

Suggested Safe Routes to School Activities

Walking School Bus

Activity: A chaperoned group of students which walks to school. Chaperones are teacher or maybe parent volunteers. Chaperones will take advantage of “teachable moments” to show how to walk near traffic safely.

Audience: Works well for K-4 or 5.

Frequency: Events can be a few times per year, monthly or weekly.

Responsibilities: HART will assist with establishing the program, setting up the routes and introducing SRTS and the walking school bus to volunteers and relevant school groups. The school SRTS coordinator organizes, publicizes and participates in each walking day. Some schools include parent volunteers in a rather informal way while others require background checks and have specific time tables for the routes. The chaperone to student ratio depends on age.

Benefits: Teaches about pedestrian safety through demonstration. Quells parental anxiety. Saves parents time. Encourages walking as a legitimate form of transportation and provides some regular exercise.

Incentives: Some schools use “Frequent Walker” punch cards, which are distributed to each student. Once they have filled a card or half of a card (depending on school bus frequency), the student will receive hi-viz yellow reflective shoe laces. Small stickers, pencils and string backpacks are also available. The number of punches required for different incentives varies from school to school. Themed events like a walk with a police officer or holiday themed walks can provide variety.

Frequent Walker Program

Activity: Essentially the incentive part of the walking school bus without the chaperones and direct teaching opportunities.

Audience: This may be more appropriate for Grades 5-6 than a walking school bus. Efforts should be made to provide safety education through other means.

Responsibilities: HART can help establish the parameters of the program. The rules for getting incentives, what the students receive, who to contact for a new frequent walker card and why walking is being promoted should be made clear by the SRTS coordinator and the school.

Pedestrian Safety Presentation

Activity: HART staff will give a 15 minute presentation on pedestrian safety structured around the phrase “Stop, Look, Listen and Think.” Points covered:

- Yielding to cars and driver behavior at crosswalks
- Pedestrian signal heads
- Making yourself visible to drivers
- Your safety – friends and distracted drivers
- Parking lots and roads without sidewalks

The assembly can be extended with demonstrations, either indoor or outdoor mock crossings to show safe and unsafe behavior.

Audience: Grades K-5, though Kindergarteners often don't grasp the concepts. The presentation can be adjusted for younger children (K-2 should always cross with an adult) or older children.

Responsibilities: A projector and laptop can be provided by HART. School equipment is preferred.

Benefits: Gets safety information to students once. One time exposure will probably not change habits. Fulfills a core curriculum for 2nd grade.¹ Partially fulfills a core curriculum standard for 4th grade.²

Incentives: Children who answer questions will receive reflective shoe laces.

Golden Sneaker Award

Activity: Homerooms (or grades) compete to see which one can get the most students walking to school. The group with the largest percentage wins the “Golden Sneaker” for a certain period. Lambertville Public School awards it every two weeks and keeps track on a bulletin board near the entrance.

Responsibilities: Student Council or Safety Patrol members can be employed to count the number of students who walk to school. It can become part of taking daily attendance. Making the competition prominently visible to remind students is important, through a bulletin board or building excitement through announcements and showing off the sneaker.

¹ Core Curriculum for 2nd Grade. 2.1.2.D.3

“Identify procedures associated with pedestrian, bicycle, and traffic safety.”

² Core Curriculum for 4th Grade. 2.1.4.D.3

“Examine the impact of unsafe behaviors when traveling in vehicles, as a pedestrian, and when using other modes of transportation.”

Benefits: Encourages students to walk and adds fun to the program.

Incentives: The Golden Sneaker is a sneaker, spray-painted gold and mounted on an old baseball trophy pedestal. HART will provide the Golden Sneaker. Where it has been introduced, students love it.

Walkability/Bikeability Audit

Activity: A group of adults and students walk around the streets near the school to discuss and document pedestrian facilities and obstacles. HART provides checklists for guidance, introduces the purpose and directs the walk. HART will write a report summarizing the issues identified and possible solutions. Bikability elements are generally added to a walkability audit because bikability is more a function of traffic volume and road width. It is also important to determine where students actually bicycle.

Responsibilities: The local coordinator is responsible for assembling the group. The group can include teachers, administrators, parents, police officers, local officials or an engineer, crossing guards, or students. Students bring a unique angle, and should be sought.

Time: Audits usually take 1 hour, though it depends on the size of the area to be covered.

Benefits: The audit report creates a starting point for the relevant government entity to pursue improvements or for larger issues, pursue grant money.

Bicycle Safety Presentation

Activity: John will give a 15-20 minute presentation on bike and helmet safety. This can include helmet fitting in a few formats, may include a Jell-O brain to demonstrate the brain's fragility and cover traffic rules in an age-appropriate way. Major Points:

- Helmet fit and importance
- Always stop and look Left-Right-Left before entering traffic
- Where to ride on the road
- Hand signals
- Visibility and predictability

Helmet fitting is important because improperly worn or fit helmets are only 50% effective as those fitted correctly.

Audience: Helmet safety is important for all ages. Students can generally start riding with traffic at Grade 4, so Grades 4-6 are the key audience. Grades 7-8 will benefit, but engaging them can be difficult.

Responsibilities: Please tell the student to bring their helmets on that day. Helmet fittings can be conducted for small groups by 1-2 HART employees, or teachers can assist with large groups, or if few students bring helmets, we can simply demonstrate the proper method.

Benefits: This presentation exposes students to a few simple rules that could prevent many injuries. Student often don't hear these rules elsewhere.

Equipment: A projector and laptop can be provided, though school equipment is preferred. Speakers for the laptop or another audio jack are helpful if available at the school.

Incentives: Handouts include a bookmark with basic rules and a quarter-sheet with steps for fitting a helmet.

Bicycle Rodeo

Activity: A bicycle rodeo is a series of stations and drills which covers the above information, but also includes handling and some bike maintenance information. They are generally conducted after school.

Volunteers: Rodeos include 5-8 stations and generally utilize a number of volunteers with student groups larger than 12-20. HART has 2 members who can take 8-10 students each through every drill. For larger groups, volunteers will be needed at each station and students visit each in groups of 8-10.

Responsibilities: The school/local coordinator is responsible for providing volunteers. HART can provide, at maximum, 2 staff members. Instructions for each drill, hands-on explanations for volunteers and event leadership are provided by HART.

A close estimate of student attendance is required. Liability waivers for HART must be signed by parents in advance or at the event. A rodeo requires a clear parking lot and 1.5 hours before hand to set up the courses. All 8 drills take about 1:10 for the students to do.

Benefits: A rodeo provides students an opportunity to practice the correct skills in mock courses which are more realistic than the classroom but safer than the road. Students generally enjoy the rodeos and attend by choice.

Incentives: ABC Quick Check, 'Bike Rules!' Tip bookmark, A to Z by Bike (26 page pamphlet written for children and adults), Safe Routes pencil, water bottles for slow-race winners or everyone depending on availability.

Walking and/or Bicycling Policy

Activity: The Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers recommends that biking or walking policies include:

- A description of the benefits of walking and bicycling to school,
- A list of conditions explaining the rules and expectations of the student, guardian and school
- A disclaimer which states that walking or bicycling is an "assumption of responsibility by guardians and students."

Responsibilities: Anyone can suggest the need for a policy to the School Board. If the board agrees on the need for a policy, they will direct the superintendent to write a policy. Model policies are available [online](#), along with a FAQ. The policy must be made available for public comment and read 3 times at Board meetings, then it can be adopted.

Benefits: Makes responsibilities clear and may address concerns about the school's liability. Explicitly incorporates active transportation options and related issues into school policy, where bussing may dominate.