“Decide to Drive” Program Overview

Through the Decide to Drive initiative, high school students have the opportunity to create positive change in their community while helping to hone essential skills for college readiness. The Decide to Drive program uses Common Core-ready language arts lessons and activities to raise awareness about distracted driving among teens in grades 9–12. A culminating student magazine project prepares teens to be advocates for remaining aware and alert behind the wheel.

Distracted Driving Defined

Distracted driving is any activity that could divert attention away from the primary task of driving. All distractions endanger driver, passenger, and bystander safety (Distraction.gov). These could include, but are not limited to, texting, using a cell phone, eating, drinking, putting on makeup, combing your hair, talking to friends, looking at maps, or reaching into the backseat for something.

Fast Facts

In 2011, 3,331 people were killed in crashes involving distracted drivers and an estimated additional 387,000 people were injured in motor vehicle crashes involving distracted drivers. (“New NHTSA Analysis Shows 2011 Traffic Fatalities Declined by Nearly Two Percent,” National Highway Traffic Safety Administration).

According to a survey released in 2013 by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, there are 660,000 drivers on the roads of America at any given moment of the day who are engaging in texting, tweeting, making phone calls, or otherwise using technology in a way that distracts them from driving. (“NHTSA Survey Finds 660,000 Drivers Using Cell Phones or Manipulating Electronic Devices While Driving at Any Given Daylight Moment,” NHTSA).

A 2012 AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety distracted driving study found that 15.1 percent of teens drove while engaged in distracting activities that did not involve an electronic device. These distractions included adjusting controls, grooming, eating or drinking, reaching for an object inside the car, communicating with people outside of the car, turning around to see the backseat and reading. ("Distracted Driving Among Newly Licensed Teen Drivers," AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety).

Compared to non-distracted drivers, drivers who text are 23 times more likely to be involved in a car crash. ("Key Facts and Statistics," Virginia Tech Transportation Institute).
Lesson 1: Distracted Driving—Dangers, Awareness, and Advocacy
Students learn basic facts about distracted driving and explore the art of persuasive writing by identifying the use of ethos, pathos, and logos in a short article about the epidemic of distracted driving in America. Next, students exercise their critical thinking skills in a group discussion before composing a short essay about distracted driving and the power of advocacy.

Lesson 2: Facts, Statistics, and Charts
Students delve deeper into the topic of distracted driving as they perform their own research to uncover attention-getting facts from reputable national, state, and local resources. Students will discuss what kind of facts will have the greatest impact on their target audience and how to present data in an appropriate chart or graph. This lesson culminates with students writing a short essay exploring ways to end distracted driving in their community.

Lesson 3: Distracted Driving and Our School
Students perform their own distracted driving assessment at a location close to school to better understand the prevalence of distracted driving in their immediate community. After collecting their data, students compare their results with the national statistics collected in Lesson 2 and create appropriate visual representations of the data.

Culminating Project: Student-Created Advocacy Magazine
Students will create a four-page magazine filled with images, charts, and short articles about the dangers of distracted driving to distribute to members of their community. Some students will create a magazine geared toward parents and adults in the community, while others will create a magazine geared toward other students. In conjunction with publishing this magazine, students will consider other ways to be effective advocates in their community, such as organizing a distracted driving awareness event or creating an advocacy campaign for social media.
Lesson 1: Distracted Driving—
Dangers, Awareness, and Advocacy

Activity: Have students read Worksheet A, which includes the article “The Devastating Consequences of Distracted Driving,” and then complete the analysis page examining how the author of the article uses the three modes of persuasion: ethos (demonstrating credibility and authority), pathos (appealing to the reader’s emotions), and logos (appealing to the reader’s logic).

Direct students to write a short essay in response to “Devastating Consequences of Distracted Driving.” Remind students to pay careful attention to using correct grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling while crafting an essay that addresses the following questions:

- How would you define distracted driving? What are some activities that are examples of this?
- Have you ever noticed distracted driving in your own community?
- What did you learn about distracted driving and its impact on society?
- What does it mean to be an “advocate”? How could advocacy be a way to make driving safer for everyone?

Critical Thinking: Despite the increase in the number of state laws banning texting and restricting phone use while driving, distracted-driving related crashes have continued to cause fatalities and permanent injuries. Ask students to consider this trend and support their opinions with evidence from the text.

- Why might new laws not be effective in preventing distracted driving?
- How would you explain the behavior of drivers who see others driving while distracted, but do not change their own behavior?
- What measures do you think states should take to combat distracted driving?

Community Connection: As distracted-driving laws are proving difficult to enforce, more dramatic decreases in distracted driving will likely result from individuals policing their own behavior behind the wheel. This is where advocacy can prove a powerful tool in making the roadways safer for drivers, passengers, and bystanders alike.

- Did the article change the way you think about distracted driving?
- What do you think might happen if more people were aware of the dangers of distracted driving?
- How do you think advocating for safer driving could make a difference in terms of addressing this serious national safety concern?
- How might you become an advocate?

Role-Play: Invite students to work in pairs and take turns practicing a conversation they could have with a peer, a parent, and a stranger (three different scenarios) about the dangers of distracted driving. How might their approach vary for each scenario? For students in grades 9 and 10, ask them to summarize points of agreement and disagreement between their own opinions and those of their partner at the end of the roleplay activity. For students in grades 11 and 12, ask them to actively probe their partner’s reasoning and express divergent opinions.
The Devastating Consequences of Distracted Driving

by Zoe Franklin

A few seconds can change a life forever. It was April 18, 2010, when Aaron Brookens, then age 19, was driving home after spending the weekend with his girlfriend, Kelly. As he sped down Interstate 90 at 75 mph, he decided to send her a quick text. When he looked up from his phone, he saw a towering wall of white zooming toward him as his truck slammed into the rear of a slow-moving semi. His vehicle slid almost entirely underneath the semi and it took first responders nearly an hour to free Aaron from the wreckage. He was airlifted to a local hospital with two broken femurs, a fractured knee and ankle, cuts to his internal organs, and nerve damage to both of his legs. He was told he may never walk again.

According to a new survey released by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, approximately 387,000 people were injured in motor vehicle crashes involving a distracted driver. In recent years, many states have banned texting and limited the use of cell phones while driving. However, as our nation’s laws are getting tougher on one of the most common sources of driver distraction, distracted driving continues to cause fatalities and permanent injuries.

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood (2009–2013) captures the essence of this seeming paradox when he says, “You see it every day: Drivers swerving in their lanes, stopping at green lights, running red ones, or narrowly missing a pedestrian because they have their eyes and minds on their phones instead of the road. Yet, people continue to assume that they can drive and text or talk at the same time.” Despite these new driving laws, people’s attitudes toward

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660,000 American drivers text, tweet, make phone calls, or otherwise use technology in a way that distracts them from driving. And this is only a fraction of the problem. A 2012 AAA driving study found that while 6.7% of teen drivers drove while distracted by an electronic device, more than twice as many drivers (15.1%) drove while engaged in other distracting activities, including adjusting controls, grooming, eating or drinking, reaching for an object inside the car, communicating with people outside of the car, turning around to see the backseat, and reading. Any activity that takes a driver’s eyes off the road and hands off the wheel endangers the driver, passengers, and bystanders.

Driving while distracted can have devastating consequences. In 2011, 3,331 people were killed in crashes involving a distracted driver. An additional multitasking while driving have yet to change. Clearly, reducing the number of distracted drivers will take more than the efforts of law enforcement alone.

Preventing the hundreds of thousands of life-altering crashes caused by distracted driving begins with each individual deciding to focus on driving safely each time he or she enters a vehicle. And it is the responsibility of passengers, friends, and family members to speak up when they observe distracted driving.

After numerous surgeries and a lengthy rehab, Aaron has regained much of his mobility and considers himself lucky to be alive. “You don’t think it’s going to happen to you. I heard how many times in my life that texting and driving was dangerous, but obviously I was still doing it,” he says. “If the text is that important, pull over. It’s not worth your life. You might not be as fortunate as I was.”
Elements of Persuasive Writing

Let’s examine closely the way this author uses the modes of persuasion (ethos, pathos, and logos) to craft a persuasive article. Use a separate sheet of paper as needed.

What is the author’s central idea and purpose in writing this article?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

ETHOS: Establishing your credibility on the topic. How does the author establish credibility in her article? Cite specific examples from the text.
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

PATHOS: Connecting to your audience on an emotional level. How does the author evoke an emotional response from her readers? Cite specific examples from the text.
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

LOGOS: Using logic to persuade your audience. These are the facts and figures used to support a writer’s claims or thesis. Effective use of logos also benefits the author’s ethos. How is the use of logos demonstrated in the article? Cite specific examples from the text.
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

CRITICAL RESPONSE: Do you think the author’s use of ethos, pathos, and logos in her article was effective? Why or why not? How did these techniques strengthen her argument? How did these techniques make her article more engaging? Is there anything you would change about the article to make it even more persuasive?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Lesson 2: Facts and Statistics

Fast Fact: Nearly 80 percent of all crashes and 65 percent of all near crashes involve driver inattention within three seconds of the accident. (“Breakthrough Research on Real-World Driver Behavior Released, Virginia Tech Transportation Institute).

Warm-Up: Ask students to recall what they learned about the use of ethos, pathos, and logos in persuasive speaking and writing.

- Was there a particular mode of persuasion that impacted them most from the article “The Devastating Consequences of Distracted Driving” or was the combination of approaches most effective?
- Would the article still have been effective without any facts and statistics? Why or why not?

Activity: Provide students with copies of Part 1 of Worksheet B and access to the Internet in order to perform their research on facts and statistics related to distracted driving. Ask students to make sure part of their research includes quantitative data and information they located in video or multimedia formats in addition to traditional text formats. Remind students to always assess the credibility of the sites where they conduct research, as well as to cite their sources.

Critical Thinking: There is an ever greater amount of research into distracted driving, and yet more information does not equate to more effective advocacy; rather, it’s selecting just the right facts to support your message and then presenting them effectively.

- Who is the audience you hope to reach as an advocate?
- What kinds of facts do you think will have the greatest impact on your audience in terms of motivating them to change their driving habits? Why?
- Is including more facts always better? Why or why not?
- What kinds of images do you think will have the greatest impact on your audience?

Community Connection: Invite students to write a short essay exploring approaches they could use to advocate with peers, parents, and even adults they don’t know very well. Students should use proper grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation in their writing, as well as reference facts and statistics from their research.

- What statistics from your research do you feel are most attention grabbing?
- What might you say to your parents if you notice they are driving while distracted?
- How might you encourage a friend to be more focused while driving?
- Are there ways that someone who doesn’t even drive a car can be an effective advocate?

Role-Play: Help your students become confident “interrupters” of distracted driving by having them practice ways to intervene when they notice someone engaging in a distracting activity while driving. As a class, brainstorm distracted driver scenarios and list them on the board. Ask students to categorize the suggested ways to interrupt distracted drivers, summarizing points of agreement and disagreement. Next, divide students into pairs and ask them to take turns being the driver and the “interrupter” in the various scenarios described by the class. What code word or phrase could students use with friends and family to remind each other to focus on the road if they notice that the driver is distracted? For students in grades 11 and 12, ask them to actively probe their partner’s reasoning and express divergent opinions. How could a passenger offer to take over an activity that would distract the driver?
Facts, Statistics, and Charts

PART 1: FINDING THE FACTS
Becoming an effective advocate begins with understanding the facts about your topic. Using the Internet, locate facts and statistics you can use to persuade others to be more aware drivers. Record your research on a separate sheet of paper. Be sure to always note your source.

Before you begin your research, consider the following:

>>> What kinds of facts, media, and images do you think would be most useful when trying to persuade someone to change his or her driving habits?

>>> Do you think local, statewide, or national statistics, or a combination of all three would have the greatest impact on your audience? Why?

>>> Look for local news stories about distracted driving in your community. Does your community and/or state have distracted-driving laws? If so, how many individuals have been ticketed since the law(s) went into effect?

>>> After evaluating several sources, how would you define distracted driving? What are examples of distracted driving?

>>> Assess the credibility of each source you consult. How do you know it is a trustworthy source of information?

DISTRACTED DRIVING RESOURCES

>>> distraction.gov  >>> nhtsa.gov  >>> decidetodrive.org
>>> cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/distracted_driving  >>> ghsa.org

PART 2: CHOOSING THE RIGHT KIND OF GRAPH OR CHART
Presenting information in the form of a graph or chart is an effective way to convey a lot of information quickly. But not all data fit in every type of chart. Review the types of charts shown below and consider which format will best highlight the trend or “message” of the data that you want to present. Also take note of the charts you see as you’re collecting research. Be sure to create an attention-grabbing title, label each axis, and select the units of measurement for your chart wisely.

BAR GRAPH

PIE CHART

FREQUENCY TABLE

LINE GRAPH
Lesson 3: Distracted Driving and Our School

Fast Fact: Of those people killed in distraction-affected crashes, 385 died in crashes in which at least one of the drivers was using a cell phone (12% of fatalities in distraction-affected crashes) at the time of the crash. Use of a cell phone includes talking/listening to a cell phone, dialing/texting a cell phone, or other cell-phone-related activities. ("Traffic Safety Facts: Distracted Driving 2011," National Highway Traffic Safety Administration).

Warm-Up: As a way to reconnect with the research students performed in Lesson 2, have students share a fact or statistic related to distracted driving that they found particularly interesting. Then have students consider how their community might compare to the state or nation as a whole in terms of levels of distracted driving. Ask students to clarify, verify, or challenge ideas during the classroom discussion.

- Compared to the nation as a whole, do you think there is a greater or lower percentage of distracted drivers in your community? What makes you think this?
- Do you think drivers are more likely to drive safely when close to a school? Why or why not?

Activity: Guide students in designing a distracted-driving survey to be conducted near the school or at a busy local intersection. Ask students to determine the parameters of their survey (such as what specifics to record for each distracted driver they see). Have students agree upon a set number of drivers to observe, such as 50 or 100, and determine how they will work together to get an accurate count of distracted drivers. Before they conduct the survey, make sure students have created one survey template that everyone can use to standardize recording their observations.

Critical Thinking: Have students use their data to create a statistical profile of the distracted driving they observed. They should create percentages of the different types of distracted driving, as well as the frequency of distraction. Using the data collected in Lesson 2, have students write a comparative profile of the local data with state and national rates. As students write, remind them to pay close attention to using correct grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. Ask students to verify their data and challenge or corroborate conclusions.

- Does the level of distracted driving we observed in our community reflect state or national findings?
- What might explain the differences between student observations and state or national statistics?
- What was the most common form of driver distraction you observed?
- How does this finding compare to surveys that have been performed using a larger set of data?
- Were you surprised by any of the results?

Community Connection: Provide students with Part 2 of Worksheet B. After they review the different types of charts and graphs, ask students to create appropriate visual representations of the data they collected during their distracted-driving assessment. In addition, have students create a two-way frequency table comparing the frequency of various forms of distracted driving as revealed by national surveys and the class’s own community assessment.

- What does the data collected from our community assessment tell us about the level of distracted driving in our area?
- When you examined the possible choices for ways to convey data visually in the form of a chart or graph, which format[s] made the most sense? Why?

Role-Play: Changing one’s habits takes the support of a whole community of friends and family. Ask students to pair up and role-play the various ways they can convince others to become advocates for safe driving. Have them imagine the barriers others have to speaking up when they see distracted driving. How will they convince friends and family members to pledge not to drive distracted and to interrupt others when they witness distracted driving? How could students coach others to become “distracted-driving interrupters”?
**Fast Fact:** Of those people killed in distraction-affected crashes, 385 died in crashes in which at least one ten percent of fatal crashes and 17 percent of injury crashes in 2011 were reported as distraction-affected crashes. (“Traffic Safety Facts: Distracted Driving 2011,” National Highway Traffic Safety Administration).

**Warm-Up:** Have students look at a variety of magazines covering a diverse range of topics from business and news to fashion and pop culture.

- What do you notice about the covers of these magazines?
- What do you notice about the balance between blocks of text and visual elements like photos, drawings, and charts? How is color used?
- Which magazines grab your attention most and make you want to pick them up and flip through the pages?
- What do you think makes some magazines more attractive and inviting than others?
- When flipping through a magazine, which parts do you look at most? Headlines? Captions? Visuals?

**Activity:** Divide the class into groups of four. Some groups will create a distracted driving awareness magazines designed to appeal to their peers, while other groups will create magazines geared toward parents and other adult members of the community. Explain that the magazines will include the following components:

- A brief informative or explanatory essay that introduces the topic of distracted driving (Students should pay attention to the conventions of this form of writing, including using a formal style, thoughtfully organizing ideas to illustrate relationships between concepts, employing logical transitions to link sections of text, incorporating relevant facts and definitions, and providing a conclusion that articulates the significance of this topic).
- A persuasive essay that underscores the importance of educating others about the dangers of distracted driving (Students should pay attention to the conventions of this form of writing, including using a formal style, clearly defining their claim as well as addressing counterclaims, providing relevant evidence, establishing the relationships between claims, evidence, reasons, and counterclaims and including a conclusion section that supports the argument presented).
- An essay summarizing the results of the distracted driving survey from Lesson 3 (Students should write using a formal style, thoughtfully organize their findings, incorporate any necessary definitions to aid reader comprehension, and summarize their findings in a conclusion paragraph that articulates the significance of their survey).
- One or two charts that depict survey data and findings.
- Distracted-driving advocacy tips.

Have students meet with their group to brainstorm ideas for their magazine, strategize on how best to divide up the work, and go over the magazine content specifics included in Worksheet C. If feasible, encourage students to make use of technologies such as Google documents or Dropbox in order to facilitate their collaboration.

**STUDENT CONTEST!** Students could win cash prizes up to $1,000, as well as a tablet computer for their teacher advisors, when they submit their student advocacy magazine to DecidetoDrive@aaos.org by November 22, 2013. Read more about the contest here.

**Critical Thinking:** Every single person has the power to inspire change in his or her community by taking a stand and speaking out about an important issue like distracted driving.

- Why is it important to create these magazines to share with members of your community?
- What do you hope people will learn from your magazine?
- How will you inspire and empower others to speak up when they see distracted driving?
- Why might it be most effective to create a variety of advocacy materials geared toward different groups?
- How will your target audience influence the way you create your magazine?

**Community Connection:** Brainstorm further opportunities for advocacy, such as visiting other classrooms to raise awareness, organizing a community event to educate the public, writing letters to the editor of a local newspaper, or creating campaigns for social media. Challenge students to share their magazines digitally to widen the reach of their advocacy efforts.
Advocacy in Action: Creating a Student Magazine

Magazines that combine eye-catching visuals, thought-provoking statistics, and touching personal stories can be powerful tools for educating others about the dangers of distracted driving. Follow these guidelines to create a magazine that will raise awareness about distracted driving. Be sure to revise, edit, and rewrite in order to present your best work. Using correct grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling in your magazine is essential to communicating effectively with your audience!

How are you going to get people’s attention and convey the essence of your message in a single glance? Your cover should include the title of your magazine, bold imagery, and a brief introduction to the topic of your magazine.

You got your readers to open up your magazine, so now what do you want to tell them? On this page, provide an overview of distracted driving with a startling statistic that will get your readers’ attention. This page also should feature a short persuasive article that underscores the importance of educating others about the dangers of distracted driving.

Share the results of your class’s distracted-driving survey. This page should include an article describing the results of the distracted-driving survey as well as a sidebar featuring one or two charts depicting the survey data and findings.

Make a statement with the back cover of your magazine. Create a poster, advertisement, or other visually creative piece advocating the importance of awareness of distracted driving. Include a special box containing tips on what to say if you see a friend or family member (or even someone you don’t know very well) engaging in distracted driving.

**TOP TIPS**
- Did you know that readers are most likely to read captions and quotations that have been enlarged and set into the text? Take advantage of professional layout strategies to get your message across to your reader.
- Try to incorporate all the modes of persuasion (ethos, pathos, and logos) into your magazine as some readers might respond better to one mode over another.
- Charts and graphs are eye-catching, but are only effective if they’re thoughtfully crafted and labeled.
- Use color and variation in your page layout to grab your readers’ attention.