



# Safe Routes to School

*A Review of Education Best Practices*

## SUMMARY

Safe Routes to School is a national movement to support children and families in traveling to school by active modes, and improve traffic safety for children who walk and bike. Some programs include shared modes like bus and carpooling as well, particularly when a major goal is reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Nationally, the percentage of children who get to school by foot or bicycle has plummeted in the last three decades. Safe Routes to School programs work to reverse that trend by offering a comprehensive set of events and activities that support active transportation.

One essential aspect to Safe Routes to School programs is teaching children safe bicycling and walking skills and habits. This white paper will walk you through the steps involved in selecting and teaching an in-classroom educational program.

## SELECTING A CURRICULUM

For communities looking to implement in-classroom safety trainings in their Safe Routes to School programs, there is a myriad of curricula to choose from in a variety of formats. Ask yourself the following questions to help select the curriculum most appropriate to your school.

**Who is directing my program?** PTA representatives or parent volunteers? Teachers, principals, or other administrators? City staff or non-profit organizations? What perspective will the instructors bring to the program?

**What are the goals of my educational program?** Do I want to address unsafe behaviors, teach children how to interact with drivers, or provide guidance on how to use the biking and walking infrastructure?

**Who will teach the curriculum?** Local advocacy groups or non-profits? Parent volunteers? Teachers trained in the curriculum?

**What grades will be taught?** Will younger children learn pedestrian safety? Will upper grades be taught how to bike with traffic?

**How much time is available for trainings?** Will there be one or two classes per year? Several classes per month or week? Will classes be during the school day, after school, or both?

**How many children will be taught at once?** Will there be large assemblies with demonstrations? Will trainings be interactive discussions in the classroom? Do I need a high instructor to student ratio because students will participate in off-campus rides or walks?

**Where will my classes be taught?** Will there be in-classroom time only? In-classroom time and a blacktop activity? In-classroom time, a blacktop activity, and community ride or walk?

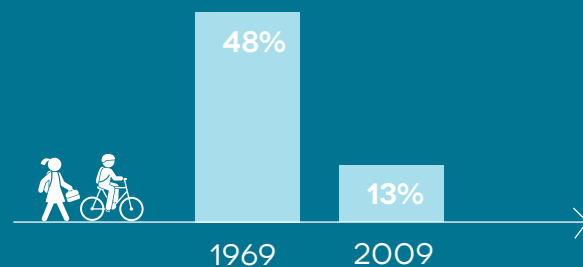
**Will there be a fleet of bikes and helmets available?** Will I need to purchase and store these materials? Will I partner with a local vendor to rent?

**Who will review and approve my curriculum?** The school district? School principal? Teachers?

Once you have answered these questions, choose a curriculum accordingly. Example existing curricula are listed below.

- » Alameda County Safe Routes to School
- » League of American Bicyclists Traffic Safety Program
- » Oregon Bicycle Transportation Alliance Safe Routes for Kids
- » NHTSA Child Pedestrian Safety Curriculum
- » Bicycle Alliance of Washington

*Within the span of one generation, the percentage of children walking or bicycling to school has dropped precipitously.*



## SCHEDULING AND LOGISTICS

Scheduling in-classroom safety trainings is done at the school level. Use the following checklist to get the trainings on your school's calendar and help you prepare.

- | Step                       | Task  |
|----------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | Schedule a meeting with your point of contact at least one month in advance of your target training date to begin scheduling                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | Obtain the appropriate number of instructors or adult volunteers  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | Have instructors or adult volunteers complete any required background checks at least one month in advance of your target training date to begin scheduling |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | Provide point of contact with a list of technology needs and room/blacktop requirements (such as a projector or a place to store bicycles)                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | Confirm room/blacktop and technology reservations   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6 | Distribute and collect any necessary waivers, permission slips, or photo releases   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7 | Conduct trainings   |



## CONDUCTING IN-CLASSROOM TRAININGS

Most of the existing curricula provide outlines and scripts to help deliver the material in the classroom, which is beneficial to any type of instructor. However, for guest instructors, learning the unique calming methods of the classroom – such as a hand signal – is also important for managing the classroom and maintaining the attention of the students.

Though not necessary, it can be helpful if the regular teacher stays in the classroom during the trainings and actively participates in the lessons. If that teacher remains in the room, he or she is able to assist with any problem behaviors occurring and also become skilled in the material.

### EVALUATION

Though there are many options for bicycle and pedestrian curriculums, there has been little follow-up evaluation on how effective the programs are at reaching children. Asking the opinions of the teachers and principals that were involved with the courses – such as through surveys – can evaluate their effectiveness, determine how classes can be improved, and help build a supported and custom education program.

### SUSTAINABILITY

Program sustainability is key. If the program folds after the first year, future students won't receive the benefit of safety trainings. While establishing the program, be sure to involve partners in a longer-term discussion about how to keep the program going after the pilot concludes. Involving local organizations and advocacy groups in the initial program delivery creates a built-in training program that helps build relationships with the schools and the district and facilitates a seamless transition. Incorporating the curriculum into the district's existing curriculum, though a more time-intensive process with the school district, can ensure the lessons are continuously taught well into the future.

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*Involving local organizations and advocacy groups is the initial program delivery creates a built-in training program for long-term sustainability.*