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Successful SR2S programs in the United States have incorporated one or more of the following approaches:

- The Encouragement Approach uses events and contests to entice students to try walking and biking.
- The Education Approach teaches students important safety skills and launches driver safety campaigns.
- The Engineering Approach focuses on creating physical improvements to the infrastructure surrounding the school, reducing speeds and establishing safer crosswalks and pathways.
- The Enforcement Approach uses local law enforcement to ensure drivers obey traffic laws.

Collect Information

The first step for any SR2S program is to collect your baseline data through surveys and traffic counts to learn how students currently arrive at school.

- Student surveys will enable you to determine how children get to school. A quick daily show of hands during homeroom is often enough to get a feel for student travel habits at your school.
- Traffic counts will supplement this information by determining how many vehicles enter school grounds to drop off children.
- Parent surveys measure attitudes and identify obstacles and opportunities for changing behavior.
- Traffic and crash data, which can be obtained from your state's department of transportation and department of public health, will help to demonstrate the project's importance.

Events



Walk and Bike to School Days are a great way to inaugurate your program and generate enthusiasm. International Walk to School Day, held the first Wednesday in October, offers an opportunity to plug your school into a successful worldwide movement. Schools across the nation have used this event to launch ongoing and permanent safety and education programs, and secure funding for street improvements. Schools that have success with International Walk to School Day can keep the energy alive by organizing Walk and Bike to School Days, either weekly or monthly.

Contests

Contests are an ideal way to get children's attention and motivate them to try something new. Contests can take many forms. Children can think about real world issues through art projects or essays. Challenge students to travel to school in different ways and reward them either individually or reward the entire class. The ultimate goal is to engage students through a contest to discover the value in walking or biking to school, without receiving an award.

Teaching Children in the Classroom



Teaching children basic pedestrian and bicycle skills is vital to the success of your SR2S program. Bicycle Rodeos and obstacle courses are examples of fun activities for students. Teaching health, fitness, and the environmental consequences of various transportation modes enhances children's ability to make healthy choices in their lives, which will have a positive impact on the community.

Mapping the Routes

The Safe Routes to School Task Force focuses on developing a Safe Routes to School Improvement Plan. The SR2S Task Force will identify a focused area surrounding the schools, mapping the routes that children currently take to school, suggest safer routes when necessary, and recommend improvements. Walk the routes in groups and identify safety issues, using the Safe Routes Checklist and locating them on a map. Involve the students and have them map the routes themselves. Those who walk and ride regularly already are familiar with their streets, while those that do not, will begin to learn about their neighborhood. Working with local government staff, develop a SR2S Improvement Plan for addressing such safety issues as speeding cars, dangerous intersections, and missing or ineffective crosswalks, sidewalks, and bike lanes.

Escort Programs

Many parents would like to allow their children to walk or bike to school but are afraid of letting them walk or bike alone. Escort programs address the immediate need for safety and complement more permanent infrastructure improvements. The “Walking School Bus” (or “Bike Train”) involves adult volunteers who accompany children to school, stopping at designated locations where children can join the “bus” or “train” at pre-arranged times. Escort programs require a commitment of volunteer resources and good coordination.

A crossing guard program can train volunteers to help children cross the road. School districts should be encouraged to place guards at particularly dangerous crossings. Other escort programs provide monitors on the street or find neighbors to offer their homes as Safe Houses. This is a form of community participation that urban visionary Jane Jacobs called “Eyes on the Street,” and is particularly useful in urban areas where crime is a major concern.

Carpools and Buses



Many children live too far from school to expect them to walk or bike to school. This is especially true for children who attend private schools. Some schools offer a bus program, using yellow school buses or through agreements with city bus services. If so, include a carpooling and bus component in all your SR2S activities and encourage parents to form carpools with special incentives such as preferred drop-off areas for carpools.

Keep Your Program Alive

It takes time to develop new cultural attitudes about transportation. Be sure to reintroduce your program every year at the beginning of the school year. You should:

- Hold a kick-off event or assembly to get students excited.
- Notify parents by including information about the program in the parent packages that are mailed home at the start of the school year.
- Hold regular SR2S team meetings at a time when most interested people can attend.
- Meet with the principal and teachers at the beginning of the year to plan in-classroom activities for the year.
- Hold neighborhood coffees to encourage parents to form “Walking School Buses,” “Bike Trains,” and carpools.
- Keep your school community up to date on the latest street improvements. Every new success builds increased support for the program.
- Keep measuring your success through new surveys. The greatest satisfaction comes from seeing the increase in the number of children walking and biking to school and the reduction of cars entering the school grounds.
- Be sure to inform your community through press releases and newsletter articles.
- Join government advisory groups and attend city council and school board meetings.
- Reward yourselves and celebrate each and every success, large or small.