

# Florida Safe Routes to School Traffic Safety Education Guide

Thank you for choosing to make your community a healthier and safer place! The Florida Safe Routes to School Traffic Safety Education Guide provides educators with information to assist them in developing pedestrian and bicycle safety education programs for their schools. The guide uses a step-by-step approach to implementing pedestrian and bicycle safety education, and can be tailored based on time, equipment, and facilities available.

A growing health risk for children is physical inactivity which can lead to diabetes, obesity, heart disease, and other preventable diseases. Teaching children to be physically active through safe walking and bicycling can promote the skills necessary to live an active and healthy life. Although walking and bicycling are viable forms of physical activity and transportation, they may pose added risks to students who have not been educated in safe traffic practices. Pedestrians and bicyclists need proper training in safe behaviors, use of equipment, and rules of the road. An effective program teaches children safe walking and bicycling habits that will prevent injuries by equipping them with skills they will use throughout their lives. Crashes commonly involve being distracted, darting into a roadway, failing to stop or yield at intersections, riding against traffic, or riding into the street or diagonally across it without first yielding and scanning for traffic. Such skills are best learned through repetitive skill practice in a pedestrian and bicycle safety program. A school-based traffic safety program provides the opportunity for all students to acquire lifesaving skills they may not get elsewhere.

Florida Safe Routes to School welcomes you to use this guide for setting up and implementing a traffic safety education program that is effective, fun, and appropriate for your goals. The guide is separated by grades, with pedestrian safety lessons in grades K-8 and bicycle safety lessons in grades 3-8. Each lesson addresses a main topic and is similar in structure. For example, most lessons provide:

- Background information
- Prerequisites
- Vocabulary
- Objectives
- Videos with Guided Discussion
- Get Moving Activities (gets students physically active while teaching fundamental skills)
- Activities for practical application of skills

Most lessons are designed to be taught during one class period, but instructors may extend or condense lessons based on time, equipment, or facilities available. For example, while most lessons have accompanying videos, teachers may not have access to a computer, or it may not be convenient to move children from a classroom setting to an outdoor setting in one class period. While videos are not mandatory, teachers could choose to implement the videos and Get Moving Activities one period, then teach the practical activities another period.



## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS TO CHILDREN AND THE COMMUNITY?

While a traffic safety education program requires commitment in curriculum time, equipment and training, children and the community benefit greatly. The community has much to gain from the adoption of traffic safety programs which encourage walking and bicycling as healthy activities. In addition to children learning how to be safer pedestrians and bicyclists, one goal is that children who learn traffic awareness and safety skills at an early age are more likely to apply these skills and concepts to their motorist behaviors in later years. They should also be more likely to understand the benefits of safe walking and bicycling for themselves and their community. Competent pedestrians and bicyclists can contribute to reductions in pollution, traffic congestion, and energy consumption by being less reliant on motor vehicles for short or local trips.

Benefits of a traffic safety education program include, but are not limited to:

### Children

- Progressive acquisition of lifetime and lifesaving skills for walking and bicycling
- Development of sound decision-making skills
- Well-developed sense of balance, eye-hand/foot coordination, and other motor skills
- Increased awareness of neighborhood and surroundings
- Increased awareness of conservation issues and earth-friendly habits
- Independent mobility
- Physical activity and improved health
- Lifetime recreation and transportation

### The Community

- Increased number of well-informed pedestrians, bicyclists, and, ultimately, drivers
- An adult population more likely to use pedestrian/bicycle transportation, thereby reducing automobile use, pollution, traffic congestion, and energy consumption
- A more pedestrian/bicycle centered transportation system, which may result in greater community interaction, less individual isolation, and a healthier population

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## WHAT SHOULD A SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL EDUCATION PROGRAM INCLUDE?

### The Five Es (Engineering, Enforcement, Education, Encouragement, and Evaluation)

These Five Es combine to present a quality, comprehensive traffic safety program. An ideal education program teaches children how to be predictable and competent in traffic through sequential learning experiences in pedestrian and bicycle safety. Instruction should focus on traffic skills where lessons provide instruction in safe street crossing, skillful handling of bicycles in traffic, proper use of bicycling equipment (e.g., helmets), laws/rules of the road, and planning of safe routes.

### A traffic safety education program should also include:

- Traffic safety materials for classroom and practical skill instruction
- Family traffic safety nights sponsored by PTAs/PTOs
- School site designs that facilitate safe walking and bicycling provided by traffic engineers and school administrators
- Secure bicycle parking areas

- Effective law enforcement programs on school property and in surrounding neighborhoods
- Safety campaigns and other community supported events and media promotions
- Encouragement programs for school and community wellness, including participation in International “Walk to School Day” or “Bike to School Day” Events
- Evaluation of program effectiveness

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## WHAT ARE SOME PROGRAM CHOICES?

“In the past, people thought that handing out some pamphlets and giving a pep talk were effective ways to teach bike safety. No one would think of teaching baseball, football, square dancing, and car driving or hunter safety by handing out brochures and talking to an auditorium full of kids. These days, we see it’s important to get the kids on their bikes and teach them real world skills.” — John Williams & Dan Burden

Many schools give some attention to pedestrian and bicycle safety. Programs, however, range in commitment from a two/three-week program in physical education classes to a one-time assembly or showing of a video tape about traffic safety. In many public schools throughout Florida, Montana, Colorado, Hawaii and North Carolina, a full, two-week program with 8-10 hours of instruction and on-foot/on-bike training has been found to be effective because actual on-foot/on-bike practice supports skill development. In schools where a full program is not possible, plans can be adapted to accommodate particular school district needs and constraints.

### Alternatives may include:

- Extended day or after-school programs (at school sites taught by certified teachers and/or resource officers)
- Cooperative programs with local recreation departments, youth organizations, YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, etc. for after-school and/or summer programs

Alternate models should only be temporary as transitions into, or to complement implementation of, full traffic safety education programs in schools. Alternate models should not replace in-school programs, since they will not reach all children. These approaches, however, can supplement the skills taught in school, raise community awareness, and motivate actions necessary for developing or maintaining comprehensive and effective programs at schools. While a one-day pedestrian/bicycle rodeo can be effective as a community awareness event, it is typically not sufficient to cover the pedestrian and bicycle safety education needs of children. It is most effective as a culminating event at the conclusion of a traffic safety education unit.

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## HOW CAN A TRAFFIC SAFETY EDUCATION PROGRAM BE IMPLEMENTED IN MY SCHOOL?

### The program requires: instructor training, equipment and facilities, curriculum materials, and time to teach the curriculum

Schools need to identify constraints to program implementation and resolve issues related to scheduling and equipment. Teachers may need support and assistance from school administrators and others to arrange schedules to reach students with the program. Principals, PTAs, and school advisory committees can also play a key role.

### Instructors

To be most effective, teachers need preparation for teaching pedestrian and bicycling safety skills. Ideally, this preparation includes a one-day (8-hour) in-service training session. The Florida Safe Routes to School Program provides school districts, at no charge, with the necessary training and curriculum materials to



effectively implement a pedestrian and bicycle safety education program. Teacher-training workshops train teachers, school resource officers, and others how to use the curriculum and implement pedestrian and bicycle safety education units in their schools. Health and physical education teachers, classroom teachers and school resource officers typically make excellent traffic safety instructors. Often, these educators know students personally and are aware of their individual capabilities.

### **Facilities and Equipment**

Pedestrian safety skills can be taught in a variety of settings, such as classrooms, gymnasiums, grassy fields, or paved areas (e.g., basketball court, covered pavilion, secured asphalt area). On-bike practice requires a large (50' x 100' or larger) asphalt or grassy area, covered if possible, along with a secure space to store bicycles and equipment for the time that the bicycles are at the school (assuming a set of equipment travels from school to school). Some schools store and transport equipment in enclosed trailers, surplus delivery trucks, or retired school buses with the seats removed. All windows and doors should be secured to prevent theft.

It is ideal but not necessary to provide a bicycle for each child in a class. However, when station-rotation training is utilized, there can be 2-3 bicycles for each line/station so a minimum of 6-10 bikes total could still provide basic skills training for an entire class. Another option could be to ask students to bring their own bicycles to use during the class. While this may provide more bicycles to be used during class, it is essential to inspect all bicycles before they are used. Helmets are mandatory for each child, and it is helpful to send a note home or ask children to bring their own helmets if possible. This allows educators to inspect the helmets and identify any fit issues or whether a new helmet is needed. Other program equipment may include ropes, cones, chalk/chalk spray, halved tennis balls, stop signs, mock vehicle signs, and polypots. Each activity will provide suggestions for equipment and materials.

### **Curriculum Materials**

Some teachers assemble their own curriculum materials from websites, pamphlets, videos, fact sheets, and lessons available from numerous safety organizations and programs. In addition to other available resources, the Florida Safe Routes to School Program provides a comprehensive traffic safety education curriculum to participants who attend teacher-training workshops. The Florida Safe Routes to School Traffic Safety Education Guide includes pedestrian safety lessons for grades K-8 and bicycle safety lessons for grades 3-8.

### **Florida Safe Routes to School Regional Trainers**

Regional Safe Routes to School programs have staff who can conduct teacher-training workshops in their areas. Trainers are certified as League Cycling Instructors by the League of American Bicyclists, and complete the training process through Florida Safe Routes to School. For information on a regional Safe Routes to School program or trainer near you, please contact:

Florida Safe Routes to School  
[SRTS@hhp.ufl.edu](mailto:SRTS@hhp.ufl.edu)  
(352) 294-1685

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## **WHAT STUDENT ACTIVITIES SHOULD BE PART OF A TRAFFIC SAFETY EDUCATION PROGRAM?**

Student activities involve both indoor (classroom) lessons and outdoor lessons where practical pedestrian, school bus, and bicycle safety skills can be practiced.

The lessons include skills such as:

- Stopping at the Edge
- Stop and Search



- Visual Barriers
- How to enter and leave a school bus
- Importance of Helmets
- Seeing and Being Seen
- Rules of the Road
- Pre-ride bicycle check
- Avoiding hazards and defensive riding techniques, such as stopping, searching for traffic, scanning to the rear, signaling, turning and maneuvering through intersections.

Children must first learn and practice traffic safety skills in a controlled setting before they venture out into traffic. Mastering these will help children be safer and more predictable pedestrians, bicyclists, and future motorists.

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## TRAFFIC SAFETY EDUCATION

Teaching children to be safer pedestrians and bicyclists is the main goal of Safe Routes to School (SRTS) education programs. Another valuable goal is teaching children about the benefits of walking and bicycling, such as the positive impact these activities have on personal health and the environment. Knowing these benefits can help children understand the importance of these activities and inspire lifelong participation.

### School-based Education

- While, ideally, children receive most of their instruction from parents, this does not always happen. School-based education assures that all children get the chance to learn and practice the same potentially lifesaving skills.
- All children can benefit from learning pedestrian and bicycle safety behaviors regardless of whether they will walk and bicycle to school, as these skills will serve them throughout life.
- The reality in some communities is that young children, who would ideally be supervised by adults, are walking to school alone. This makes providing safety education and other strategies even more important.

### Classroom or Physical Education Lessons

In a classroom or physical education class, education can be provided in the following ways:

- Stand-alone lessons.
- Comprehensive curriculum delivered as a pedestrian and/or bicycle safety unit.
- Lessons integrated into subjects such as language arts and math.
- Ideally, children will receive a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian safety education program which includes skills practice on-bike and as pedestrians.

### Parent Involvement

Parents can also be an important part of children’s traffic safety education because:

- They can serve as role models for safe walking and bicycling behavior.
- They can observe their child’s behavior and provide guidance in real-life situations.

Information about what's being taught in school can be sent home and parents can be asked to reinforce these skills with their children. Encouraging parents to walk or bicycle with their child provides time for them to assess the child's skills, such as whether the child pays attention to traffic, chooses appropriate routes to walk/bike, and has the ability to gauge gaps in traffic that allow for safe street crossing. Parents can also play a role in schools by volunteering to help with classroom and skills practice.

*Special acknowledgement to Margaret Raynal whose time and dedication to previous editions of this curriculum will continue to touch the lives of children for years after her untimely death in December 1996.*