allow local jurisdictions the opportunity to determine the value of educating novice drivers, should we not also allow the same local jurisdictions to determine other traffic safety issues such as speed limits, drinking ages and BAC amounts, legal driving ages, etc. as well? Where would traffic safety be in this state if every county had a different speed limit or driver licensing procedure?"*
- "Whether by educators or laymen, two basic viewpoints seem to prevail: (1) get it out of the school curriculum in order to save money or (2) improve it to make it more worthy of inclusion in the curriculum. For obvious reasons, it is important to understand which of these two basic views motivates the critic."
- "It is in the national interest to critically evaluate all social and educational programs against carefully defined goals."
- "We suspect that the criticism of driver education is no different from that made about education in general."

- "The perception by the general public regarding the presentation of driver education between the commercial driving school and the public high school is no different. The flaw in this perception is that it is true that while the physical outcome of receiving one's certificate of completion (blue slip) is the same between the public and private sectors, the educational value is quite different. ***After all, isn't the incentive in the private sector "to make money" and the incentive or driving force in public education "to ensure that students who success-fully pass the course, do so in an educationally sound and responsi-ble manner?"***

### Why has driver education lost support in some parts of the country?

- "Some critics of driver education in the schools can agree with the purpose and goals of HSDE. But, they ask, "Why not by a police department or some other non-school group?"
- "Once students have successfully passed driver education, instructors have very little if any control on how those same students drive their car down the highway. Novice drivers may have been extremely well-taught on how to physically, mentally, and emotionally control their vehicle on public highways in high school driver education programs, but whether or not they continue to utilize this information is ultimately up to the choice of the individual, not the program itself."
- "Apathy of administrators and board members due to the financial crunch has created driver education staffs to annually fight for their own program. This, in turn, causes apathy to take place within the driver education staff as well."
- "Administrators have not adequately staffed driver education programs which has caused a 'back-up' of students eligible to take the course. ***This, then, pro-motes parents to be influenced by their son or daughter in attending the commercial driving school which might finish the course in four weeks or less.***" "Apathy by the general public of how education is funded by property taxes, in general, has reached epidemic levels. Local referendums are constantly defeated and a general feeling of being 'over-taxed' seems to be constantly on the public's mind."

### The Case for Driver Education

The case for driver education is based on a number

## Illinois High School & College Driver Education Association Support Handbook

of factors:

- "The human tragedy and financial costs connected with traffic related fatalities and injuries are serious state and local problems. Driver errors account for most fatal and injury producing accidents, and novice drivers of school age have a disproportionate share of both.
- *"State legislators have a compelling responsibility to motorists and taxpayers to prepare young people for entrance into the traffic system as competent and responsible drivers."*
- "Preparation includes skills and understandings which cannot be picked up automatically or those which are not easily found in one's own surroundings. They must be learned in a carefully planned instructional program."
- "This is the basis for the rationale of keeping driver education in the more affordable, more educationally sound public high school system. Traffic safety education, when properly designed and taught, allows new drivers to become adequately prepared and eased into the rather complex world of driving."
- "Effective driver education is an excellent positive step towards reducing highway traffic fatalities and injuries."
- "Young people are intensely interested in learning to drive just prior to or shortly after reaching legal licensing age. The public education system reaches almost all eligible youngsters at this strategic time."
- "High school driver education has a high potential for reducing crashes because it intervenes in the driving experience, the highest risk age group (teenage drivers) is the target audience, and there is substantial logic in training teenage drivers."
- "Public driver education is best suited to handle the mentally and physically challenged student."
- "Public high school driver education allows all eligible students regardless of their own financial status, to have the opportunity to receive proper driving instruction which is affordable."
- "Commercial driving schools are expensive and for this reason likely discriminate financially against the disadvantaged or minority student who cannot afford to take the course. Due to the fact that the course might be dropped first in the low-income areas because of budget restraints, it is very possible that these same students will receive no affordable formal instruction whatsoever."
- "Driver education saves gas. It takes a few gallons to teach a young person to drive properly, but the investment pays off in both safety and conservation of fuel.
- "Insofar as the threat to human life is concerned, driving a motor vehicle in traffic is the most important skill known in contemporary society. What other skill taught in high school affects one's safety and livelihood more than that of driver education? Statistically speaking, the after age driver would have 1,500 near collisions and 12 real collisions during this lifetime exposure.
- "Driver education does not subtract a substantial block of time from English, mathematics, science, and other areas. The typical course involves less than one percent of the available high school instruction (assuming six hours instructional time for 180 school days during each of four years).
- "The program is cost effective. The U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), in a recent report to Congress, took the position that a quality HSDE program would be cost effective in terms of those crash reduction savings gained in the first year after licensing alone among those persons exposed to it. (In Texas, for instance, the cost of driver education for all eligible students is estimated at approximately \$25-30 million per year. The Texas Department of Public Safety estimated that the cost of traffic crashes in Texas exceeded \$3.1 billion in the same time span. If driver education was made available to all eligible students and if it reduced crashes by only two percent each year, Texans would save \$39 million per year. In addition, there would be close to 73 fewer deaths.)"

## Countering Arguments against Driver Education

## Illinois High School & College Driver Education Association Support Handbook

Arguments against driver education are usually based on either philosophical grounds or on claims of its ineffectiveness as an accident countermeasure. Several related and side issues are also involved. *Many critics, for instance, are not so much skeptical of the logic of training person to operate motor vehicles safely as they are of the ability for any short-term program to have a significant impact in molding behavior.* Another side issue is the dissatisfaction with education in general. The major concern, however, is that the thousand "other side issues" keep cropping up and create brush fires that divert attention away from major issues.

It follows that debates between opponents and proponents usually focus upon the argument of opponents rather than proponents.

### *There are several reasons for this:*

- "Proponents have not always been able to anticipate the kinds of questions they are likely to be asked, nor are substantive answers always available."
- "Proponents often fail to successfully articulate the case for driver education. They sometimes use too many educational jargon terms like "behavioral objectives" or "performance criteria." Such terms don't communicate. They don't tell the story or unveil facts in the precise manner necessary to influence decision-makers."
- "Proponents' efforts many times are poorly managed and uncoordinated. This handbook and the information and helpful sources it references, should help correct many of the problems."
- "It is no longer enough for proponents to say they believe in driver education and that it is a good thing which should, therefore, be supported. Criticism and the arguments based against driver education are usually too well entrenched."

### **Arguments against driver education typically fall into one of the following four general categories:**

- "There is no scientifically convincing evidence to prove that driver education reduces traffic accidents and the resulting deaths and injuries."
- "There are too many weak and ineffective programs in our schools and colleges, thus driver education is not meeting its traffic safety goals and objectives."

- "The public is opposed to increased spending and driver education may not be worth the cost. "
- "Driver education is not a proper function of the schools. Because legislative debate usually centers on opponents' points of view, proponents must be prepared to counter their arguments and objections. The sections that follow provide ideas for rebutting each objection. Other issues are discussed at the end of this support handbook."

## **The No Evidence Objection**

The "no convincing evidence" argument is powerful because there is no scientifically accepted basis for expecting driver education to prove conclusively that it prevents traffic accidents and the resulting deaths and injuries. Equally powerful, however, (and this is ammunition for proponents) is there is no convincing evidence to prove that HSDE does not reduce accidents!

In any event, proponents should recognize that despite many attempts at evaluation, no convincing evidence of accident reduction through HSDE has been produced. The big question is whether or not young people completing driver education programs have improved accident (and/or violation) driving records. Those who insist on a clear cut yes or no answer are likely to be frustrated by evidence currently available. It should be noted that many other more costly and more fully funded programs in traffic safety have not demonstrated their effectiveness.

Proponents must be familiar with this "evidence" which includes studies of driver education effectiveness and critiques that cite shortcomings of these studies.

### **The following examples summarize the findings of some studies related to the effectiveness of driver education:**

- "One of the more extensive studies was done in 1963 by the State of Illinois. Data were obtained from the driver license files covering all Illinois drivers between ages 16-20. This sample of over a half million drivers included two groups: "those who did," and "those who did not" complete a high school driver education course. Analysis showed that those not receiving a driver education course were involved in 493 traffic violations and 111 accidents per 1,000 drivers. The corresponding

## Illinois High School & College Driver Education Association Support Handbook

figures for driver education students were 171 and 56."

- "In 1964, the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicle studied the driving records of nearly 50,000 young beginning drivers. The results indicated that HSDE students had 40 percent fewer violations than parent-trained drivers, and 45 percent fewer violations than commercially trained drivers." These two studies and others have been challenged on the grounds that where the course is an elective, a pre-selection factor may be in effect. That is, those who voluntarily enroll in HSDE courses may be more mature, conservative, safety-conscious, and otherwise, better driving risks than their counterparts who do not elect to do so. Proponents can, in many instances, respond to this challenge by citing study results where the course was completed by virtual all students. In states with laws that set the minimum driving age at 18 except for those successful completing high school driver education course (usually at age 16) virtually all students complete a HSDE course, hence, the pre-selection criticism is not a factor.
- Until Michigan recently dropped HSDE from the high school curriculum, for instance, most high school students completed a HSDE course because of the "18 year old licensing law." In 1962, a study completed in Lansing, Michigan, used the city's official traffic accident records over a three and one-half year period.

***The most significant finding of this study is listed below:***

- "The Lansing driver education teenagers experienced only half as many traffic accidents as the national statistics. Several studies have been conducted that reflect the findings of a 1973 Ohio study. This study reported that HSDE can significantly improve knowledge levels and attitudes conducive to safe driving. For the study, HSDE students were given knowledge and attitude tests before and after the course. The results consistently showed positive gains at least for short time intervals. A California study suggested that driver training reduced fatal and injury-producing collisions, and partially reduced at-fault, and single-vehicle crashes for young female drivers. For young male drivers the evidence was

less firm.

- In this study biographical, attitudinal, personality, and driving behavior data were collected on 13,915 young beginning drivers aged 16-17.

### **Among the more important findings:**

- "Those taking behind-the-wheel (BTW) training had better subsequent driving records than those not taking BTW, but BTW students also appeared to have more socially desirable personality traits, thus confounding the results."
- "A cost-benefit analysis indicated that even through the apparent crash reduction was small, the savings at least equaled the cost of the program."
- In short, "studies" and statements pro and con on driver education effectiveness are easy to come by. In fact, some of the studies may support one's position regardless of what it may be.
- Proponents, however, should note with emphasis, that automobile insurance companies grant discounts to young drivers who receive good grades in school, completing "approved" courses of instruction. These discounts are usually 10 to 15 percent. Such discounts are not provided on a whim. For insurance companies, the trained young driver discount is considered a sensible business proactive. The financial advantages to youngsters with driver education credit are obvious. They are eligible for a reduction in insurance premiums over a period of approximately seven or eight years. Few taxpaying parents fail to appreciate the economic advantages of a quality high school driver education course when this cost factor is identified.
- In a 1979 news release, the Aetna Life and Casualty Company said: "Teenaged drivers with driver education credit have fewer and less costly auto accidents teenagers with-out the training,..." this conclusion was based on a three year analysis of the company's actuarial data. The study compared frequency of claims per 100 cars and claim cost per car, for more than 175,000 drivers under 21 years of age insured by Aetna in *all* 50 states for the years 1976 through 1978. Youthful operators with driver education credit had fewer and less expensive claims for both liability and collision coverage.

## The Ineffective Programs Objection

Many concerned driver educators believe that program effectiveness is the most critical issue facing high school driver education. There is little doubt that several driver education programs need improvement. This includes both high school and college level offerings. Many of these programs are weak. Some are ineffective.

One knowledgeable spokesman says that too many programs "operate for benefit for teachers and school administrators rather than for students." *Too many programs are offered only before or after school or on Saturdays because it is "less expensive" that way and because "it helped supplement teachers inadequate salaries."*

Taking another approach, two other driver educators cited the "lack of commitment" by school boards, administrators, or the teaching staff, or of all three. "Weaker courses," they said, "are recognizable by a number of characteristics."

### Among the Shortcomings:

- *"Offering classroom instruction and behind-the-wheel instruction at different times. This absence of concurrent instruction means that some information and techniques will be lost or forgotten and opportunities to reinforce learning, omitted."*
- *"Use of part-time teachers. This means there is a greater likelihood that teachers will be less interested, under prepared and not familiar with the characteristics of a good program."*
- *"Stress on (manipulative) skills. Too little attention to decision-making."*

Frequently cited as reason for weaker courses is the fact that the no incentive to program excellence exists. States reimburse local schools simply for the number of students completing the course. The current system of state reimbursement to school districts for driver education expenses exacts a financial penalty on schools that attempt more comprehensive programs. Their per-student reimbursement is generally the same as that for schools meeting only minimum requirements.

The lack of research and evaluation is considered

by many authorities to be the major stumbling block to program effectiveness. Quensel (1979) thoughtfully provides an explanation and a recommendation by stating:

"In spite of the fact that over the years many state legislatures have provided reimbursement for driver education programs, none that I know of which have appropriated any funds for research. Even with all the Federal funds available since (the Highway Safety Act of) 1966, there doesn't seem to be a state with a comprehensive plan for the evaluation of driver education. I now think it is imperative that we do a better job of collecting more objective data so that we can better answer our critics as well as develop guides for program improvement."

A report to Congress further stated that "driver education programs cannot be expected to improve unless they are implemented in a manner that allows accurate feedback with

regard to their present effectiveness. Without such feedback, there is no incentive to modify such programs."

Doubtless, driver education suffers from a lack of good objective data. Proponents are thus limited in their promotional efforts. Additionally, they are at a disadvantage when trying to pinpoint and correct program deficiencies. Proponents can make a strong case for a better system of evaluation to help identify weak programs and work for their improvement.

***If the "ineffective programs objection" is raised, proponents would be remiss if they failed to point out that no other high school course is evaluated on the same terms as driver education.***

The math program is not evaluated on how well students balance their checkbooks. The English program is not evaluated on the basis of how skillfully students write in later life. Yet, driver education is held responsible for the driving records accumulated by its students.

Are the criteria applied to driver education realistic? Should the program be responsible only for whether its students can drive safely and responsibly or whether they actually do drive in this manner? Individual driving performance is the result of many factors, such as peer influence, home pressure, adult example, style of life and individual personality, all of

## Illinois High School & College Driver Education Association Support Handbook

which are beyond the control and influence of the driver education program and teachers.

Proponents must point out that there is a serious question of whether the expectations on driver education have exceeded anything that could realistically be accomplished. The question proponents should ask of critics is, what, realistically, should driver education be accomplishing?

At this point, proponents have an excellent opportunity to recite and review the goals, purposes, and major objectives of driver education as advocated. With these estimates, proponents can construct several sets of figures to describe the costs and benefits of driver education for any given year. An example follows (proponents should remember that most of the numbers used are estimates and that the above exercise is but one attempt to put the safety benefits of driver education into a specific context).

"In 1977, for instance, **IF** driver education reduced teenage (16-19 year olds) traffic crashes by five percent because they successfully completed the program, the nation saved \$253 million in traffic accident costs. The estimate is based on the assumption that the 16-19 age group is involved in 16.6 percent of all traffic accidents and assumes that their accident costs are also 16.6 percent (\$30.2 billion x .05 = \$253 million)."

- "In terms of cost effectiveness, driver education would probably pay for itself in terms of one year's crash reduction alone.

*The cost could be estimated as follows:*

Crash reduction savings	\$253 million
<hr/>	
2,400,000 x \$90 per students	\$216 million
<hr/>	
Savings	\$ 37 million

With \$253 million saved as opposed to \$216 million spent on driver education, the net savings is \$37 million.

Thus, a \$1.17 is returned for every dollar invested in driver education over a one-year period. This estimate does not include benefits in future years for the same training experiences."

## The Not-a-Function-of-the-Schools Objection

Opponents of driver education in the schools are found both in and out of education. Whether an educator or a layman, two viewpoints prevail:

- **"Get driver education out of the school curriculum.**
- **Improve it to make it more worthy of inclusion in the curriculum.**

It is important for proponents to understand which of these viewpoints motivates a critic. The arguments for taking driver education out of the curriculum often center on philosophical grounds. Some opponents view the program as a "frill." Some consider it an exploitation of youth through consumer propaganda and through education.

Other attacks seem less a concern about driver education that a frustration over "progressive education," "life adjustment," and "education for citizenship." The arguments over these philosophies have been going on for years and are not yet resolved.

Well-informed proponents of HSDE do not have to be reminded that these types of arguments have powerful appeal. Proponents, likewise, can present appealing counter-arguments. For example: Driver education is considered a "frill" by critics who energetically advocate a return to education fundamentals, often called the back-to-basic movement. Driver education is not alone. Home economics, vocational education and other subjects are being subjected to the same criticism. Fundamentalists believe these subjects subtract a substantial block of time from English, math and science.

This is not true in the case of driver education. Assuming that there are six hours of instructional time during a school day, 180 days of instruction in a school year, and four years of high school, there are 4,320 hours of instructional time available. On this basis, driver education uses 36 hours or less than one percent of the high school time available. When this is spread over 12 years of formal education, driver education utilizes .003 percent of the time available.

Hypothetically let's say that the average adult person drives a motor vehicle about 1.5 hours a day, which would equal approximately 500 hours a year. This amounts to approximately 32,000 hours or of

## Illinois High School & College Driver Education Association Support Handbook

driving during a lifetime. Therefore it is conceivable that drivers who begin driving at 16 and stop driving at age 80 (64 years) are actually driving a car for approximately 1,333 days (or) 190.5 weeks (or) 3.7 years. Even though these figures can vary according to how much driving a person actually does, they do not include the number of hours that we ride as passengers in vehicles throughout our lifetimes. It can also be argued that driving is the most important skill in contemporary society, insofar as the threat to human life is concerned. In any case, it is too important to learn by chance or in a haphazard way.

With few exceptions, driver education support campaigns are hastily conceived and implemented. They generally are the result of short term planning and quickly conceived strategies. As a rule, they are organized and initiated in response to an immediate crisis. Such crises may take a number of forms. Sometimes they appear as efforts by school administrators or school board members to cut back or eliminate driver education. Sometimes they appear as pending legislation to withdraw state financial support of the program.

Responses to the crises are typically "spear-headed" by a single individual supported by a few school or state officials. Support from public agencies (e.g., department of motor vehicles), safety and professional organizations, the general public, and the media are usually lacking. In short, most driver education support campaigns are fragmented and narrowly focused. Consequently, they are not always able to overcome the substantial amount of misunderstanding and opposition associated with the issues.

If a campaign to promote driver education or to enact favorable legislation is to succeed, these deficiencies must be overcome. Organization and planning are vital attributes of any successful campaign. The purpose of this section is to provide guidelines for conducting an effective driver education support campaign. Topics covered include objectives, planning strategies, organization, implementation, and follow up.

What other single activity might any person do for 32,000 hours which could directly cause human injury or death due to a error in driver judgment?

### Campaign Objectives

The two major objectives of a driver education support campaign are:

- To develop and build public, professional, and legislative support favorable to driver education.
- To incorporate and unite the support into an effective and comprehensive effort to improve the status of driver education.

Accomplishing these objectives requires identifying pivotal issues and building the strongest possible case for driver education. It involves communicating that case to school officials, professional groups, safety organizations, legislators, and the general public. It also requires that the concerns, interests and objections of these groups are addressed. Further, it involves imaginative reinforcement of persuasive positions.

Only an orderly and coordinated effort can achieve the desired results. The organization may consist of one or two people (e.g., a school official and a state legislator) or it may be a diverse group (e.g., a coalition of advocates).

In Illinois, the IHSCDEA has elected to create a driver education task force of educators, traffic safety proponents from both corporate and governmental agencies, parents, along with lobbyists in order to help promote traffic safety which confronts public high school driver education in this state. A major advantage of this plan is that the machinery is present and functioning at all times. It becomes a force for continuing "action" as opposed to a hastily found "reaction" group.

Regardless of organizational structure, priorities must be established, tasks de-fined, functions coordinated, and resources mobilized. These are demanding actions but if the campaign develops in a systematic and orderly fashion, it has a good chance of success.

Driver education proponents must learn to use every opportunity to state and repeat their points of view. Through persistent efforts, public, official, and legislative support can be generated.

### Planning Strategies

Public support for driver education is no longer to be taken for granted. It does exist but it must be mobilized. The process of mobilization is both complex and demanding but it must be accomplished. It will be successful to the extent that the points suggested here are refined and expanded upon in specific situations.

## Illinois High School & College Driver Education Association Support Handbook

### Three planning strategies must be addressed:

- Identify issues & solutions.
- Identify / involve appropriate individuals and groups.
- Work directly with decision-makers.

### Pick an issue and develop a solution:

Isolating or defining an issue (i.e. 15, 16, and 17-year-old students who should take driver education) is one of the most important steps to getting something done through public support. Without a compelling issue, most efforts at developing support will fail. The "issue" is the first step in any campaign. Getting a sample reaction to just the issue may be in order. If there are no strong reactions to the issue, further work may be required to generate interest.

Once the issue is evident, a reasonable solution (i.e., state funding for driver education) needs to be formulated. Again, the solution to the issue needs to be tested to see if it is practical. When a well-defined issue/solution is set, a campaign can be developed. Once underway, all involved persons need to be pitching the same issue / solution.

## Involve Appropriate Individuals and Groups

When the issue / solution package has been developed, as many groups as possible should be identified and involved. The pivotal groups and individuals to involve in the campaigns are state legislators, highway safety officials, school officials, and safety groups. However, many others' contributions should be sought if time and resources permit. Presented below is a general list of those whose support should be enlisted:

- State legislators
- State highway safety officials
- Police officials
- Medical personnel including doctors and nurses
- Insurance industry
- Substance abuse groups
- Parent-teacher organizations
- Women clubs and safety groups
- Motor clubs and auto associations
- City and community organizations
- Highway user groups
- Education organizations and school groups

In general, driver education campaigns should count on generating support internally (i.e., within the state and local communities). Support from national

organizations (e.g., National Safety Council; Highway Users Federation; American Automobile Association; Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association; American Trucking Associations, etc. can be valuable, but in many cases, state legislators discount their arguments. The same arguments and data have much more impact when presented by in-state personnel. Still, national organizations are valuable sources of data, ideas, and (in some cases) expertise and funding.

### Involvement of these individuals and groups require sensitivity, to two critical elements:

- Most large groups are governed by boards or committees. The final endorsement by the association body as a whole is usually the final step. If for example, a proposed or pre-filed bill is going before a legislature, one must get with a large group's guiding body (e.g., the state PTA's legislative committee) to start things moving.
- Timing can be almost as important as the message. If action on an issue by a board or legislature is imminent, interest will follow. If time is too short for a group to respond, don't bring up the issue. Always sell your issue / solution from the point of what action can be taken.
- Obviously, a driver education support campaign needs to include as many supporters and participants as possible, however, the support and involvement of some are more critical than others. Experience indicates that a state legislator who is an active proponent of driver education is invaluable for escorting a proposed bill through the legislature and for personally contacting other legislators on behalf of the bill. In addition, a legislator generally has ready-access to the media and a better understanding of the legislative process.
- The involvement of state highway safety personnel, including the traffic safety coordinator, is also critical. These officials can provide data on the state's accident situation and on the need for driver education. Moreover, they may have access to funds for conducting the campaign and they provide a necessary link to the state governor. Finally, they are in contact with and able to enlist support from many professional and civic organizations interested in traffic safety problems.

### Work Directly With Decision Makers

In this example, a legislature is used. However, the same steps can be generalized to working with other decision-making bodies. Proponents need to be sensitive to the following basic points:

- A coordinator should be identified so that all actions on an issue / solution are timed and organized to the maximum degree possible. This person must be available, capable, and willing to work on the issue / solution.
- The leadership, in any group, can make or break the best of efforts. Every attempt should be made to gain support from these individuals.
- Be sensitive to time, both from the amount of time one can expect to have an issue / solution heard and when it's heard. The time for a hard-hitting presentation is when the decision makers can act.
- The staff of a legislature provides influential input to decision makers. Seek these individuals out and provide them with solid information that supports your issue / solution. If one is successful, factual reports will be the result.
- Gaining support from the initial committee to hear a bill in a legislature is the first critical test. If it fails there, more than likely the bill (issue / solution) is dead.

### Campaign Organization

A campaign to achieve passage of a pro-driver education law can be structured in one of four ways:

- Legislators can lead and sponsor the campaign.
- A state agency or group can initiate it.
- A public interest group can organize the effort.
- A coalition of proponents can be formed.

More often than not, efforts to enact driver education laws in the various states have been organized and led by state legislators. Such campaigns are advantageous in the sense that legislative support is a prerequisite for passage of a driver education law, and probably the greatest influence on state legislators are their colleagues. Yet, because of pressing responsibilities in many other areas, it is difficult for legislators to devote their full attention to developing outside support and resources for their efforts and without this outside support (especially from school

and safety groups), there is a tendency for state legislators to view proponent arguments as unconvincing.

Department of education and state traffic safety officials have sponsored legislative initiatives on behalf of driver education. Such attempts require a legislator to introduce the proposed bill, but state, school, and safety officials are responsible for promoting the legislation. One big drawback to this approach is that promotion of the proposed law is restricted by formal legislative procedures (i.e., the committees). Generally, proponents have few opportunities to speak directly with other legislators and personally seek their support.

While many public interest organizations have been involved in state efforts to pass a driver education law, few organizations have ever mounted a campaign on their own. But the possibility does exist. The major advantage of this approach over the others is in its capacity for generating public support for the issue. Not only is the organization composed of citizens, but their efforts on behalf of driver education legislation tend to be well received by other members of the public and by legislators. The disadvantage is that this approach is extremely difficult to organize. There is also a problem in getting a bill introduced in the state legislature.

Proponents of driver education also can form a coalition to seek passage of necessary legislation. The coalition approach is usually best because a broad-based campaign allows the organization to draw support from many different quarters (e.g., school and professional groups as well as the legislature and traffic safety officials). This structure also combines the advantages, without the drawbacks, of the other organizational forms. Furthermore, the many varied resources of a coalition allow it to focus on additional target audiences, to accomplish more tasks, and to conduct a more comprehensive campaign.

### Implementing the Campaign

The following principles should guide activities of a legislative campaign:

- Organize and plan the campaign in advance of the legislative session.
- Present the case for the law to legislators individually through personal contact.
- Tailor the case for driver education to the needs of

## Illinois High School & College Driver Education Association Support Handbook

the state.

- Focus the campaign on both chambers of the legislature.
- Develop a broad base of outside support for the legislation.

In most states, the legislature meets for three months, once each year. In others, the legislature meets every other year; fewer than a dozen states have full-time legislators. Once the legislative session convenes, little time is available for campaign organizations. Thus, campaign organization and planning should be accomplished well before the start of the legislative session, so that proponents can devote their full attention to proposed legislation during the session. Most legislators are not fully informed of their state's highway safety problems and of its need for quality driver education programs. To gain the legislative support necessary to enact a favorable law requires educating a substantial number of legislators on the consequences of motor vehicle accidents, the scope and value of driver education, and the merits of improving program quality.

Committee hearings and floor debates, however, cannot be the only forum for accomplishing this task. Unless a legislator is a member of a committee, he will seldom attend its meetings. Furthermore, committee hearings are not usually transcribed. Consequently, the majority of state legislators are first exposed to an issue during floor debates. In most cases this means that:

- The case for favorable driver education legislation must be presented and substantiated.
- Arguments against driver education must be effectively countered.
- Obstacles in the legislative process that may prevent passage of a favorable law or prevent defeat of a poor law must be overcome.
- Outside support for driver education must be identified, mobilized, and deployed on behalf of favorable legislative action.

Legislators are elected to serve the needs of their constituents. Arguments and data to be presented on behalf of a pro-driver education law should be framed in terms of the state's particular needs. How many students are involved? What are the alternatives? What are the safety benefits? What would be its cost savings? Such information adds relevance and meaning to otherwise impersonal statistics.

## Follow Up: Always Say Thanks

Never miss the opportunity to say thanks. Letters, news coverage, and personal thanks are always in order for those who have taken the time to put forth an effort. Even if one falls short of final victory, thanks are in order for those who cared enough to try. The next time, you'll win and these same people will be there.

And remember:

- Three years is a good rule of thumb for gaining victory on an issue / solution of substance. This is the amount of time it takes to gain the solid base of support that is needed to make big things happen. This time factor exceeds the stamina of many proponents. Additionally, personnel changes can destroy continuity.
- Throughout the process one needs to be alert for opportunity and put driver education's best foot forward.

## Involving the Media

Mass media (radio, television, newspapers, and magazines) are powerful determiners of thought and opinion. Their influence on decision-makers cannot be overestimated. Alert proponents of driver education will be aware of and prepared to use the vast potential of the media. For many years, driver education enjoyed the positive influence of a generally friendly press. The reason was simple. Driver education was accepted without question. Since it "saved lives," there was no reason to question it - at least, this was the case for a period of time.

But there were some people who did question the assertions regarding driver education's value. When they expressed their opinions and released findings of their research, the media served as a conduit, just as it had for the pro-driver education propaganda. Media still provide numerous opportunities to increase public knowledge and to change negative attitudes but driver education proponents, generally, have not used this vital resource. Most proponents have virtually ignored the possible positive influence the media can have.

This section is designed to help proponents sharpen their skills so they can use the media more effectively. At the outset, we must learn to view the media as both a target audience and a resource. These prospective roles and how proponents can best deal with each are

## Illinois High School & College Driver Education Association Support Handbook

discussed. Methods of increasing and improving news coverage and techniques for making more effective use of the media as a campaign resource are also explored. Finally, the chapter suggests other types of public information and education activities that proponents may conduct on behalf of driver education.

### **Increasing Public Awareness**

Media serve as communications channels between driver education proponents and target groups, particularly the general public. Both news reporting and public service advertising provide supporters with communication outlets for increasing public awareness.

#### **News Reports**

Through newscasts and newspapers, the media disseminate information about a variety of subjects to the public. Since driver education is a legitimate news subject, some news coverage is inevitable. The task faced by driver education proponents is to ensure that news reports are accurate, impartial, and thorough, a task that is not easy to accomplish.

Most news reports on driver education tend to be brief and descriptive rather than analytical. Typically, they report highlights of research findings emphasizing the elements stressed by the researcher. In the case of legislation, the news report usually announces who is sponsoring the bill, its chances of success, and what the legislation entails. Very few of these reports are more than a few paragraphs long, and many are subsumed in larger articles on either traffic safety or general legislative events. For the most part, they fail to report all sides of issues.

Incomplete and superficial news accounts of driver education may increase public concern about spending public monies or increased government interference, and may thereby generate opposition. More importantly, inaccurate or incomplete reports mean that communications between proponents and potential support groups will suffer because the media do not fully understand the issues involved.

It should not be assumed that media reporters and writers have information that is any more accurate, thorough, or thoughtful than that known by the general public. Most have only a surface knowledge of their state's traffic safety problems and they are generally unfamiliar with motor vehicle accident rates. In

addition, traffic safety is usually a low priority item in relation to other social and political problems.

To insure that the public receives all the information required in order to make a wise decision about driver education and laws that may affect its future, proponents must be prepared to educate media persons as well as the public. This task includes doing whatever it takes to generate more accurate and complete news coverage on driver education, monitoring media reports thoroughly, and responding quickly to inaccurate or misleading information.

#### **Public Service Programs**

The public service announcement (PSA) is another communications channel available to driver education proponents. Unlike the news, it is a resource that proponents can use to communicate specific messages to the general public.... a resource with the potential of reaching mass audiences and influencing public attitudes. There are, however, two restrictions on use of the PSA:

- It is an outlet confined mainly to the electronic media (i.e., radio and television).
- It cannot be used to promote legislative causes (e.g., a high school driver education law).

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requires all radio and television stations to provide air time for serving the public interest of the local community, but broadcasters are under no obligation to grant time to any specific group. Announcements on the safety benefits of driver education would be considered for broadcast. There are, however, limitations. Under the FCC's "Fairness Doctrine," radio and television stations are required to provide a reasonable opportunity for the presentation of contrasting points-of-view on controversial issues. Since public service announcements promoting specific driver education laws could be controversial, most stations would refuse to carry them. At best, the public service announcement route is a time-consuming endeavor. Proponents must obtain or produce written, filmed, or recorded announcements on driver education, distribute them to local television and radio stations, and encourage the stations to broadcast the announcements. These activities necessitate a highly organized and concerted effort. In some cases initiating a public service announcement campaign may be impossible, but if a proponent or agency can conduct it, a public service campaign can be invaluable.

## Illinois High School & College Driver Education Association Support Handbook

### **Improving News Coverage**

The news media are chroniclers of events rather than participants in them, but they are also in the business of selling their news programs. News means action, and, local action is likely to receive coverage. The media also show a strong preference for dramatic stories with a local flavor..... issues and events that affect the lives, health, comfort, and happiness of the people who reside in the communities they serve.

The challenge faced by proponents of high school driver education is to frame events and happenings in dramatic local terms. A second challenge is to get this information to the media and to inform them on the basic facts and issues surrounding the problem. Neither of these tasks is easy, but they can be accomplished. By understanding a few basic techniques and methods, as well as the needs of the media, news coverage can be increased and improved. Proponents should familiarize themselves with the press conference, interview, personal appearance, news release, editorial, spot and news story, letter to the editor, and broadcast editorial reply. Each technique has potential for influencing wide audiences.

### **Press Conferences**

A press conference can be an effective method of disseminating information to both the media and the public. A conference to announce a coordinated campaign by various governmental units in cooperation with citizen groups to enact a high school driver education law stands a good chance of news coverage. Coverage of other campaign related events such as speeches and rallies is also probable if sufficient notice is given to the media and if these notifications are accompanied by fact sheets and background information. If the event is one in which action (such as a rally in front of the statehouse) can be incorporated, a great deal more coverage can be obtained.

A news conference generally begins with a short statement giving the reason for the conference and the basic story. Facts or statistics that bear on the issue should be available in a handout. Biographies of people involved in the campaign, the text of the opening remarks, and other related information also should be available. Following the opening statement, there is a question and answer period. It is important to be organized

and prepared and likely questions should be anticipated. Questions should be answered honestly, and when an issue is uncertain, the speaker should not hesitate to say that the item will require further study.

### **Interviews**

Interviews can be utilized in a number of ways, but they are especially effective when coordinated with a press conference. Immediately following the conference, have legislators, school officials, and other important individuals involved with the campaign available for interviews. This not only increases the potential for news coverage, but also may lead to special feature-length news programs on the campaign.

### **Personal Appearances**

Another possibility that presents itself as a result of post-conference interviews is an invitation for government officials and others involved in the campaign to appear on local radio and television "talk" or interview shows. Even if the invitations are not forthcoming as a result of the press conference, these shows are constantly seeking "interesting and informative" people to appear and every effort should be made to publicize the availability of driver education proponents.

### **News Releases**

News releases should be prepared for the media when significant news occurs. Releases should be written as clearly and concisely as possible. Unexplained jargon has no place in a news release, and a brief, well written release will receive a much better reading in a newsroom than a complex eight-page thesis.

### **Editorials**

Most opinion makers (especially state politicians) read the editorial sections of the newspaper with great interest. Like-wise, many people pay close attention to editorials presented by the broadcast media. Editorials endorsing a driver education law can greatly aid campaign efforts and a concerted effort should be made to gain editorial endorsements for strong driver education legislation.

Editorial writers should be provided with detailed background information and fact sheets. The

## **Illinois High School & College Driver Education Association Support Handbook**

possibility also exists that guest editorials can be arranged, using the talents (ghosted or otherwise) of various officials and personalities in the campaign. These editorials signed by government officials, legislators, law enforcement officers, and school officials can also be adapted for use as television and radio editorials, ideally with the author presenting them in person.

### **Spot and News Stories**

News exists within any organization. The media, however, do not always have the time or the resources to cover it. Consequently, many organizations voluntarily report news stories about their work to the media. A driver education support campaign can also prepare news stories about its work and volunteer them to the media.

Generally, there are two types of news events: spot news stories and feature stories. Spot news reports on events or happenings as they occur. This would include events such as the initiation of a driver education support campaign and the introduction of a new high school driver education law in the state legislature. A news release is a type of spot news story.

The key part of spot news stories is its "lead." The lead, that is the first sentence or two, must contain the *"WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, and WHY."* The lead is designed to give readers information quickly and in such a manner that they will want to read the rest of the story.

After the lead, the details are written in declining order of importance. This permits the story to be cut from the bottom, if need be, without having to rewrite it to avoid leaving out important facts.

To assure data accuracy, use exact dates ("June 19th or "Tuesday, June 19th not just "Tuesday"). Use addresses when necessary.

Feature stories provide a more in-depth look at a particular event or issue. Generally, they have a strong human interest or educational theme and have no immediate deadline. Feature stories can be used any time, and frequently they are prepared days or weeks before they appear. Feature stories can be prepared on such topics as the people involved in the campaign and the reasons why the law is needed.

People and events connected with your driver education campaign can easily provide much material for feature stories. Keep a record of the more newsworthy people in the project and a record of

special events such as anniversaries. When you think you have good material for a feature story, talk to the editor of your local paper or to a reporter. Be sure to get to them two or three weeks in advance of any special date, and ask if they are interested and whether they want you to provide a prepared story or information from which they can write the story themselves.

If the editor assigns someone to do the story, write a memo giving the reporter all the data and whether someone is going to be interviewed. Be sure the reporter is introduced to the person, and provide helpful assistance. Avoid being assertive. You can help the person to be interviewed by telling him in advance the kind of questions likely to be asked.

### **Letters to the Editor and Broadcast Editorial Replies**

Driver education proponents should not overlook letters to the editor as a means of disseminating information to the public and to counter editorials against driver education legislation. In addition, proponents can request airtime to respond to radio and television editorials relating to driver education. The response need not always be in opposition. You can agree with a favorable editorial; point out other supporting arguments that may have been overlooked.

### **Key Media People to Contact**

It is important to know the people who report the news. This includes reporters and editors in the press and on radio and television. If you do not know them, find out when they are least busy and pay them a visit. Look into the news capabilities of public television and radio as well as cable systems in your area. Develop a list of key people and keep them informed.

Meet the city and managing editors of the local newspapers), and remember that the education editor (if there is a Sunday paper), the picture editor, and the suburban editor are also important. At radio and television stations, make appointments with the station manager, news director, program director, public service director, and editorial director. Be businesslike and to the point in discussing driver education and its importance to the community.

### **Statements of Insurance Company Industry**

# Illinois High School & College Driver Education Association Support Handbook

## *"Does Driver Education Make Sense?"*

Generally speaking many insurance companies fundamentally believe that an approved driver education program is a better way to prepare young drivers than other, less formal methods. Anything that causes a deterioration in the driving performance of young drivers will undoubtedly result in more deaths and more injuries, which will, in turn, create a greater economic loss to insurance companies and policyholders as well.

*The temptation to cut vital programs is sometimes irresistible to those whose intention is to demonstrate to the public that they can't have it both ways - more and better services and lower taxes.*

Even the most essential services are vulnerable and education is no exception. Educators may be called upon to make some difficult decisions in the upcoming months with respect to the programs their school systems offer and the amount of financial support each receives.

*Although fiscal pressures and an emphasis on "educational basics" are threatening driver training programs in an increasing number of public schools, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has endorsed high quality driver education in secondary schools, estimating that a program can reduce the likelihood of crash involvement by 10 to 15 percent for those exposed to it.*

## Miscellaneous

### High School Driver Education Features / Benefits Analysis

- The "*Features*" cited below are not listed in order of importance or seriousness.
- Driver education proponents need to supplement information presented in "*Benefits*" column with as much local data as possible.

### What does high school driver education accomplish and what does it offer?

**Feature:** Provide students with at least minimum performance capabilities for entry into traffic system as motor vehicle drivers.

**Benefit:** It is a primary means by which over 88 percent of the state's youth gain the skills and knowledge required to obtain their driver's licenses.

**Feature:** Equips students with know-ledge and thought processes that will enable them to make rational decisions in traffic.

**Benefit:** Improves quality of individual decisions related to driving in a manner that encourages continuing improvement.

**Feature:** Produces drivers that are responsible as well as competent.

**Benefit:** Besides preparing students for a lifetime of safe driving, today's high school driver education courses are influencing tomorrow's traffic citizens (judges, teachers, police, engineers and other traffic safety authorities). This can influence the traffic accident picture in the future as significantly as teaching youth how to drive.

**Feature:** Uses professionally prepared, certified teachers in a familiar and approved school setting.

**Benefit:** Students receive real life, educationally sound instruction featuring appropriate materials and techniques.

**Feature:** Reaches the majority of all new drivers on an annual basis.

**Benefit:** More future drivers are found in secondary schools than any other single place where systematic instruction can "reasonably be provided at affordable prices."

**Feature:** Consumes less than one per-cent of the high school time available. (Assuming a school day has six hours instructional time for 180 school days during each of four years.)

**Benefit:** Driver education does not subtract a substantial block of time from English, mathematics, science and other subject areas. When spread over 12 years of formal schooling, driver education utilizes .003 percent of instructional time available.

## Driver Education Needed Now More Than Ever

*A survey by the Auto Club of Southern California found that nine out of ten Southern Californians are convinced that driver education helps young people become safer and better drivers, and three out of four say that public school systems are the proper place to teach driver education.*

With the traffic death toll rising, and young drivers are particularly vulnerable, the need for safety education is as strong nationwide as it is in Southern California. The Highway Users Federation points out a valuable spin-off benefit of high school driver education not normally associated with traffic safety - fuel conservation.

After the Arab oil embargo, the use of gasoline in high school driver education programs became a legitimate target for scrutiny. It takes about six gallons of gasoline to train each student to drive properly, so the question of how much gasoline could be saved by abolishing high school driver education was a logical one. The American Automobile Association and the State of Maryland conducted separate studies on the effect of high school driver education on fuel use. The AAA study found that eliminating driver education would not measurably improve the nation's fuel supply, since the courses consume less than two hundredths of one percent of all fuel used for highway transportation in this country. It also found that poor driving habits drop fuel economy by 23 to 44 percent, and concluded that a ten percent reduction in gasoline use could easily be achieved if all American drivers practiced the safety and fuel conservation measures taught in high school driver education.

As for shifting the responsibility for driver education from the high school to the parent, the Maryland study found that instruction in the family car uses more gasoline than instruction in the driver education car.

**In short, both studies found that high school driver education does not waste gasoline. Not only that, but it helps save gasoline because fuel - saving techniques which last a lifetime are taught.**

A safe driver is also a fuel-efficient driver. Evidence that high school driver education does make safer drivers continues to mount.

Much like the 55 mph speed limit, which was imposed to save fuel and ended up saving lives also,

high school driver education was instituted to save lives and is saving fuel as well. Conservation of those two very precious commodities - lives and fuel - should have top priority with the upcoming generation.

## Driver Education Update

Budget watchers, eager to cut taxes, see public education as a prime target. Driver education is certainly not immune from their efforts. After more than 40 years, it remains one of the most closely scrutinized instructional programs. But when the costs of driver education are compared to the hospital and medical bills of those injured in auto accidents and the repair bills for damaged cars, driver education should appeal to the shrewdest of bargain hunters.

Still, there is no doubt that driver education is controversial. While most people agree that would - be drivers need formal instruction, some say that such instruction has no place in the schools.

**There are also unanswered questions about what is expected of driver education.**

*For example, is accident reduction the sole criterion on which it is to be judged successful? Advocates of school programs say that accident reduction is not the only criterion for success. They note that the high school driver education curriculum has concentrated on the attitudinal and manipulative aspects of driving. While safety is an explicit objective in this curriculum, the emphasis has been on learning how to drive - an obviously useful goal.*

Critics of school - based programs point to the Federal Highway Safety Act of 1966, which mandated accident reduction as the sole criterion for evaluating the success of school driver education programs. They also note that numerous attempts at evaluation have produced no convincing evidence that driver education has reduced accidents. **Conversely, advocates point out that there is no evidence that it has not.**

When Horace Mann told us that schools exist to teach people to do better than which they'll be doing at some point in their lives, he made the case for driver education in the schools. Ours is a mobile society. For most of us, participation in this society depends on use of the private automobile. Citizens must be prepared to participate in the transportation system, and the schools are uniquely able to provide the instruction that is necessary.

For years (driver education was introduced in the

## Illinois High School & College Driver Education Association Support Handbook

schools in the mid-1940s), instruction was based on what we simply thought was right. In contrast, today's learning objectives are the outgrowth of rigorous research. In the late 1960s the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, part of the U. S. Department of Transportation, conducted a study of driver education and followed it up with a careful analysis of driving tasks. The analysis determined the relative importance for safety of each driving task. For example, on a scale ranging from -20 to +20, parking has a value of -5 while skid recovery is valued at +16. Instructional programs developed from such data show that driver education is not just a matter of riding around all day. Today's instructor is an educational strategist who leads students through a carefully planned series of learning experiences.

**The best driver education courses are a full semester long.**

Their integrated curriculums offer traditional classroom teaming experiences and on street practice driving, as well as simulated driving experiences. Some courses use multiple-car ranges, where between five and 12 students in separate cars can practice off the street, under the supervision of one teacher. Short-range radio contact facilitates this instruction.

**The best courses are moving away from time - based instruction (30 hours in the classroom and six hours behind - the - wheel) and toward performance - based learning.**

Students are required to demonstrate specific competencies related to roadway use before moving on to the next learning task.

Programs like these teach techniques that experienced drivers had to learn the hard way. Since the immediate environment is so critical to driving, students receive carefully structured perceptual training. They are taught to be better judges of road conditions. The emphasis is on responsible decision-making and performance.

**Conducted by well-prepared, committed teachers, these courses utilize both large and small group instruction.**

The teachers go beyond chalkboard and textbook. In addition to more commonly used media, they enliven instruction with single - concept films on such specific topics as entering a freeway; trigger films to get students' attention; stimulate discussion; and, sometimes, use their own slides of local conditions. They also provide learning activity packages that require accomplishment of a variety of experiences on

the way to achieving a specific competence. These teachers are likely to have acquired major or minor certification in other instructional areas as well as having had specialized preparation in driver and traffic safety education.

Some driver education teachers feel that neglecting to offer training in high-risk situations is like putting a test pilot in an experimental airplane without a parachute. Group instruction makes it possible to cover a wide variety of settings in great detail. On-road experiences will, of course, reinforce the learning. But the key benefit of simulations like these is that they make a smaller amount of the more expensive on-road instruction necessary.

Unfortunately, not all programs include such imaginative instruction. There are token efforts that, because of lack of genuine commitment, aren't doing the job. The lack of commitment may be that of the school board, the administration, or the teaching staff, or of all three. In any event, these weaker courses are recognizable by a number of characteristics.

**An absence of concurrent instruction where both theory and laboratory phases are not integrated and taught together, is one major weakness.**

Offering classroom instruction and behind-the-wheel instruction at different times means that some information and techniques will be lost or forgotten; and opportunities to reinforce learning, omitted.

Another weakness lies in attempts to introduce visual skill instruction and to correct mental errors during the on-road phase of instruction rather than during earlier classroom instruction. These are expensive and time-consuming characteristics of weaker programs. Teachers must learn to get results more efficiently.

Programs that use part-time teachers can be weak, too. Where driver education is a secondary instructional responsibility, there is a greater likelihood that teachers will be under prepared and not be familiar with the characteristics of a good program. Additionally, under such conditions, teachers may give their best energies to their primary subject and less to driver education.

Finally, too many programs still stress skills and give too little attention to decision making. The real potential of driver education is yet to be realized, but research continues.

In addition to the examples of effective instruction mentioned earlier, the following are effective techniques that some teachers are already using. A

## Illinois High School & College Driver Education Association Support Handbook

comprehensive in-car checklist, based on the above-mentioned task analysis, can provide sound direction and uniformity to the learning process. Also, rather than taking students out in the car to encounter problems randomly, some teachers select particular problems and then take students to areas where those problems are more likely experienced.

Some driver education teachers already take the lead in involving teachers of other subjects in cooperative instructional efforts. For example, they work with science teachers on the laws of nature; with social studies teachers on traffic laws; with business teachers on insurance matters; and with health, biology, and physical education teachers on alcohol as it affects driver behavior. Parents, too, can play a role in driver education. Teachers **must** involve them to a greater degree. Finally, the better teachers continue to upgrade and improve their preparation and to implement new ideas as they become available.

Driver education in the schools is one dimension of the broad national traffic safety program. It is assuredly not guaranteed to eliminate all motor vehicle mishaps.

*But driver education does prepare people to do better on that which they'll eventually be doing anyway. Considering the limited time and resources allotted to driver education, it performs this vital function very well indeed.*

## Ten Frequently Asked Questions About High School Driver Education

About four million American teenagers will reach driver-licensing age again this year, and most will begin to experience the pleasures and responsibilities of driving a car. If a teenager is going to drive, concerned parents begin asking questions about what sort of preparation their children ought to get.

The Highway Users Federation, with the help of the American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association, has supplied answers to the following frequently asked questions about driver education.

### 1. Is driver education taught in every high school?

No. But it is taught in about 12,000 -15,000 high schools around the country, three out of every five.

### 2. Is high school the best place to teach

### young drivers?

They can pay for private lessons offered by commercial driving schools, or, for better or worse, be taught by parents or friends. But in most cases, modern, well-equipped high schools offer the best combination of competent staff, administrative capacity, materials and facilities for quality courses. The public agrees.

*A recent survey found that three of four people think that high school is the best place to teach young people how to drive safely.*

### 3. Couldn't I teach my children to drive as well as a professional instructor could?

Possibly, if you are well-schooled in how to teach beginning drivers safe and fuel-efficient driving techniques, traffic laws, signs, signals and markings, motorist's responsibilities, vehicle handling characteristics, vehicle maintenance, hazard perception and decision - making skills and are willing to put in the necessary time and effort. Remember, learning how to drive safely involves more than mastering the mechanics of operating a car. You may also have a bad driving habit or two that your child could pick up.

### 4. How much does high school driver education cost the public?

This depends upon how the course is being taught (two - phase; three - phase; etc.). Salaries, instructional materials, supplies, and capital equipment can cost school districts between \$300 - \$500.

### 5. Where do they get the cars?

The majority of driver education cars are either leased or bought by the school district.

### 6. Couldn't we save a lot of gasoline by abolishing these courses, or at least the practice driving involved?

On the contrary, abolishing driver education would actually increase our use of gasoline. Fuel-saving techniques that last a lifetime are taught in driver education. *One study found that if all drivers practiced the fuel-saving measures taught in high school driver education, the country could achieve a ten percent reduction in gasoline use.* Moreover, a parent teaching a youngster how to drive in the family car uses more gasoline than the instructor in the driver

## Illinois High School & College Driver Education Association Support Handbook

education car. All the high school driver education classes in the country consume less than two-hundredths of one percent of all highway fuel used in the country, a very small investment for saving lives and fuel.

### **7. Doesn't high school driver education encourage youngsters who might not otherwise drive to get a car?**

No more than teaching home economics encourages house buying. Driver education is a "survival" course. *Eight out of ten American adults are licensed drivers, and the percentage is growing. Most young people want to drive, and many need to for occupational or other reasons. Driver education teaches them how to do properly what they are likely to do anyway.*

### **8. Does high school driver education pay off?**

The evidence says yes. Youths who have completed high school driver education courses are cited for fewer moving violations and are in fewer collisions than those involved without instruction. In many states, 16 or 17 year - olds cannot get a regular drivers license unless they complete a driver education course.

### **9. How are these classes organized?**

In most schools, classes begin in the tenth grade. They are a combination of classroom and laboratory instruction. In the classroom, textbooks and other materials are used to supplement lectures, study, and discussions as with any academic subject. The laboratory, part is "practice driving," in which the student gains actual driving experience under the guidance of the instructor. Some schools also use driving simulators in the classroom for additional "life-like" experience.

### **10. How can I help my teenager become a better driver?**

*Insist on a quality driver education course taught by qualified instructors using up-to-date materials and equipment.* You can set a good example, particularly in driving courtesy and attitude. And, you can supplement your child's practice driving by allowing him or her to gain experience under your guidance in night driving, or under various weather and traffic conditions which might not be possible in the school's program.

## Driver Education Research and Random Samplings

*Teenage drivers who have successfully completed high school driver education have fewer convictions and traffic collisions than teenagers who are commercially trained.* (Source: Illinois Secretary of State, 1996; Ohio Study, 1987; Virginia Study, 1986)

### INTRODUCTION

This group of studies represents excerpts from several sources including the states of Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Virginia. While some of these materials date back to 1984 (Ohio study), it's noteworthy to see that when comparing state to state from 1984 through 1996, the findings indicate significant differences between the quality of commercial training and the public school driver education programs.

The intent of this section is to demonstrate a serious drop off in driver performance, much of which is traceable and indicative of the overall quality of both commercial and public school driver education programs.

The purpose of this support handbook has not been to paint a revealing picture of commercial school operations in various states, but rather, the thrust has always been one wherein the quality of all traffic safety programs is maintained or improved.

As traffic safety advocates, it is our hope that in the preparation of tomorrow's drivers, driver education, as a viable discipline, will point to a renewed commitment by all of those concerned.

## State of Illinois

The following are excerpts from a letter of support from George H. Ryan, Secretary of State for the State of Illinois.

Dear Task force Members:

I am writing this letter to express my continued support for quality driver education programs for teens in Illinois. Illinois is one of 30 states that require driver education as a condition of licensure for teens under age 18. I am proud that our requirements in both public schools and commercial schools meet or exceed those in many other states, and I strongly believe that

## Illinois High School & College Driver Education Association Support Handbook

these should not be weakened in any manner.

Driver education in public schools ensures statewide access to low-cost driver training for Illinois teens and their families. In fact, they are the primary provider of driver training in Illinois, training 80 to 90% teen drivers. Without this widespread access to training, many teens might have to forego or delay licensure, often resulting in economic or other hardship.

*Moreover, our statistics show that drivers ages 16-17 who obtain their driver training from commercial schools receive more than two-and-one-half times as many traffic convictions as those students who participate in public school driver education. Those same drivers are also nearly one and one-half times as likely as their public school counterparts to be involved in a crash. This data is based on a recent random sampling of 25,000 young drivers (in the State of Illinois)....*

....We still have much to do. In 1994, over 15% of highway deaths in Illinois were among those aged 16 to 20. We must reduce that tragic figure through traffic safety efforts. It will require increased parental involvement, continued and enhanced education efforts, and adoption of graduated licensing provisions that build on and complement formal driver training. **Continued quality driver training programs offered statewide must be a cornerstone of these efforts to prepare teen drivers.**

I look forward to working with the Task Force to ensure that quality, affordable, accessible driver education remains available to all Illinois teens and their parents, and to promoting the pivotal role that public school programs play in making that possible.

Sincerely,  
George H. Ryan

### State of Michigan

The following excerpts are from AAA Michigan's *Portrait of a Young Driver*.

Two separate studies in 1991 and in 1992 conclude that driver education through public high schools might be better.

*"Commercial driving schools had significantly higher accident and traffic conviction rates when compared to students who took their training at the practice range, traditional, and competency pro-*

*grams in public schools," says Sayeedur Rahman Mallick, author of a study of driver education programs and accidents.*

Certification requirements which are imposed on commercial driving schools should be scrutinized to determine whether they are effective in ensuring quality driver education," adds Mallick.

**"Public school programs scored better than the commercial pro-grams, says Donna Heppe, author of another study of driver education in Michigan. The commercial programs reported the highest number of accidents and convictions per student when compared with any of the other programs."**

(Rink, 1994)

### AAA Michigan Recommendations

Upon review of the data, input from agencies directly involved with Michigan young drivers, and input from AAA membership, AAA Michigan supports and promotes the following concepts:

#### I. Driver Education

A. Continuation of driver education in the public school with emphasis upon placing it back into the general curriculum. We encourage local boards of education to become more involved.

B. Require 30 classroom hours and 6 hour of "behind-the-wheel" training as minimum requirement for all public and commercial driver education programs.

C. Require parental involvement before the issuing of any driving certification for all public and commercial driver education programs. Further research needs to be undertaken to determine the role of the parent.

D. Require monitoring of both public and commercial driver education programs to meet Department of Education and Secretary of State guidelines. Adequate funding should be made available for this monitoring process.

#### II. Licensing Procedure

A. Restructure the provisional licensing process to provide young novice drivers the opportunity to accumulate experience over an extended period of time, in accordance with the following guidelines:

1. Require supervised driving with licensed parent, guardian, or approved (SOS) adult licensed

## Illinois High School & College Driver Education Association Support Handbook

driver.

2. Adjust driving hours during high-risk periods for a limited time.

3. Restrict the number of non-family passengers for a limited time.

4. Require a road test to be given or closely monitored by Michigan Secretary of State after completion of supervised driving time.

### III. Illegal Driving Activities

#### A. Alcohol

Illegal use of alcohol combined with the automobile must remain unacceptable. However, with the passage of two new alcohol laws in Michigan, time is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of these laws in addressing the drinking / driving problem.

#### B. Fifteen year-old drivers

Additional research needs to be completed to better understand why 2,687 15-year-old drivers were involved in crashes during the 1989-91 study period. When the issues are clarified, counter measure programs should be implemented to help reduce these unacceptable statistics.

## State of Minnesota

*The following excerpts are from the St. Paul Pioneer Press of Sunday, February 5, 1995.*

**Some driving schools steer teens off course....inquiry finds lax training and teacher traffic offenses.....**

Each year in Minnesota, more than 20,000 teenagers eagerly enroll in commercial driving schools to learn the rules of the road and get their driver's licenses.

Parents trust their children are in good hands because the schools are licensed and regulated by the state. But too often, that trust has been misplaced, a Pioneer Press investigation found out.

Commercial driving school instructors have been accused of sexually molesting students, counseling them on how to beat speeding tickets and drunken driving charges, and cheating them out of the training time required by law.

It is all part of a growing, but loosely regulated industry spinning out of control, according to driver education experts. Private, **for-profit** driving programs are offering services once provided almost exclusively by high schools.

*More and more often, parents and teenagers choose commercial driving schools for convenience rather than for quality.* Such a choice could spell trouble down the road, authorities say.

Selecting a driving school is risky, the newspaper found during a review of hundreds of licensing files, police reports, court documents and driving records of commercial school owners and teachers:

- Driving instructors have been accused of criminal acts, hostile or abusive behavior toward students, contributing to their delinquency and other inappropriate conduct. One 15-year-old girl had access to liquor, and school cars while staying at the home of her driving instructor.
- Parents and students describe some driving courses as an expensive waste of time. One girl complained that her instructor failed to show up for three classes, allowing her and her classmates to get their licenses without actually receiving the minimum hours of instruction.
- Commercial driving school owners and instructors, as a group, had worse driving records than the general population in Minnesota. They have been cited for offenses that include drunken driving, wrong-way driving, exhibition driving, and failure to stop at school crossings.
- The state provides few safeguards against unscrupulous driving schoolteachers and operators. Jerry Arvidson, who is supposed to oversee enforcement and regulation of the schools for the Public Safety Department, says he is so strapped for time, he seldom documents or investigates complaints.

"The system is currently broke," says John Palmer, a Professor and head of the Traffic Safety Department at St. Cloud State University.

Indeed, Palmer and others contend that the training programs too often are not taken seriously either by the state, the students, their parents, or the instructors.

***Most teenagers simply want a license as quickly and cheaply as possible.***

That's a mistake, given the dire consequences of putting inexperienced drivers on the road. ***In Minnesota, deaths from traffic accidents involving teenage drivers increased 39% in the first seven months of 1994, when compared with the same period in 1993.***

"Students walk out with just enough information to kill themselves," said Palmer, who is in charge of the state's only training program for driver's education teachers in public schools.

(Browning & Collins, 1995, pp. 11 -12),

\* \* \* \* \*

## Lessons Others Have Learned

### How good are the commercial driving schools?

No one can say for sure. The state does not document or investigate most complaints. Rather, it turns them back to the school owners and tells them to deal with them.

That's left some parents doubly unhappy. They're angry that their children got what they consider poor training and they're angry with the state for allowing it to continue.

A woman representing several families complained last year to the state about two commercial schools in Duluth. She said the 'Esse' franchise and the 'Duluth Academy of Driving' didn't deliver the required hours of training, and that the training the students got was practically worthless.

"In talking with the children and their parents, it was just a filmstrip show," said Sharon Hudelson, of Saginaw. "It was a joke."

One of those parents was Linda Urshan, who sent her 16 year-old daughter to Esse of Duluth. She was dissatisfied with what little training she said the school provided.

"One of the classes, I no more than got her there and was home for maybe 15 minutes and she called and said she was done, Urshan said. When I did call and spoke to the instructor, he said, "If you want her to sit there for three hours, she can sit there for three hours."

Urshan said even though her daughter is now a licensed driver, she still worries whether her daughter received proper training.

**"It scares you to death as a parent," she said, "she really could have just read the manual for the instruction that she received in the classroom."**

(Browning & Collins, 1995, p. 13).

## Project Criteria and Guidelines

The Minnesota Public Safety Department provided the Pioneer Press with the names of commercial driving school owners and instructors. Because turnover among the instructors is high, the paper checked the records twice, first in mid-summer and then in late fall.

Reporter, Dan Browning, extracted the instructors' driving records from a computerized file containing more than 2 million traffic convictions between January 1, 1989, and Jan. 31, 1994. A sample of the records was verified by comparing the computerized data with certified copies of the driving records. No errors were found. Reporters then analyzed the number of tickets that all licensed drivers in the state received in the same period and compared those findings with the records of the driving school industry. **The commercial driving school employees had slightly worse driving records when compared to licensed drivers in the general public.**

(Browning & Collins, 1995, p. 14),

\* \* \* \* \*

## The Road Ahead

In the end, Minnesota's commercial driving schools will improve only when parents hold them accountable for teaching teens a skill that could save their lives. Teachers at public and private schools alike lament what they say are declining standards in the quality of driver education programs they offer. They say cutthroat competition is part of the problem, but apathy has done most of the damage.

"People just really don't give a damn," said David Gantner, former president of the Driving School Association of the Americas. He manages the Sears Driving Schools in the Twin Cities.

Palmer, the head of the traffic safety program at St. Cloud State University, warns parents that the state sets only minimum standards for the schools.... standards he called inadequate to protect public safety.

So it's up to the parents to demand better quality, Palmer said. **Yet his research shows that students....not parents....usually choose where they will take driver education. Most teenagers take the path of least resistance.** And that can be a deadly mistake, he said. Gantner agreed, *"What amazes me*

## Illinois High School & College Driver Education Association Support Handbook

*is why we don't kill more than we do."*

(Browning & Collins. 1995. p. 14)

*The following is from the St. Paul Pioneer Press of Monday, February, 6, 1995, issue.*

### **Trainers' Records Blemished....**

Some who teach new drivers say brushes with law are helpful.

Many of the driving instructors who teach your children the rules of the road could use a refresher course themselves. Among the more than 320 private driving school owners, managers, and instructors in Minnesota, are people whose brushes with the law might paint them as bad drivers.

A Pioneer Press investigation found that commercial driving school owners and instructors, as a group, have a worse driving record than Minnesotans in general. They have been frequently cited for such offenses as drunken driving, reckless driving, and speeding,

Should parents be worried who is actually behind-the-wheel with their children). You bet, traffic safety experts say. "Driving instructors need to walk the talk," said Carol Bufton, president of the Minnesota Safety Council. "They need to set an example for the students. All of our employees wear their safety belts when they drive. They don't drive after they have been drinking, and they drive the posted speed limits," said Bufton, whose organization trained 23,000 people in defensive driving last year.

Nancy Johnson, legislative liaison for the Minnesota charter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, lost a child to a drunken driver. She was angered by the newspaper's findings.

**"I really believe that most parents assume that the people who are instructing their children are good drivers." This, however, is not always the case.**

(Browning & Collins, 1995)

*The following excerpts are from the St. Paul Pioneer Press Of Tuesday, February 7, 1995.*

### **High School Driver Education oversight is running on empty. One man held responsible for all Minnesota schools.**

Minnesota teenagers who want a driver's license pay an average of \$200 for training at state-regulated commercial driving schools. Yet the state often doesn't know what the students get for their money.

Some got more than they bargained for: sexual assaults; insults and irresponsible instructors; an investigation by the Pioneer Press has found. Others got less: shortchanged on class time; courses that rely heavily on movies; and behind-the-wheel lessons that include stops at banks, churches, malls, and fast-food stores so their teachers can run errands.

When parents do complain to the Public Safety Department, the agency charged with regulating the schools, their grievances are usually handed over to the schools themselves.

That's just not good enough, say some parents who filed complaints with the state. Driver training is too important to let it slide out of control, they say.

(Browning & Collins, 1995, p.16)

## MISSOURI

*The following excerpts were issued from the Missouri Highway Patrol Study.*

### **Missouri sees increase in road deaths**

- Officials say the lack of driver education programs may be one reason fatalities were up 82% in 16 Northeast Missouri counties.

### **Highway deaths are up sharply in Northeast Missouri, and authorities blame it partly on a decline in the high school driver education programs across the state.**

"A lot is related to younger drivers who weren't paying attention," said Capt. J.T. Hull, spokesman for the Missouri Highway Patrol in Jefferson City.

Unlike Illinois, Missouri drivers under 18 years, are not required to take driver education to get a license. A lot of schools have done away with driver education programs in the past few years," Hull said. "I don't know if that is the whole reason, but it's part of it. There are more inexperienced drivers on the road."

### **Highway deaths increased 82% last year from 1993 in the 16 Northeast Missouri counties known as Troop B, of the Missouri Highway Patrol. Statewide, highway deaths rose 16%.**

State officials don't know how many high schools have cut driver education courses. But of the 10 in Northeast Missouri, nine have either eliminated the course or offer it only in the summer.

Canton High School is the only one to offer a year-round program. "Our program is a rarity," said Terry May.

\* \* \* \* \*

## OHIO STUDY

## Illinois High School & College Driver Education Association Support Handbook

*The following excerpts are from an Ohio study called: Youthful Driver Record Comparisons: Commercial vs. High School Trainees Licensed 1984 and 1985. It was prepared by the Office of the Governor's Highway Safety Representative, and compiled by B. Monroe Barner, OGHSR, Researcher.*

The study compared driving records of all 16 or 17 year old Ohio drivers who were issued licenses during calendar years 1984 and 1985 and at the time the drivers' licenses were issued, had completed either a commercial or high school driver education curriculum. A total of 59,496 driver records of high school trainees were compared to a total of 37,642 driver records of commercial school trainees in terms of the numbers of accidents and convictions accumulated over various time periods immediately following the issue date of each license. Time periods under consideration were 3, 6, 9, 12, 18, 24, and 30 months; and conviction types examined included the five most frequent offenses committed by Ohio drivers during 1984: speed, traffic, control lights, DUI, stop sign, and assured clear distance.

**Cumulative accident and conviction rates were found to differ significantly (at the .01 level); high school driver education graduates had a greater percentage of records without accidents or violations; a lower accident involvement rate; a lower speed violation conviction rate; and a lower (overall) conviction rate than their commercially trained peers. The high school accident and conviction rates remained consistently lower than the corresponding commercial rates for all time intervals examined.**

Although the causes of these variances are not easily identifiable, statistical control comparisons established that the differences between conviction rates were probably not attributable to the minor variations in the compositions of the two groups with respect to age and/or sex. **The thrust of these statistics is that statistically significant differences in the drivers' early performances do exist, and thus represent immediate concerns in terms of economic losses and injuries resulting from highway accidents.**

\* \* \* \* \*

## Conclusions

Statistically, significant differences exist between

the driving records of drivers who completed a high school driver education curriculum and the records of drivers who completed a commercial driver education program. Although the causes of these variances are not easily identifiable, the thrust of these statistics is that statistically significant differences in the drivers' early performances do exist, and thus represent immediate concerns in terms of economic losses and injuries resulting from highway accidents.

- The high school groups achieved overall **conviction rates** that were consistently, lower than the equivalent rates exhibited by the commercial groups during the first 30 months of driving experiences.
- The high school groups achieved **accident involvement rates** that were consistently lower than the equivalent rates exhibited by the commercial groups during the first 30 months of driving experience.
- The high school groups contained a significantly higher proportion of drivers who *had neither an accident nor a conviction on their driving records.*
- The high school groups had a significantly **lower** proportion of drivers whose records showed at least one accident and one conviction.
- The high school groups achieved overall conviction rates that were **consistently lower** than the equivalent rates exhibited by the commercial groups during the first 30 months of driving experiences.
- The high school groups achieved a speed violations conviction rate that was **consistently lower** than the equivalent rate exhibited by the commercial group during the first 30 months of driving experience.

According to the Ohio Department of Motor Vehicles' Driver License Division, approximately 175,000 16 and 17 year-olds receive licenses each year in Ohio. Of these 175,000 new drivers, about 65,000 will have graduated from a commercial driver education program. Statistics presented earlier in this report suggest that, during their first 12 months of driving, these 65,000 drivers will be involved in 11,173 accidents, whereas 65,000 drivers of their high-school-trained counterparts will be involved in 9,340 accidents. Using 5-year average proportions of the severities of state-wide accidents (from 1981-1985, inclusive), the annual difference of more than 1,800 (reportable) accidents would result in an accident distribution approximating:

## Illinois High School & College Driver Education Association Support Handbook

- 8 fatal accidents involving 9 deaths;
- 575 injury accidents involving 68 serious visible injuries, 368 minor, visible injuries, and 457 non-visible injuries; and,
- 1,217 property damage accidents.

The **direct** calculable costs of these accidents and injuries (i.e., wage loss, medical expenses, insurance administration costs, and property damage), as determined by the National Safety Council would therefore result in an estimated **minimum** dollar loss to Ohio of \$75,000,000 per year.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Virginia

*The following excerpts are from the Virginia Study entitled: "Driver Education in Virginia: An Analysis of Performance Report Data" prepared by the Virginia Highway and transportation Research Council for the State Department of Education. It was written by Kevin A. Ohlson, Research Scientist Assistant, and Charles B. Stoke, Research Scientist.*

### **The analysis of the data gathered led to the following findings:**

- Students graduating from commercial driving schools in Virginia have a **significantly greater** incidence of accident involvement and a **significant higher** rate of conviction for motor vehicle offenses than do students who receive their driver training at a public or private school.
- During their first 3 years of driving, young people are convicted of motor vehicle offenses at an increasing rate each successive year, and this rate increases to such a degree that males who graduate from public high school driver education courses and who have 2 to 3 years of driving experience, receive approximately 50.7 convictions for every 100 students during a single 12-month period. The comparative number of males who take commercial driver education 71.3 convictions for every 100 students during the same time frame.
- Young people who receive their training in a two-phase driver education program generally accumulate fewer convictions per 100 students than do their counterparts who receive their training in three-phase range, three phase simulator, or four-phase programs. The capsulized versions of these and other findings are in the section of this report entitled

### *"Analysis of the Data."*

## Analysis of the Data

Terms:

CDS = Commercial Driving School

HSDE = High School Driver Education

- During a 12-month period, and after 2-3 years of driving experience, CDS males had 71.3 convictions per 100 trained drivers as compared to 50.7 convictions for males who took HSDE.

- The rate of convictions rises as the years of experience increases.
- Over a two-year period, CDS males had 194.0 convictions per 100 drivers, and

CDS

- Females had 69.7 convictions per 100 drivers.
- As a comparison, during the same two-year period HSDE males received 118.8 convictions per 100 drivers, while females had 42.4 convictions per 100 drivers.
- The combined number of convictions for male CDS students was 63.3% higher than that for male HSDE students.
- The combined number of convictions for female CDS students was 64.4% higher than that for female HSDE students.
- Students who had successfully completed a commercial school program had a greater number of crashes per 100 drivers than did those who had successfully completed their instruction in a public school.
- Crashes peaked at the 1 - 2 year experience level.
- Over the length of the two-year study, the combined number of crashes for CDS males was 47.4 per 100 drivers, while the HSDE males only encountered 31.5 crashes per 100 drivers.
- Over the length of the two-year study, the combined number of crashes for CDS females was 31.2 per 100 drivers, while the HSDE females only encountered 21.1 crashes per 100 drivers.
- **The combined numbers of crashes for both males and females who had successfully completed their instruction in a commercial school were over 50% higher than those for students who had completed their instruction in a public high school.**

