

Coordinator Quick Guide

Project Zebra



What is Project Zebra?

A short-duration high visibility campaign to increase awareness of safety around at pedestrian crossings near schools. It includes creative ways to share messages with students and motorists.

Where did this happen?

The pilot was run at Highfield School, Timaru in 2019. It is being evaluated to inform future action.

The project was a collaboration between WAVE – Wellbeing and Vitality in Education, South Canterbury Road Safety and the NZ Police. Auckland Transport kindly shared resources which were adapted for the local project.

What does Project Zebra address?

Driver speed and behaviour in the approach to a pedestrian crossing. Plus, student awareness of the crossing and perceptions of their own safety while walking.

The Timaru pilot was based around two zebra crossings used by Highfield School students. The crossing on Wai-iti Road – a long straight arterial road – is a block away from Highfield School and has a school staff member on duty but no formal school patrol. It is part of a popular route to school, linking via a walkway to a pedestrian crossing outside the school on Rimu St. Students operate as school wardens to assist their peers to cross safely at Rimu St, with another supervising teacher in place there.

The school's travel plan survey identified zebra crossings as a safety issue for students. The school's WAVE lead teacher says there were times when drivers did not stop for students. In other incidents, drivers approached too fast, resulting in sudden braking of the vehicle.

What happened during the Project Zebra week?

Lots of things took place! A postcard was sent home with the school newsletter and messages shared online. The postcard includes safe crossing advice and a puzzle for students.

Student leaders held placards near the crossing and students had cut-out zebras to raise the attention of waiting motorists. A police officer and a coordinator in a zebra costume added their presence to the crossing.

An electronic sign was placed on Wai-iti Road, and media coverage secured in the Timaru Herald/Stuff website.

What steps were taken during the project?

Jane Sullivan, WAVE, explains how Project Zebra was carried out:

1. Both myself, and Deb Quested (School Community Officer, Timaru Police) presented Project Zebra to a full school staff meeting. This included a review of the SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) for the zebra crossings. This happened the week leading into the launch.
2. An electronic flashing sign was placed on Wai-iti Rd warning drivers 'Zebra crossing ahead... Stop for pedestrians.' This went up week before and remained in place for the week of Project Zebra and the following two weeks.
3. The WAVE lead teacher organised the road wardens to be ambassadors and scheduled three ambassadors to be present at each of the two zebra crossings (6 in total) before and after school.
4. Project Zebra was introduced to a full school hui for students on the first day and attended by me (in zebra costume), Deb (SCO) and Daniel Naude (South Canterbury Road Safety Coordinator).
5. The postcard was sent out with the school newsletter to each family. Teachers shared it with children beforehand so they could 'talk' to it at home.
6. A banner was placed on the school's front fence on day one.
7. The school posted updates on Project Zebra on their Facebook page.
8. On the Friday students were invited to join in Footpath Friday, an active travel initiative and receive double 'gotcha' points.

What outcomes were seen during the week?

'Project Zebra certainly got the school community talking. We also noticed a larger number of children using the crossing to get gotcha points. With regards to improving driver behaviour on Wai-iti Road, traffic was certainly going slower and more aware during the focus week. It will be telling if this continues. Our school crossing on Rimu Street is still a concern, where traffic does not stop as they see the wardens holding children back with outstretched arms. This area will need to be reviewed.' Robyn Cooper, WAVE lead teacher at Highfield School.

'Project Zebra has been a great initiative to engage with the school staff, students and families and to start conversations about travel behaviour. It was a very visible project not only for the school but also the wider community and provided a platform to highlight a road safety concern for our young people. The collaborative approach has strengthened the working relationships with the involved agencies.' Jane Sullivan, WAVE health promoter