



# Who's In Control?

Social Studies, Safety

## Overview

Trains provide an environmentally friendly alternative: they get people out of their cars, reduce traffic congestion and give people choices about how to get from here to there. Nonetheless, pedestrian and motorist safety are always concerns in cities with rail service. Many people do not know how to cross train tracks safely, nor do they understand the dangers of walking on train tracks. Middle school students will respond to this lesson that begins with a comparison of risky and dangerous actions, then incorporates the video *Are You in Control?* to underscore the message, “You have no control over a train.” Students work in cooperative learning groups where they take on the role of a marketing firm trying to help the local passenger train service spread the word about safe choices. Their goal is to increase citizen awareness through a campaign that illuminates safety messages, as well as the benefits of train travel. Each team of four to five students is responsible for a poster representing its campaign strategy.

## Time Allotment

Six 60-minute lessons

## Learning Objectives

On completion of this lesson students will be able to:

- Differentiate between risky and dangerous actions.
- Develop a poster which demonstrates completion of the steps in creating a public awareness campaign.
- Explain safety messages that help prevent tragedies around train tracks.
- Describe at least three benefits of train travel.

## Media Components

- *Are You In Control?*, (DVD or VHS) available from Elite Promotions, [www.elitepromo.com/stores/oli](http://www.elitepromo.com/stores/oli)
- DVD or VHS player with projector and screen or monitor/TV
- PowerPoint template for optional teacher editing (provided with lesson)

- (optional) Computers for student use in creating ad campaigns, including software for artwork and/or digital image manipulation (e.g., Adobe Illustrator) and software for desktop publishing (e.g., MS Publisher)
- Speakers, if necessary

## Materials and Student Handouts

- Assignment sheet with specifications for creating posters (attached) – one per student
- Video log (attached) – used as reference for the teacher
- Blank poster template (similar to the one at [www.metrocontest.com/files/pdf/0809\\_PosterTemplate.pdf](http://www.metrocontest.com/files/pdf/0809_PosterTemplate.pdf))
- Rubric for grading posters (attached)
- One piece of 8.5x11” paper for each student
- Tape, pushpins or magnets for posting papers on front board
- Dark markers or black crayons
- Small pieces of paper to draw from a hat (see Teacher Preparations)
- A hat or other receptacle to hold the papers for random selection of teams

### Teacher Preparations

- Copy all student handouts.
- Preview the video, *Are You in Control?* and review its incorporation into the lesson's activities. Since the lesson is video-based, the video is an essential component.
- Read through the attached video log/transcript and note messages to highlight for your students.
- View the PowerPoint presentation available with this lesson. Images within it are clip art available for public domain use. Find other images, if necessary or preferred. (See box to right.)
- Familiarize yourself with safety messages that might be incorporated into students' advertising campaigns, accessible through Operation Life-saver's website at [www.oli.org/education\\_resources/safety\\_tips.htm](http://www.oli.org/education_resources/safety_tips.htm)
- Review benefits of train travel on [Amtrak.com](http://Amtrak.com) under News & Media and [APTA.com](http://APTA.com) (American Public Transportation Association) under Media Center: News Releases and Public Transportation Facts.
- Write or type the words train, tracks, lights and bells, engineer, platform, signs and signals, with enough duplicates for even distribution across six teams, and cut the words apart for drawing. (For example, if the class size is 24, there will be four instances of each word or phrase in the hat.)

### Introductory Activity

#### (Day 1)

**Focus:** Pass out one piece of paper per student and prepare to show the slide show. Say: Today, I want to show you some images and see what your answer to some questions might be. The questions have to do with things that might be risky or things that might be dangerous. Is there a difference between those two words? Can anyone define them? (Await well thought-out responses.) Let's fold our piece of paper lengthwise. On one half, at the top of the column, write "Risky" and on the other half, write "Dangerous." With each image you see in the slideshow, write down under the proper heading where you think the image belongs.

**Activity:** Show the slide show beginning with the title slide "Risky or Dangerous?" Follow the sequence shown in the box to the right.

### Power Point Slide Show

*Note: The slideshow template provided with this lesson plan uses line-art images on slides 2-9 that are accessible through [microsoft.com](http://microsoft.com) clip art and that can be used for classroom display.*

**Slide 1** – Title "Risky or Dangerous?"

**Slide 2** – snowboarding: Is this dangerous?

**Slide 3** – ice hockey: Is this risky?

**Slide 4** – gymnastics: What about this?  
Dangerous or risky?

**Slide 5** – rock climbing: Would you do this?  
Why or why not?

**Slide 6** – walking on train tracks: Is this dangerous?

**Slide 7** – surfing: Is this risky?

**Slide 8** – parachuting: What about this?  
Dangerous or risky?

**Slide 9** – jumping on a trampoline:  
Would you do this? Why or why not?

**Follow-up:** Ask students to review their lists. How many different activities did they write under "Risky" or "Dangerous"? Do they have any new definitions or ideas about the two words and what they mean? Explain that today the class will see a video that further defines the two words, and perhaps gives students a different idea about the differences between them.

### Learning Activities

#### Video Lesson (Day 1, continued)

**1. Focus:** First provide some information on the intended outcome of today's video lesson: Tell students they'll be watching a video today that brings to light real-life tragedies that happen when people aren't careful around train tracks. This is their introduction to train safety, and it's important for their assignment – a public education campaign that incorporates safety messages and should result in safer travel for pedestrians.

Now, tell students about the video itself. The

video's cast members are all young people in their age group. These teenagers attend a stunt training school that teaches them film stunts and preparation for stunts that ensures safety. While it might not seem like stunt work and train safety have a lot in common, the video helps to further define the difference between risky and dangerous actions.

While students view the video, they should do two things:

- 1) Write down definitions for risky and dangerous based on what they see and hear.
- 2) Write down any specific train safety messages they hear during the viewing.

Explain that you will pause to call attention to certain areas of the video you want them to note. (For purposes of interactive viewing and discussion during the video, do not turn lights off and use a remote control, if possible.)

**Activity:** View the video in its entirety (approx. 10 mins.), preparing to pause at four key points (marked with double asterisks in the attached log sheet).

**Pause** at the first pause point (approx. 1:09).

**Ask:** What does Miles say you need to have if you're going to do something that might be considered risky? (You need to "have the right gear, the right training and the right people to show you the ropes.") Before resuming, preview the question Miles is about to ask in the video, "What makes trains different?" Encourage responses. Remind students of their focus for viewing (definitions and safety messages), and resume play.

**Pause** for discussion at the second pause point (approx. 3:25). **Ask:** What does Mike say is the most dangerous thing? ("The unexpected, what you don't know about.") Does this perspective add to the students' definition of "dangerous"? Ask students to listen specifically for the comparison Luke and Mike make between stunt work and playing around trains.

**Pause** for discussion at the third pause point (approx. 7:20). **Ask:** Can you help explain the message here? What comparison have the cast members made between stunt work and playing

around trains? What does control have to do with it?

**Pause** for discussion at the fourth pause point (approx. 9:37). **Ask:** When it comes to trains, who is in control? How is control a key piece of the definition of the word dangerous? In the final segment, there will be several train safety messages, so just like you should do when you're near a train, keep alert!

**Follow-up:** Return to the two assignments given prior to viewing. Ask students what they have written down for the definitions of risky and dangerous. Did their definitions change? Would they change the placement of any of the images they saw in the slide show, now that they have some more information and another perspective? Why or why not?

What about train safety messages? If they did not catch some of the key messages, you may wish to replay the video with the focus task of listening for safety messages. Use pause to underscore each message. The messages include:

- *Stay off, stay away, stay alive.*
- *Trains can come from any direction.*
- *Tracks are for trains.*

## (Day 2)

**2. Focus:** Ask students if being around trains is so dangerous, why do people take trains to work or as a mode of transportation for pleasure? If you think back to the video, which was really the thing that was most dangerous – the trains or the way people act around them? So if the bad choices people might make around trains are the really dangerous things, then what do we all need to do? Learn the rules that help us to be safe around trains!

Explain to students that their assignment will require them to be knowledgeable about train safety rules and about the benefits of train travel. Pass out the assignment sheet and review it. **Ask:** What are some reasons people might choose to take the train instead of driving?

**Activity:** Pose questions in Socratic fashion, encouraging students' critical thinking on this subject: What benefits might the train provide? Why might people want a choice? How would it effect

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the environment if more people took the train? ([Amtrak.com](http://Amtrak.com) and [APTA.com](http://APTA.com) can provide recent statistics on passenger train travel and the positive effects on traffic and on the environment. See Teacher Preparations.)

**Follow-up:** Wrap up the discussion, making sure students have touched on how transit offers people in the community a viable transportation option; how it helps reduce traffic congestion; how it allows people a choice besides having to always travel by car; and how the benefits to the environment are greater (with fewer people in cars on the roads). Students should have a good understanding of safety and benefits as they move into the overview of their cooperative group assignment.

### Poster Development (Days 2-4)

**4. Focus:** Explain the assignment: Each student will be a member of a cooperative team of 4-5 marketing specialists who have been asked to put together a public awareness campaign for the City Council of your (or a nearby) city. The campaign must incorporate both the benefits of the train travel and safety messages that citizens should keep in mind. Pass out the assignment sheet (attached) and go over it completely. Each team will develop its ideas for a campaign and present it in a poster format, based on the specifications set forth on the assignment sheet. To assign teams randomly, use the “draw from the hat” method. All students who draw the word “train” are in one group, those who draw “tracks” are in another group, etc. (This is a variation on groups being determined by counting off or by drawing numbers.)

**Activity:** Students should be provided two days (or more) in class and additional time outside of class to work on their campaigns.

**Follow-up:** Students should have the chance to ask questions and receive clarification throughout the process. The last half hour of the class on the fourth day should be spent setting up for presentations.

### Culminating Activities

### (Days 5-6)

**Focus:** Explain how the presentation of campaigns will work. Set up a judging panel (using other teachers, administrators, older students or parents) and use a review sheet similar to a rubric – (attached).

**Activity:** Students present their campaign components, maintaining their cooperative learning group roles.

**Follow-up:** Discuss the campaigns and the posters representing the groups' messages. Were the aspects of each campaign complete? Was the campaign inclusive of a safety message? Did the campaign meet its goals?

### Assessment

- The review sheet serves as documentation of the group's success.
- Students may be individually graded on their participation in the cooperative group process.

### Community Connections

- The Culminating Activities serve to provide a connection to the community, and may be extended to include outside public officials on the judging panel.
- If students' work is representative of an actual passenger train service in your city, arrange for a display of their work at the public library or at the train station.
- Invite a local Operation Lifesaver volunteer to come speak to the class. (Find volunteers at [www.oli.org](http://www.oli.org).)
- Send completed posters to Operation Lifesaver for review and posting on their website as examples of what schools are doing to teach railroad safety to students. (Email: [general@oli.org](mailto:general@oli.org))

### Cross-Curricular Extensions

- **Language Arts/Communications:** Students expand their campaign to other media, storyboarding and developing a video, radio or print component.
- **Civics:** After hearing more information from an Operation Lifesaver volunteer, students address how they can become more involved in railroad safety in the community through writing and/or class presentation.

## National Standards

This lesson addresses National Standards  
(Level III - grades 5-8 or 6-8)

**Language Arts** (Level III - grades 6-8)

**Standard 8.** Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes.

1. Plays a variety of roles for group discussions.
6. Makes oral presentations to the class.

**Standard 10.** Understands the characteristics and components of media.

5. Understands aspects of media production and distribution.

**Visual Arts** (Level III - grades 5-8)

**Benchmark 1.** Knows some of the effects of various visual structures and functions of art.

**Civics** (Level III - grades 6-8)

**Benchmark 1.** Knows what constitutes personal rights and the major documentary sources of personal rights.

**U.S. History** (Level III - grades 6-8)

**Benchmark 5.** Knows the internal spatial structures of cities.

**Health** (Level III - grades 6-8)

**Standard 5.** Knows essential concepts and practices concerning injury prevention and safety.

Source: [mcrel.org](http://mcrel.org)

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We're making communities safer.

# Public Awareness Campaign Assignment

## Description:

You are a member of a marketing firm that is trying to help the local passenger train service and the City Council to spread the word about safe pedestrian travel and the benefits of using the train. Your goal is to work as a collaborative member of the team to increase citizen awareness through a campaign that highlights safety messages and train travel benefits. Each team of four to five students is responsible for a poster representing its campaign strategy.

**Product:** You will create a poster that includes the campaign message and images to support it. Images must be student-created and/or cited with exact location (e.g., URL of website). The poster specifications are:

11x17 inches

1-inch border (utilize poster template provided)

## Strategy:

- 1) Choose a team leader. Choose a team secretary (scribe). Establish how each member of the team will participate (e.g., brainstorming, researching, drawing, coloring, creating computer graphics, etc.).
- 2) Decide on your team's safety message. You may use a message from the video or from Operation Lifesaver's website at [www.oli.org/education\\_resources/safety\\_tips.htm](http://www.oli.org/education_resources/safety_tips.htm).
- 3) Decide how you will include a message encouraging people to take the train (words or pictures).
- 4) Brainstorm possible student-created graphics. Research available images on the Web using safe searching techniques.
- 5) Decide team member responsibilities outside of class. Make sure everyone has a job to do. Make a plan to meet to work on the poster.
- 6) Use class time wisely! You will be graded in part on how well you work in class and as a team member.

## Timeline:

Your team will be provided \_\_\_\_ days in class to work on your campaign. All other work must be completed outside of class by ALL members of the team.

Check-in point: A draft of your work will be checked on \_\_\_\_\_.

Completed project: The completed poster is due on \_\_\_\_\_.

## Evaluation:

Posters will be judged by a team of judges. A rubric will be used by the teacher to evaluate each poster, each team and each team member's contribution to the project. Grades will be awarded to the team and to each individual.

## Public Awareness Campaign Assignment Rubric

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Required Elements</b>	The poster includes all required elements as well as additional information.	All required elements are included on the poster.	All but 1 of the required elements are included on the poster.	Several required elements were missing.
<b>Graphics - Relevance</b>	All graphics are related to the topic and make it easier to understand. All borrowed graphics have a source citation.	All graphics are related to the topic and most make it easier to understand. All borrowed graphics have a source citation.	All graphics relate to the topic. Most borrowed graphics have a source citation.	Graphics do not relate to the topic OR several borrowed graphics do not have a source citation.
<b>Attractiveness</b>	The poster is exceptionally attractive in terms of design, layout, and neatness.	The poster is attractive in terms of design, layout and neatness.	The poster is acceptably attractive though it may be a bit messy.	The poster is distractingly messy or very poorly designed. It is not attractive.
<b>Graphics - Originality</b>	Several of the graphics used on the poster reflect a exceptional degree of student creativity in their creation and/or display.	One or two of the graphics used on the poster reflect student creativity in their creation and/or display.	The graphics are made by the student, but are based on the designs or ideas of others.	No graphics made by the student are included.
<b>Content - Precision</b>	The safety message is clear and concise, and supported in both words and pictures.	The safety message is obvious, as supported through words and pictures.	The safety message is not completely clear and not supported well through words and pictures.	The safety message is missing or confused and has limited support in words and pictures.
<b>Mechanics</b>	Capitalization and punctuation are correct throughout the poster.	There is 1 error in capitalization or punctuation.	There are 2 errors in capitalization or punctuation.	There are more than 2 errors in capitalization or punctuation.
<b>Group Contribution</b>	Worked well as a team and working collaboratively.	Usually worked well as a team and worked collaboratively.	Sometimes worked well as a team and worked collaboratively.	No signs of working well as a team and working collaboratively.
<b>Individual Contribution</b>	A strong contributor to the team effort.	Usually a strong contributor to the team effort.	Sometimes a contributor to the team effort.	Not a contributor to the team effort.