The Real Cost of Distracted Driving

Understanding the Dangers Behind the Wheel and Making Safer Choices



OBJECTIVE:

Students will identify common driving distractions, understand their consequences, and develop strategies to avoid them.

TIME REQUIRED:

45-60 minutes

Materials:

- Video player
- Worksheet

PREP:

Have videos and worksheets ready.

POWER UP YOUR LESSON:

Reaction Time Challenge: Students try a simple reaction time test (online or with a teacher-led activity) and then repeat it while being distracted (e.g., texting or talking), comparing results.

Data Collection & Analysis Project: Involve students in observing distracted driving behaviors around the school or community (when they're a passenger). Students can analyze the data, present findings, and share ideas.

LESSON

Distracted driving is a leading cause of car crashes, especially among teens. In this lesson, students will explore the real dangers of distractions behind the wheel, discuss why risky behaviors persist, and learn practical ways to stay focused and safe while driving.

1. Discussion: Facing the Facts About Distracted Driving

- Have you ever seen someone use their phone while driving?
- What do you think could happen in just a few seconds of distraction?
- Fact: Sending or reading a text takes your eyes off the road for 5 seconds. At 55 mph, that's like driving the length of a football field with your eyes closed. Does that image change the way you think about texting and driving?

2. Watch and Reflect: Show one or both of the suggested videos:

Show one or both of the videos below available from WVRoadReady.wv.gov. After viewing, ask students to share their initial reactions.

- Video 1: How You Can Be a Defensive Driver
- Video 2: Myths About Speeding

3. Discussion Questions: Facilitate a group conversation using these prompts:

- Why do you think so many people text or use their phones while driving even though they know it's dangerous?
- What are some distractions besides phones that can affect drivers?
- How do you think peer pressure or social media affects driving habits?
- Share: 72% of teens feel the need to immediately respond to texts, social-networking messages, and other notifications, according to Common Sense Media research. Why do you think that is?

4. Worksheet Activity: Distraction Impact Chart

- Students complete a worksheet listing common distractions (texting, eating, loud music, friends in the car, etc.).
- For each, they should rate the risk (low, medium, high), describe the possible consequences, and brainstorm safer alternatives.
- Students can work alone or in groups, then review answers together.

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