



Reporter



Students from Franklin Elementary in La Crosse participating in Walk to School Day.

Welcome

Welcome to the second edition of the Safe Routes Reporter.

Many SRTS projects are underway and the deadline for 2008 project applications just closed on April 4th.

We are excited to see the many new and innovative ways Wisconsin communities are addressing Safe Routes to School.

We hope you enjoy this second edition of the Safe Routes Reporter and welcome your feedback.

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Local Highlights

La Crosse County SRTS Coordinator

IN 2007, THE LA CROSSE County Health Department was awarded \$137,000 from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to fund a Safe Routes to School County Coordinator position for two years. The overall goal of this position is to make Safe Routes to School a part of all schools in La Crosse County. Ginny Loehr was hired this past fall and since then has been working hard to fulfill this mission. To promote bicycling and walking to school she is kicking off a Walk and Bike to School Challenge at Franklin Elementary School in La Crosse during the week of May 5th.

Children who participate in the challenge will be given a logbook to track their commuting behavior. Each time they walk or bike they will be eligible to enter the Challenge raffle. At the end of the week, winners will be drawn and awards made. Ginny is also organizing walking school buses for a Walking Wednesday event on May 7th. A walking school bus is a group of neighborhood

children walking together with an adult. Adults take turns chaperoning children to school, creating walking opportunities for children whose parents' schedules may not allow for walking to school each day. Healthy snacks will be provided to children throughout the week, helping kids to understand that exercise and good nutrition are key to life long health. This Challenge is taking place in conjunction with the city's Bike to Work Week events and complements the week's many family and kid friendly activities.

Ginny is also working with the City of Onalaska to develop a Safe Routes to School program at Irving Pertzsch Elementary. She hopes to start a focused biking and walking promotional program by the end of April. Some ideas are to work with the City's Planning Department as well as students from UW-La Crosse to start a walking school bus program, conduct a pedometer challenge and kick off an education program.

Lastly, a group of dedicated parents at State Road Elementary in La Crosse is working with Ginny to pilot a Walking School Bus program this May; they are organizing a Safety Carnival to kick off the new effort. Through these programs and others, Ginny hopes to continue to build momentum and support for Safe Routes to School throughout La Crosse County. ♪

Join the fun!
Frequent Walker-Bicyclist
Get a star punch on each day
you walk or bike to school.
My name _____

For more information, see page 4!

What is wrong with this picture?



How it should be ...



Where schools are sited greatly impacts student travel choice. Students are more likely to walk or bike to school when they live nearby and can travel through bike and pedestrian friendly environments. Unfortunately, new schools are often designed to accommodate a large number of students, thus requiring a large parcel of land for construction. As a result, they may be located on the outskirts of town, away from existing housing, with few pedestrian and bicycling facilities.

The top picture shows one such example. The school location contributes to increased traffic congestion, air pollution, school transportation spending and perhaps obesity. By designing and siting schools so they are well integrated into our communities, such as the one shown in the bottom picture, we can support a variety of travel choices helping to improve environmental and human health. ▲

Photos by University of Oregon Community Planning Workshop for Oregon School Siting Handbook, Oregon Transportation & Growth Management Program.

Safety Tips for Parents

HOW DO YOU GET YOUR children ready to move safely through the world, ready to deal with the people they may meet? Here are 10 tips from Paula Statman, M.S.S.W., Director of KidWISE Institute, author of *Raising Careful Kids in a Crazy World*, and designer of the *Best Feet Forward* workshops.

- 1. Protect and teach your children.** Protect your children and teach them the skills they need to be safe and strong. Start by teaching your children that they have the right to be safe. Also, learn about the tough issues children face today, which may not be the same as those you faced when growing up.
- 2. Prepare—don't scare—your children.** Teach yourself to share your fears with other adults rather than your kids. Teach what your children need to learn rather than what you think they should be afraid of. Do not use graphic words that put scary pictures in your children's heads. Instead, help them see themselves acting safely and not getting hurt.
- 3. Use "teachable moments" to explain safety.** When you are out with your children, help them learn how to deal with the problems and people they may meet. Here is a lesson that is easy to teach: Suppose you pass a postman, who says, "Hello." Ask your children to say, "Hello," so that they gain practice talking with a person in uniform in case they ever need help. Afterwards talk about why it is OK to talk to certain people and not to others. This is a better approach to teaching safety than saying, "Don't talk to strangers!"
- 4. Help your children say, "No!"** We need to teach our children—who are taught to respect adults—that they have the right to say, "No!" to anyone who is acting odd, even if that person is an authority figure. This means we must teach them how to say, "No!" to a strange offer, stand up to a bully, and yes—say, "No!" even to us. Safe and strong kids know how and when to protect themselves.
- 5. Teach your children to recognize, trust, and act on their instincts.** Help your children respond quickly if they have a gut feeling that something is not right. Tell them to trust their inner alarm more than what they see or hear. Their built-in warning system is never wrong and should guide their next steps.
- 6. To teach children in kindergarten through second grade, suggest ideas for acting safely when they play outdoors, walk to school, are in the park, or go to the store.** They will need to hear and practice new safety skills many times to learn them. Other ways to help children learn safety rules are turning them into rhymes, making up songs, and drawing pictures about them.
- 7. To teach children in third grade and up, ask them to suggest safe actions.** They are learning to solve problems, so ask them why something might be unsafe and then help them come up with the best—and safest—way to deal with it. This is a good age to begin using "What would you do if...?" questions to open your talks about safety.
- 8. Track the safety skills your children are learning.** This will help you make smarter choices about how much supervision your children need, when to grant more freedom, when to say "No," and when to give them more practice while you are with them. It is best to teach a little bit at a time and repeat the lessons and practice sessions. This process makes it simpler for your children to learn, recall, and use new safety skills.
- 9. Fight the urge to ground your children for life when they do not practice safety when they should.** Instead, discuss the gaps in their thinking—or your teaching. Then, supply the missing pieces. Ask them to tell you what they would change next time and practice with them so they have the chance to show what they have learned.
- 10. Praise your children's progress when they learn, recall, and choose safe behavior.** When you see even a little bit of the desired actions, let your children know that they are on their way to becoming safe and strong kids! Our goal is to help our children show good behavior and judgment over and over, so that they can safely handle more freedom. ▲

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Winning bookmarks by Shelby Weiland, Grace Shelble and Olivia Letter. (from left to right)

To order a winning bookmark, visit

http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/wcee/keep/student_involvement/#Bookmarks

6th Grade

- » Hanna Seidel, John Edwards Middle School, Port Edwards
- » MacKenzie Lambert, Berlin Middle School, Berlin
- » Grace Shelble, Lumen Christi Catholic School, Mequon

7th Grade

- » Emma Kowalkowski, Notre Dame Middle School, De Pere
- » Olivia Letter, Notre Dame Middle School, De Pere
- » Scott Frazier, Lumen Christi Catholic School, Mequon

Congratulations to all the winners of the 2008 KEEP Bookmark Contest. For more information or to order bookmarks, visit <http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/wcee/keep/StudentInvolvement/#Bookmarks>

Bicycle Safety: Did you know...?

CHILDREN HAVE

- » 1/3 less peripheral vision than adults
- » A poorly developed sense of danger
- » Difficulty judging speed and distance
- » Limited attention
- » Less visibility than adults because they are smaller

The leading causes of bicycle/car crashes for children are

- » Mid-block rideouts
- » Failing to stop for stop signs
- » Unexpected turns and swerves

If you help teach bicycle skills to children, it is important to keep these items in mind. If you want to learn more,

the Department of Transportation offers free training classes for people who assist with bicycle education programs. For more information on the Teaching Safe Bicycling courses, contact Larry Corsi at (608) 267-3154.

Spring into Spring!

MAY IS A GREAT MONTH for sponsoring a Safe Routes to School "Spring into Spring!" event. Not only has the spring thaw arrived but May is both National Bike Month and National Physical Fitness and Sports Month, providing a perfect platform from which to celebrate the positive health impacts of walking and biking to school. Recognize these special occasions by kicking off any number of Safe Routes to School promotions that will get your kids outside and moving while reducing pollution and climate change emissions.

- » *Start Walkin' and Wheelin' Wednesdays*: Create a weekly event that encourages kids to walk and bike to school through rewards and outreach.
- » Sponsor a *Bicycle Safety Rodeo*: Offer a safe bicycling operation, skill and judgment course to your students and parents. Funding for this is available through a grant from the Wisconsin Bureau of Transportation Safety. For more information contact Larry Corsi at larry.corsi@dot.state.wi.us.
- » Kick off a *Walk or Bike Around the Earth Contest*: Have individual students or classes track the distances they walk or bike and add the miles together to see how long it takes to travel around the world.



2008 Bookmark Contest

SINCE 2002 THE WISCONSIN K-12 Energy Education Program (KEEP) has sponsored an annual Energy Bookmark Contest open to 5th, 6th and 7th grade students in Wisconsin. Winners are selected from each grade and their designs are made into actual bookmarks available for order.

The theme for the contest is announced each October, with entries due in December. For 2008, the contest theme was Safe Routes to School: Alternative Transportation, focusing on how students can travel to school while reducing carbon emissions from gasoline-powered vehicles.

The winners from this year's contest are:

5th Grade

- » Tessa Rutsch, St. Paul's Catholic School, Bloomer
- » Shelby Weiland, Harrison School, Janesville
- » Mackenzie Nourse, Thomas Jefferson School Middle School, Port Washington

Coming Soon! Mileage Club Materials

WE ARE ON TRACK FOR the start of our new Mileage Club activity this May. Remember, mileage clubs and contests encourage children to begin walking and biking to school by making it fun and rewarding. We will provide you with frequent walking and biking punch cards, small rewards and administrative materials. You will find all the information you need to design and start a mileage club on our Web site at www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/aid/saferoutes.htm. To be notified about the program, email us at srts@dot.state.wi.us ↗

Safe Routes to School and Educational Performance

WHAT DOES EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE HAVE to do with Safe Routes to School? Several recent studies show a connection between physical activity and higher cognitive function.

- » The *Journal of Sport and Exercise Physiology* published a study in 2007 showing that students with higher levels of physical fitness score higher on state reading and math tests.
- » The December 2007 *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* reported that overweight children who exercised for 40 minutes as opposed to 20 minutes a day showed twice the gains in cognitive function.
- » In 2004, staff in the Naperville, Illinois School District implemented a new program called "learning readiness." Struggling students who participated in a "learning

Walk and bike to school!



Join the fun! Mileage Club Competition



readiness" physical education class directly before specialized literacy and math classes showed significant improvements on standardized test scores compared to those who attended the literacy and math classes alone. However, if the exercise class was held six hours before the literacy and math classes academic gains were much smaller.

Providing greater opportunities for children to exercise clearly contributes to a healthy mind and body, thus building a strong foundation for a happy, successful life. Developing a Safe Routes to School program can help communities achieve this goal by supporting and encouraging biking and walking to school. ↗

Source: Viadero, D. (2008). *Exercise Seen as Priming Pump for Students' Academic Strides*. *Education Week*. 27(23),14-15.