



Connections Idea of the Week
For Week ending 2/12/10



Connection to Goal

- Personalization

Amount of Time:

- 25 Minutes

Materials

- Projector
- Internet Access

Summary of Activity for the Advisor:

- Read with students CNN.com article about state laws banning texting and driving nationwide. (see below)
- Show 15 minute clip from Oprah about the dangers of teenagers and texting while driving. Follow this link to view the clip online.
<https://mail.easthartford.org/exchweb/bin/redir.asp?URL=http://www.oprah.com/oprahshow/Watch-Oprahs-No-Texting-and-Driving-Show>

Read/Review/Discuss/Do with students:

- Review the potential dangers of texting and driving highlighted in the article and the video clip.
- Have students sign the pledge to not text and drive. This pledge can be found on by following the same link to the Oprah show website.

Illinois to ban texting while driving

(CNN) -- Illinois will become the 17th state on Thursday to ban texting while driving, a safety worry that has caught the attention of the federal government.

Gov. Pat Quinn will sign an amendment to the Illinois Vehicle Code that prohibits writing, sending or receiving text messages while driving, said the governor's spokeswoman, Marlena Jentz. The bill does make texting exceptions for drivers who pull over to text or shift their car into park or neutral to message while stopped in traffic.

Illinois will join a growing list of states looking to curb accidents linked to texting. Oregon and New Hampshire banned texting drivers in July, and Alaska, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, North Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, Washington and the District of Columbia already have laws in place. Four U.S. senators announced their plan to push for a federal ban on July 29. U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood said the Obama administration will convene a summit to discuss how it can end accidents caused by distracted drivers.

Despite the ongoing efforts to address the dangers of texting while driving, studies have not shown whether the laws affect accident rates, said Jonathan Adkins, communications director at the Governor's Highway Safety Association.

The nonprofit association comprised of appointees from each state's governor's office has closely followed the texting while driving saga. But Adkins said that because of several factors that potentially play a role in an accident, to know whether texting caused an accident would require a subpoena or an admission by the driver.

In New York and New Jersey, the impact has been measured by an increase in driving tickets, but too few states track that data, Adkins said.

"With drunk driving it was important to pass tough laws, but the laws won't really have any effect unless they're enforced and the public knows about it and it's properly adjudicated," said Barbara Harsha the association executive director. "So passing a law isn't the solution, it's only part of it."

Studies have shown that those who text while driving have an exponentially greater risk of an accident or near accident.

A Virginia Tech Transportation Institute study found that truck drivers who texted while driving were 23 times more likely to crash or nearly get into wrecks than undistracted drivers.

Compared with dialing, talking, listening or reaching for an electronic device, texting posed the greatest accident risk, the study found -- most likely due to the almost five seconds researchers found the drivers' eyes were off the roadway while texting, said Rich Hanowski, the director of the Center for Truck and Bus Safety at the transportation institute.

The focus on texting while driving comes after a some high-profile accidents.

In September, a California commuter train engineer missed a stop signal while trading text messages with a friend, leading to a collision with a freight train that killed 25 people, according to federal investigators.

A mass-transit accident in Boston, Massachusetts, injured 62 people in May. The operator of a Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority trolley was later charged with gross negligence after he admitted he had been texting seconds before the collision with another trolley, according to the Suffolk County district attorney and a National Transportation Safety Board official.