



## Reaching Eleven and Twelve Year Olds

Safe Kids Worldwide has developed many programs to reach young children and parents of infants. For CPS week in 2008 and again this year the goal is to reach older children that are often not as likely to be buckled up in a vehicle than they were at a younger age. By the time a child reaches the age group 8-14 they are 20% less likely to be restrained in fatal crashes as are children under age 1[1]. Here we have collected some research on strategies to reach young adolescents on why this age group is unique in their learning behavior.

A report by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development states that early adolescence (ages 10-14), is a “crucially formative phase” in an individual’s life. [3] The report goes on to say that:

“...early adolescence is the phase when young people begin to adopt behavior patterns in education and health that can have lifelong consequences. At the same time, it is an age when, much like younger children, individuals still need special nurturing and adult guidance. For these reasons, early adolescence offers a unique window of opportunity to shape enduring patterns of healthy behavior.

Therefore, reaching children at this critical learning juncture in their development is an opportunity to shape the health decisions they make for the rest of their lives. Another article states that “Young adolescents’ brains are at a critical point of development... [developmentally] they are at their most receptive point for intellectual and moral reasoning.” [2] Therefore it is a critical time to teach about being aware of the consequences of their actions. Children are beginning to be able to make their own decisions about their health and safety based on information provided to them and not necessarily based on what they are told.

When conducting these Safest Generation events it is helpful to realize that these exercises are designed to appeal to children in a variety of ways. It should be fun, informative, creative, and children should feel as if they have accomplished something important by taking part in the activities. It may be helpful to keep in mind what one article states as seven items that young adults crave:

1. Positive social interaction with adults and peers
2. Structure and clear limits
3. Physical activity
4. Creative expression

5. Competence and achievement
6. Meaningful participation in families, school, and communities
7. Opportunities for self-definition”

Another author suggests that young adolescents want connection with what they are learning and the world around them. They want to understand not only what they are learning but why they are learning these things. This author suggests that an instructor relates “topics to past experiences and life outside of school and involving learners in tasks that reflect civic or work-world responsibilities.” So the more the learning experience can be related to the lives of the children, the more likely they are to participate and absorb the important messages.

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2 Day One and Beyond: Practical Matters for New Middle-Level Teachers by Rick Womeli. Copyright 2003. Stenhouse Publishers.  
3 [http://www.carnegie.org/sub/pubs/reports/great\\_transitions/gr\\_chpt1.html](http://www.carnegie.org/sub/pubs/reports/great_transitions/gr_chpt1.html)