



SAFE ROUTE NEWS

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Safe Routes to School (SRTS)

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The Encouragement Component of SRTS

National SRTS Guide

Encouragement is one of the complementary strategies that SRTS programs use to increase the number of children who walk and bicycle to school safely. In particular, encouragement and education strategies are closely intertwined, working together to promote walking and bicycling by rewarding participation and educating children and adults about safety and the benefits of bicycling and walking.

Encouragement activities also play an important role moving the overall SRTS program forward because they build interest and enthusiasm, which can buoy support for changes that might require more time and resources, such as con-

structing a new sidewalk.

Encouragement activities:

- Can be quick and easy to start.
- Can be done with little funding.
- Can be organized by parents, students, teachers or community volunteers.
- Focus on fun and enjoyment.
- Jumpstart a community's interest in walking and bicycling.
- Show quick success and generate enthusiasm for other strategies that may require a greater investment of time and resources.
- Can foster safe walking, bicycling and physical activity behav-

iors that will be useful throughout children's lives.

- Offer teachable moments to reinforce safe walking and bicycling behaviors.

Encouragement strategies that have been successfully implemented include:

- Special Events
- Mileage Clubs and Contests
- Ongoing Activities

A Special Event usually is a one-day activity to celebrate walking and bicycling to school. Most often, families walk or bicycle from home or from a group meeting area. Signs, balloons and banners can be used to create an air of excitement and celebration. When they arrive at (See page 2)

Dates to Remember:

March 25, 2010 Applications Postmarked

Child Pedestrians Pat Picratte Florida State SRTS Coordinator

Last November, 2008 research report by Monash University in Sweden reveals some interesting results and shows progress toward developing better skill-based pedestrian safety programs for young children. Traditionally, education programs for

young children have focused more on knowledge and attitudes than the actual skills a child needs to be safe while operating in traffic. As a result, most traditional pedestrian safety programs have demonstrated limited knowledge and skill improve-

ments.

Part of this research project involved developing and evaluation a training program for children ages 6 to 10 which stressed how to select safe gaps in traffic which would allow them to cross the road (See page 2)



Child Pedestrians cont. from page 1

safely. Randomly selected children were asked to respond to simulated road crossing environments involving a range of gap times and traffic speeds, by responding whether or not it was safe to cross the road. The children were also given a battery of tests which assessed their functional skills, and their parents were interviewed to assess information such as the child's physical activity levels and exposure to traffic and traffic education. The Executive Summary concludes:

The result suggest that children primarily use distance rather than the speed of approaching vehicles when making judgment about safe gaps.

The study further found that younger children are more likely to make incorrect gap assessments, but that it is

important to let children walk independently as they mature and are able to make these assessments:

Age was a strong predictor of critically incorrect decisions, with six year olds almost 12 times more likely than 10 year olds to make a critically incorrect decision. Children who walk independently more frequently were less likely to make incorrect crossing decisions compared with children who walk independently less frequently. This suggests that age-appropriate traffic exposure is beneficial for acquiring road skills.

The current findings suggest that tailored and practical programs have a beneficial effect on children's road-crossing decisions.

Children made 56% fewer critically

incorrect responses immediately after training and 47% fewer when re-tested one month later, which is an excellent retention rate. The authors plan to continue researching this topic and developing a more refined training course for child pedestrians. I highly recommend reading at least the Executive Summary (pages 11-15) or the full report at <http://www.monash.edu.au/muarc/reports/muarc283.pdf>.

Also available from the National Center for SRTS is the new guide; "Teaching Children to Walk Safely as They Grow and Develop: A guide for parents and caregivers." http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/resources/education_teachingchildren.cfm

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the school, participants might be greeted by the school principal or a school mascot and receive a small gift like stickers. A press conference, songs, flag salute or other group activity round out the event.

Volunteers help plan the event, walk with the children and give out items at the school. These events offer the added benefits of bringing visibility to SRTS and related issues, as well as educating families and the broader community about the benefits and joy of walking and bicycling safely to school. They may be held once a year, such as international Walk to School Day, or several times a year.

Mileage Clubs and Contests encourage children either to begin walking and bicycling to school or to increase their current amount of physical activity by making it fun and rewarding. Generally children track the amount of miles they walk or bicycle and get a small gift or a chance to win a prize after a certain mileage goal is reached.

Mileage clubs and contests are usually

designed in one of three ways:

- On an individual basis where every child logs miles walked or bicycled and has a chance to win.
- As a classroom competition where a classroom's collective miles are compared against other classes.
- As a competition among schools.
- Winners are rewarded with prizes including medals, certificates or trophies.

These activities are very flexible. Depending on the school, the competition aspect can be emphasized or not, and the rewards can be elaborate or simple. In rural areas or other places where the route to school is unsafe or difficult to walk or bicycle, the activity can be modified by providing credit for distance walked and bicycled at home, to and from a bus stop, or during the school day on campus.

Mileage clubs and contests usually involve incentives like prizes or small

gifts. In order to be most effective, incentives need to be provided in concert with other strategies over a period of time, not just given once.

Ongoing Walking and Bicycling Activities are defined here as activities that are held daily, weekly or several times per month throughout the school year. Walking school buses, bicycle trains, park and walk activities and routine on-campus walks all are ongoing encouragement activities. When planning, some schools choose more than one encouragement activity and include opportunities for children that cannot walk or bicycle the route to school from their home. See http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/guide/encouragement/on-campus_walking_activities.cfm for examples of how two schools created on-campus comprehensive, inclusive encouragement campaigns.

Walking school buses and bicycle trains both consist of groups of students accompanied by adults that walk or bicycle a pre-planned route to (See page 3)

The Alligator's Along the Way Angela Olson

Look very closely at this photo; the sign reads, "HIKERS and BIKERS Move to the side of the road when a vehicle approaches". And yes, those are alligators at the side of the road; at least eight of them!

In the SRTS program there are many "Alligator's" along the way that can make walking and biking to school unsafe or unpleasant for our school children. One way to identify these "alligators" is to have volunteer adults and children do what we call a "Walk About" using a walkability checklist <http://drusilla.hsrc.unc.edu/cms/downloads/walkabilitychecklist.pdf>.

or bikability checklist <http://www.bicyclinginfo.org/pdf/bikabilitychecklist.pdf>

A walkabout would also include volunteers observing pick-up and drop-off times at school to see what conflicts occur between the child pedestrians and the drivers.

Several communities have successfully identified safety issues by issuing digital cameras to the fifth grade classes for field trips and allowing them to show through photo images the "alligators along the way" that make it unsafe or unpleasant to walk and bike to school.



Reviewing the Parent Survey comments will give applicants an understanding of parental concerns.

Identifying and addressing these "alligators" will assist applicants in creating a comprehensive SRTS program that will be more effective in meeting the needs of the children and the concerns of the parents.

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school. Routes can originate from a particular neighborhood or, in order to include children who live too far to walk or bicycle, begin from a parking lot. They may operate daily, weekly or monthly. Often, they are started in order to address parents' concerns about traffic and personal safety while providing a chance for parents and children to socialize.

Walking school buses and bicycle trains can be loosely structured or highly organized. For example, walking buses or bicycle trains can be as simple as neighborhood families deciding to walk

or bicycle together. More formal, organized walking school buses and bicycle have a coordinator who recruits volunteers and participants, creates a schedule and designs a walking route. While requiring more effort, more structured walking school buses and bicycle trains offer the opportunity to involve more children.

A pre-determined parking lot acts as the meeting area for families who drive and then *park and walk* the remaining distance to school. Some communities require parents to walk with their chil-

dren to school while others have designated adult volunteers to walk groups of children from the parking area to school.

Park and walk campaigns have the potential to reduce traffic congestion around a school and encourage physical activity for parents and children. This strategy is especially helpful for including families who live too far from the school to walk or who do not have a safe route to school. For more information on Encouragement activities see: <http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/guide/encouragement/index.cfm>

Site's of Interest

SD SRTS

<http://www.sddot.com/srts/>

South Dakota School's Walk

<http://doe.sd.gov/oess/schoolhealth/sd>

walks/index.asp

Encouragement Activities

<http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/guide/encouragement/index.cfm>

Check out this new NFL site encouraging children to be active!

http://www.nflrush.com/play60/nfl_friends

What's Happening in SRTS

September 21, 2009—February 5, 2010 Community Presentations Available

March 25, 2010: Applications Postmarked

Sharon Chontos and Courtney Tielke hosted the National SRTS Training at St. Mary School in Sioux Falls last month. They did a wonderful job of coordinating this event. The location and hospitality was amazing.

Thank you to Sharon and Courtney for all of your hard work and thank you to those that attended.



Safe Routes to School (SRTS)

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We are on the Web
www.sddot.com/srts/

Where it's safe, get kids
walking and biking.
Where it's not safe,
make it safe.



January/February Newsletter Will Included:
Applying for SRTS: What You Should Know
The Educational Component of SRTS

Please send pictures and news articles of your Safe Routes to School activities to: angela.olson@state.sd.us

Article ideas, comments and questions are also welcomed

How Many Steps Per Day Do Children Need? walking.about.com and Angela Olson

Studies show that 6-12 year old girls need 12,000 steps per day and boys need 15,000 steps per day to stay in a healthy Body Mass Index (BMI). The study reviewed research of almost 2000 children in the USA, Australia, and Sweden. The Study was published in the June, 2004 "Preventative Medicine" by Catherine Tudor-Locke Ph.D. and associates.

While diet contributes to childhood obesity, activity seems to be the key for a child to grow with a healthy weight. Parents or teachers can make a game of increasing activity by giving children a pedometer and encouraging them to increase their daily steps.

The first week, simply track average steps. The second week, reward each child who increases their daily steps by 2000. Continue the next week rewarding those who increase them another 2000 until they reach the total of 12,000 for girls and 15,000 for boys.

Classes can hold competitions on an individual level or class by class level. In larger communities schools can even compete against each other for number of steps/miles walked.

Programs such as "Web Walking" <http://walking.about.com/cs/measure/a/webwalkingusa.htm> are perfect for schools to use to track steps on a virtual walk across the USA.

Applesauce Press publishes a kid friendly book about walking called "Walk the Walk; The Kids' Book of Pedometer Challenges". This book even includes a pedometer.

Great information about walking can be found online at: <http://www.webwalking.com/>.

My all time favorite walking guru is Mark Fenton, author of numerous books including: "Pedometer Walking", "The Complete Guide to Walking for Health, Weight Loss, and Fitness" and

"Walking: The Ultimate Exercise for Optimum Health".

<http://www.pbs.org/americaswalking/>

Making walking a part of our children's lives can change their behavior in the future. Recently my oldest daughter told me that she used to think our family hikes were "stupid". Apparently I didn't make it that fun for her. This same daughter now loves the adventure of hiking with her own family. The family hikes were a tradition handed down to me by my parents and were some of my favorite memories. Now another generation will benefit from this family tradition.

