

# **Linking Saskatchewan's Health Education Curriculum**

## **Curriculum Guide, Divisions One and Two** **(April, 1977)**

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## **Improving the effectiveness of bicycle-safety education**

Prior to 1977, little research had been conducted on the mechanisms and causes of cycling injuries. Education programs had not yet responded to the unprecedented growth in the use of the bicycle that occurred during the 1960s and early 1970s.

Attempts to improve cyclist safety focused on engineering approaches: improving the design of the bicycle and improving the design of roadways. Standards which appeared at the time represent an important benchmark in the continuing effort to enhance safety through bicycle design. At the same time, bicycle enthusiasts became captivated with the idea of developing a comprehensive system of bicycle facilities which they believed would improve safety: off-street bicycle paths, on-street bicycle lanes, signed bicycle routes, grade-separated crossings, special intersection treatments, and so on. Many of these ideas remain with us today.

When viewed in an abstract sense, it appeared that such a system would greatly reduce bicycling falls and collisions. However, when this approach was submitted to more careful study, it became clear that engineering solutions were not sufficient to prevent injuries or improve safety.

A more effective approach to reducing cyclist injuries is through education. The need for bicycle education had been recognized for a long time - at least since the mid-1800s. However, until the "bike boom" of the 1970s, few organizations were willing to commit their resources to developing bicycle safety education materials.

Public outcry in the mid-1970s resulted in a deluge of safety films, posters, pamphlets and other one-shot information materials, followed by the development of a few comprehensive bicycle safety programs designed for use in public schools. These materials and programs were based on little or no empirical data on the causes of cycling injuries. They have been severely criticized for their simplicity and their failure to address the particular knowledge and skill deficiencies that lead to cycling injuries.

There were no scientific studies of injuries to cyclists until 1974, when Kenneth D. Cross conducted a study for the California Office of Traffic Safety. Subsequently, in 1977 Cross and Gary Fisher published *Identification of Specific Problems and Countermeasure Approaches To Enhance Bicycle Safety*, which looked mostly at cyclist collisions with motor vehicles. Cross's 1978 study *Bicycle-Safety Education--Facts and Issues* presented a more thorough discussion of bicycle safety issues and educational countermeasures. Today, the "Ken Cross studies" are regarded as the cornerstone of bicycle safety research.

Since the 1970s, research has led to improvements in bicycles, helmets and education. The programs in this guide are based on current knowledge. They use reliable methods for improving cyclist safety that were not available at the time Saskatchewan's Health Education curriculum was originally developed.

# Linking Saskatchewan's Physical Education Curriculum

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### Notes:

1. Canadian Cycling Association CAN-BIKE II Instructor certification provides up to date technical and training information equivalent to NCCP certification.