



Back to School 2020

Recommendations for Safe Routes to School Programming

Foreward

In a few short weeks, kids across the country will begin heading back to school. Some will enter their classrooms and smile at their teachers from behind masks. Others will hop on bikes and feel the breeze rush across their cheeks instead of sticky school bus air. A high school senior will help his younger sister log on to her online class before opening his laptop to do the same. Another will sit at a desk six feet apart from her best friend, but only for three days a week. On remote-learning days, her grandmother will become her desk partner as they work together from the kitchen table. This is the portrait of Back to School 2020. It will be new. It will not be normal - and that's okay.

At Safe Routes Partnership, we recognize that “normal” is a mindset defined by those with the most power, privilege, and access. It does not reflect the rich diversity of our lived experiences, our struggles, and our dreams for the future. When we started thinking about our role in back to school planning, we were conscious of the urge to return to normal. We decided that the appropriate counter-action was finding a way to move forward, even if it meant confronting the unknown. We also recognized that communities are at the heart of what we do, and our journey forward would be better if we made it together.

Even with community support, we know there are challenges ahead. There are concerns about funding, staff and volunteer capacity, community resistance to mask-wearing and physical distancing, and the reality that some families cannot prioritize walking and biking when they are wondering how they will put dinner on the table. We encourage you to acknowledge these challenges, then we invite you to consider what is possible in this moment. As you read through the list of recommendations ask yourself, “What am I capable of doing right now? What can wait until later? What am I excited to try out? What inspires me?” Then, go for it! Start small if you want, or pair up with a buddy to test out a new idea. There is no need to do everything now, just pick what makes sense for you - or even something that just sounds like fun.

Some of you might start physically distanced bike train programs. Others might send out at-home walking and rolling activity calendars in your email newsletters. One of you might take a walk in a neighborhood you have never been to before to better understand the safety challenges students in that community face. Another one of you might reach out to your local food pantry to see if there are ways you can work together to ensure the health and safety of all families. However you support your communities this fall, know that you can play an important role even if it looks a little different than before. This is our chance to connect with each other, grow our movement of people walking and biking, and dismiss the return to “normal” in order to shape our own, better future. We welcome you to learn with us, experiment with us, share with us, and move forward with us.

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Introduction

The Safe Routes Partnership is releasing the first set of comprehensive guidance for implementing Safe Routes to School programs during the 2020-21 school year, offering crucial guidance for Safe Routes to School and active transportation professionals, educators, and caregivers across the nation as schools prepare to resume learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. This guidance was developed by the Safe Routes Partnership and the [Back to School 2020 Working Group](#): a women-led, diverse group of 18 Safe Routes to School and community leaders from communities across the country. As we publish their recommendations, we take a moment to appreciate their time, expertise, enthusiasm, and commitment to advancing safe walking and rolling for everyone.

The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed life as we know it. The guidance issued in these recommendations is forward-thinking and transformational, designed not only to help navigate the return to learning during this period marked by uncertainty and still-rising numbers of coronavirus cases, but also to collectively reimagine the role of Safe Routes to School in communities.

Using the six E's framework—Engagement, Equity, Engineering, Encouragement, Education, Evaluation—the Back to School 2020 guide offers strategies, tools, considerations, and advice for running Safe Routes to School programs this fall and beyond. The recommendations are short-term, actionable, and designed for you to pick and choose what works best for your community. They include a variety of ways for you to help kids and families stay safe and active during COVID-19, along with a few longer term considerations as your program evolves. There is a degree of crossover and consistency in the recommendations across the three scenarios; this is intentional to emphasize priority guidance that is relevant no matter what going back to school looks like in your community. The guide also offers trauma-informed engagement approaches to Safe Routes to School and opportunities to collaborate with community partners to deliver essential needs and services.



About the Back to School 2020 Working Group

The Safe Routes Partnership convened the [Back to School 2020 Working Group](#) in June 2020 with the goal of developing strategies and resources for effectively implementing Safe Routes to School programs during the approaching school year in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. We selected 18 individuals from a total of 179 applications from Safe Routes to School coordinators, parents, teachers, planners, crossing guards, and advocates located in communities across the United States who offered to volunteer their time and expertise in developing a comprehensive set of recommendations for returning to school. The Safe Routes Partnership extends our sincere thanks to the time and commitment of the Working Group members.

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In addition to convening the official Back to School 2020 Working Group, we hosted two informal Zoom calls that were attended by nearly 400 people. Notes from the informal calls are available [here](#).

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Acknowledgements

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Photo credit: August de Richelieu

Scenario A

Remote Learning Recommendations

Even though students are not physically traveling to and from school, transportation and physical activity are still essential needs for families and students everywhere. Safe Routes to School programs have the opportunity to carve out new, non-traditional, and forward-thinking ways to support community health and safety and equitable transportation options in a remote learning environment.

The abrupt shift to remote learning in the spring challenged schools and school-based programs to rapidly shift gears and adapt to an unprecedented new reality. Going into the fall, we have had time to intentionally prepare and plan for the role of Safe Routes to School programs in helping families and communities address the challenges presented by remote learning. The recommendations for remote learning highlight strategies, tools, and ideas based on lessons learned from the spring to help you infuse creativity and new life into your Safe Routes to School program.



Remote Learning Scenario Summary

With COVID-19 cases set to rise this fall, school districts will recommend continuing remote learning in the new school year. In-person Safe Routes to School activities will be canceled through the rest of the calendar year. We have to continue Safe Routes to School programs remotely with an understanding that funding might be limited or re-allocated to other priority areas. Program engagement drops among students and families, especially those without access to technology and those with lower incomes. Considerations for Black, Indigenous, people of color and low-income communities and people with disabilities or underlying health conditions will be high priority.

Key Assumption

COVID-19 cases remain steady over the summer with an increase in the fall months. In anticipation of this new wave and lack of a vaccine, school district officials decide to continue a remote learning model for all students. COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted Black, Indigenous, People of Color and low-income communities.

Programmatic Impact

All in-person activities through the fall (Walk to School Day, bike rodeos, walking school bus programs, etc.) will be canceled.

Educating and encouraging students to be physically active and safe from traffic must be shifted to other modes of delivery than in-person education/encouragement.

People Impact

Families, students, teachers and volunteers will experience a variety of health impacts, psychological and emotional fatigue and other COVID-related stressors. Students who require and benefit most from in-person learning opportunities will experience challenges adjusting to continued remote learning, especially students with disabilities and students in Black, Indigenous, People of Color and low-income households. Reduction in volunteer and partner engagement as in-person events are cancelled. Students and families without adequate access to technology and students with lower incomes will not engage in remote activities at the same level as other students and families. Teachers and school staff will not prioritize remote SRTS programs.

Financial Impact

Safe Routes to School Program Funding may be reduced or reallocated to other areas to support high-need areas, such as staffing, food programs, technology, online learning tools, etc. School transportation budgets may also be impacted as busing and crossing guard services are reduced or increased according to changes in remote/in-person learning procedures.

Schools may have reduced resources with staggered schedules or reduced in-person learning. Some staff may be furloughed or laid off due to budget cuts.

Families and schools in Black, Indigenous, People of Color and low-income communities may be disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

Engagement

Guiding Recommendation

Use this moment in history to listen to the unique and pressing needs of your community members rather than pushing forward with previously established plans or agendas. Taking time to hear what your community really needs and prioritizes can help you establish deeper, more trusting relationships, and infuse creativity and new life into your program.

STRATEGIES

- Reach out to parents, caregivers, volunteers, Walking School Bus leaders, and community partners. Check in with them to see how they are doing and what they need, including needs that are not necessarily related to Safe Routes to School. Work with them to connect with the students they interact with through their Safe Routes to School program to do the same.
- Crossing guards are essential partners in Safe Routes to School programs. Keep them engaged and active in Safe Routes to School efforts through self-paced learning opportunities. Many communities have a difficult time recruiting and retaining crossing guards, so it would be worthwhile to figure out how to keep them on the payroll. Identify additional tasks and responsibilities for crossing guards to keep them involved, such as conducting walk audits.
- When reaching out to teachers and other school staff, start by asking what support they need and how you may be able to help rather than by asking for support with your program.
- Use targeted outreach to engage parents and caregivers who don't usually jump to leadership or volunteer opportunities for a variety of reasons. Work with school community liaisons or engagement specialists to reach out to low-income families, Black and Indigenous families, and families of color. Keep engagement asks specific, bearing in mind not to overburden families with coordinating programs.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Some communities do not have neighborhoods that are conducive for walking for a variety of reasons. Let families know that they can still stay engaged and "Walk in Place" inside their home, apartment/neighborhood complex, local park, community center, or other safe space.



TOOLS

- Text messaging is a widely accessible tool, while internet applications might not be. Start a group text with parents to coordinate walking school buses, organize bike trains, and share information. For online engagement, explore your local Facebook and NextDoor groups to connect with parent volunteers and advocates, and to organize trainings and bike swaps. TikTok is also a great application for engaging students with fun, interesting video programming.

PLANNING FOR THE LONG TERM

- Identify organizations and groups outside of police departments with positive, existing relationships with schools, and come up with creative strategies to partner and improve engagement through collective impact. Work with youth, families, teachers and community partners to brainstorm solutions for culturally-informed programming that meets local needs.
- Foster connection, communication, and relationships among parents and caregivers who participate in walking programs. Use existing applications or develop contact lists so that families can more easily contact each other.



INNOVATION IN ACTION

In Austin, Texas, the city's Safe Routes to School program employs more than 200 crossing guards. During school closures, they offered self-paced learning opportunities in the form of podcasts, webinars and reading material, so that crossing guards could continue their regular working hours. The Safe Routes to School program staff met with crossing guards individually to understand individual technology and language capabilities, so that learning options were inclusive of everyone's needs. Not only were crossing guards able to engage with continued learning and professional development on their own time, they were able to connect with other crossing guards and broaden their understanding of how significant their role is to the greater Safe Routes movement.

Equity

Guiding recommendation: In continuing to promote Safe Routes to School and at-home physical activity, remember that people have very different home lives and experiences. Not all students have internet access, devices on which to access online material, parental or caregiver supervision or attention, or positive nurturing relationships at home. The COVID-19 pandemic has not affected all communities equally. Focus attention and resources on Black, Indigenous, and communities of color that have been most adversely impacted by the pandemic.

STRATEGIES

- Utilize a number of outreach methods to reach students and families, including text messaging, teleparent, social media, NextDoor, paid advertising, culturally-centered radio channels, and local TV.
- Partner with local community groups such as churches, recreation centers, and boys & girls clubs. Be an ally, volunteer, offer bike repairs, and show up for other organizations' priority concerns.
- Translate communications and materials into languages spoken and commonly used in your community. If your community has limited programming options at this time, take this opportunity to translate and distribute materials.
- Support families participating in school meal pick-ups. Print Safe Routes to School activities and other materials to send home with families. Partner with them to identify safe walking and biking opportunities to and from school meal pick-ups. Offer bike repair or helmet giveaways at meal pick-up times.
- Host a bike swap program to provide bikes to people who need them most. Engage with your local bike shop to assess bikes, then host a swap using a lottery system where donors could trade for a different bike, and those without a bike could choose from what is available.



CONSIDERATIONS

- The first day of Safe Routes to School programming should not be the first time a community meets or sees practitioners. Build in time to get to know the community and open up communication about their history and assets/resources that have worked, and build trust before entering. This is particularly important for practitioners who live or identify outside of a specific community.

TOOLS

- To get started hosting a bike swap, use this [Bike Swap Instructions guiding document](#) from MyBikeSkills with instructions and a [bike assessment template](#) to customize and tailor to your needs.

PLANNING FOR THE LONG TERM

- Prioritize engaging with Black and Indigenous communities and communities of color. Center Black lives and voices, and offer culturally-sensitive, trauma-informed programming. Stick through difficult conversations and promote tools to help the community build resilience and heal.
- Stay connected to the Safe Routes Partnership's [blog](#) for reflections on how Safe Routes efforts can support Black Lives, racial justice, and equitable access in your community.



Photo credit: August de Richelieu

Engineering

Guiding recommendation: Building on the increased need and demand for walking and biking during the pandemic, start or continue building infrastructure that supports walking and biking.

STRATEGIES

- Conduct walk audits virtually, independently, or in small groups following local physical distancing and safety requirements.
- Revisit projects that were slated to begin construction, and follow up with local agency staff to ensure that they are on track.
- Experiment with tactical urbanism projects and pop-ups to make changes, especially while there may be less car traffic in your community. Activate crosswalks and sidewalks with creative artwork, work on temporary or permanent infrastructure installations, and incorporate positive health and safety messaging.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Consider physical distancing, use personal protective equipment (PPE), and adhere to local health guidelines when completing in-person audits.
- Include students and families in developing audit materials and completing walk audits in your community to ensure user friendliness and maximum engagement.
- Prioritize infrastructure projects that improve safety in neighborhoods and in communities most adversely impacted by the virus, including Black, Indigenous, people of color, and low-income communities. Unsafe or poorly connected transportation options are one piece of the systemic reason that low-income and BIPOC communities are bearing the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic.



TOOLS

- [StreetStory Tool for Virtual Walk Audits \(Berkeley SafeTREC\)](#)
- [DIY Traffic Gardens and At-Home Traffic Garden activities](#)
- [Tactical Urbanism and Safe Routes to School](#)

PLANNING FOR THE LONG TERM

- Identify infrastructure projects that are low-hanging fruit and relatively inexpensive, medium-size projects, and large-scale projects to consider as jurisdictions pursue funding. Advocate for high-priority safety projects for communities, celebrate small wins, and focus on sustaining momentum.
- Reach out to neighbors and members of the school community whose schools/neighborhoods have recently received infrastructure improvements. Capture stories about how this has positively impacted their lives, either when school was in session or during the pandemic. Use these stories to advocate for future infrastructure improvements.



Education

Guiding Recommendation: Provide teachers, parents, and caregivers with plug-and-play content and materials to support kids to learn how to safely walk and bike in their communities.

STRATEGIES

- Connect parents and teachers to existing online content or pull together your own online walk & roll safety curriculum. Offer printed materials of the same curriculum for those who don't have easy or consistent internet access. All educational resources should be available in the languages spoken by students and families.
- Reach out to your school's PE teachers to incorporate Safe Routes to School activities into physical education materials. Offer professional development "train the trainer" instruction for PE teachers, health teachers, and other interested partners to integrate into online learning. This could be a webinar or printed packet with information about safe walking and biking education.
- Partner with local libraries, Parks and Recreation agencies, and other community services/organizations that are already offering online streaming content or public television programming, and integrate Safe Routes to School education as part of that programming.
- Design, build, and install a pop-up traffic garden that students and families can visit remotely on their own time.
- Offer or share online educational videos on Bicycle Basics for Families so families can brush up on bicycling skills.
- Offer to conduct school safety assemblies as webinars or recordings rather than in-person assemblies.
- Host bike helmet giveaways during "open street" hours. This could take place during regular street closures for outdoor dining, walking and biking, food distribution services, farmer's markets, etc.
- If you have a contract to provide Safe Routes to School educational programming, reach out to your grant administrator to request a change to your scope of work. Try not to reinvent the wheel with materials and content that have already been developed; instead, focus on creative ways to engage students remotely. You may wish to encourage students to create content that resonates with them.



CONSIDERATIONS

- Provide Safe Routes to School lessons that are “bite-sized,” approachable, easy to complete independently, and relatable to students’ real-world experiences.
- Remember that not all students have internet access or devices to access content.
- Activities should reflect the feedback received during evaluation & engagement efforts. Community input should inform what Safe Routes to School programs look like through COVID-19 changes.

TOOLS

- [Remote learning resources and lessons from Eugene-Springfield, Oregon Safe Routes to School](#)
- [Safe Routes At Home Family Activity Guide from Wisconsin Bike Fed](#)
- [Palo Alto, CA Online Safe Routes to School Curriculum, including 5th grade assembly and tips for bicycling with kids of all ages](#)
- [Sample lessons for safe walking and rolling while physical distancing from Oregon Safe Routes to School](#)
- [Resources for educators, parents and caregivers on walking and biking: route ideas, safety resources and activities, from Beaverton, Oregon Safe Routes to School](#)
- [MyBikeSkills offers bicycle safety education videos for parents, caregivers and children to learn about biking basics](#)
- [Bike Safety Presentations and Worksheets for ages 5-9, 10+ in English, Spanish, and Hindi from EZ Ride](#) (Haitian Creole and Pedestrian Safety coming soon!)
- [Walk and Roll with SchoolPool Activity Book from King County, Washington](#)
- [Safe Routes to School Distance Learning Modules on Google Classroom via Iowa Safe Routes to School](#)

PLANNING FOR THE LONG TERM

- After the school year begins, work with teachers and school administrators to discuss how your Safe Routes to School program can continue to offer traffic safety education and physical activity programming in spite of remote learning. Develop a Safe Routes to School guide for parents and identify ways they can get involved with and support your local program. Use these [resources](#) on volunteer recruitment and management to get started and this [resource](#) for parent champions.
- Advocate for Safe Routes to School efforts and reinforce the relevance of how physical activity boosts mental health and improves immune response toward chronic and infectious diseases.

Encouragement

Guiding recommendation: Promote walking and biking as a safe, physically distant way for families and caregivers to support their kids' essential needs while learning from home: meaningful connection with adults, physical movement and activity, and socialization with peers.

STRATEGIES

- Promote at-home ideas for staying physically active and engaging with active transportation options. Offer a curated list and simple resources for parents (such as three choices each week instead of exhaustive lists) with ideas for setting family health and wellness goals.
- Promote walking, biking, and rolling activities that the whole family/household can enjoy.
- Encourage families and caregivers to practice walking and bicycling to school while traffic volumes are lower so they build the habit and get more comfortable using active transportation to get to school.
- Partner with local businesses who have been impacted by COVID-19-related closures to participate in a scavenger hunt where students and families walk and bike to local businesses to earn prizes. Purchase gift cards or merchandise from these local shops to offer as rewards for completing the challenge.
- Similar to a Remote Drop Off/Park-N-Walk program in rural communities, identify and suggest places that people can walk safely close to home or school.
- In addition to scavenger hunts, host remote walking and biking challenges.
- Plan a remote Walk to School Day for October 2, 2020 with a variety of activities, including poster contests with prizes.

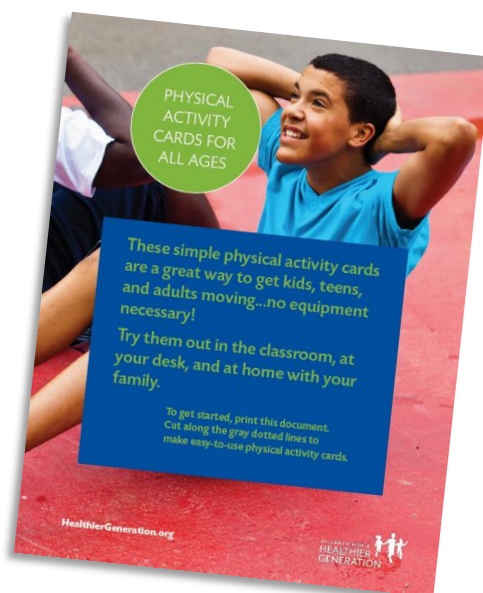


CONSIDERATIONS

- Use challenges that allow for a variety of in-person, remote, and hybrid participation so that students and families with different needs and comfort can still participate.
- Take a “two-generation” approach, such as “Safe Routes for All” with programming and options for the whole family.

TOOLS

- [Walk and Roll While Social Distancing Tip Sheet from King County, Washington](#)
- [Check out how communities celebrated Bike to School Day remotely in May 2020 for remote Walk to School Day ideas](#)
- [Family Resources for Staying Active During Covid-19, including activities and bike/ped home education opportunities from WALKSacramento](#)
- [Alliance for Healthier Generations Kohl’s Healthy at Home Campaign](#)
- [Walk and Roll to School Poster Contest from San Francisco Bicycle Coalition](#)
- [Walk & Roll Activities Calendar](#)
- [Make-Your-Own Walk & Roll Activities Calendar Template](#)
- [Walk and Roll Activity Bingo from Eugene Springfield Safe Routes to School](#)



PLANNING FOR THE LONG TERM

- Plan ahead for future Walk/Bike to School Days using this [fact sheet](#). Some communities are considering Winter Walk to School Days. If you are thinking about that and need photos of kids walking and biking in the winter, check out the [Safe Routes in All Weather photo library](#).

Evaluation

Guiding recommendation: Connect with members of your community to understand transportation needs and preferences both related to the return to school and the pandemic more generally. Assess how Safe Routes to School programming and infrastructure that supports kids' safe travel to school can also help community members meet essential needs. If capacity allows, evaluate how the lack of in-person school affects kids' physical activity.

STRATEGIES

- Survey, talk with, and listen to youth, parents, caregivers, teachers, and other partners to identify needs and possible solutions. Other groups may have already done surveys. See if they are willing to share information with you. Use evaluation to inform programming and funding opportunities.
- Make a prioritization list of communities most in need and try to direct resources to those communities first.
- Assess how shifts in traffic volume and speed have affected active transportation rates and safety.
- Collaborate with local partners and agencies who provide essential needs and services—mutual aid efforts and food distribution centers could be opportunities to give away bike helmets, educational materials, bike swaps, etc.
- If your community has already undertaken Open Streets, Play Streets, Slow Streets, or any other innovative approaches to making more public space available for people to be outside, assess what neighborhoods these are available in. Support community members to self-determine whether something like this is desired and if so, the approach to increasing public space and safe opportunities for recreation and travel that would be most beneficial to them and their neighborhood.
- Take a walk or ride around your community and take note of infrastructure challenges. Consider using/imagining a transportation mode you don't usually take—for example, if you usually drive to the grocery store/park/school, what would this trip look like if you had to walk? Bike? Take transit?
- Use the built environment to gather data. Invite people to share thoughts and concerns on a community comment board, a sidewalk chalk display, or a comment box set up at a food distribution center.

CONSIDERATIONS

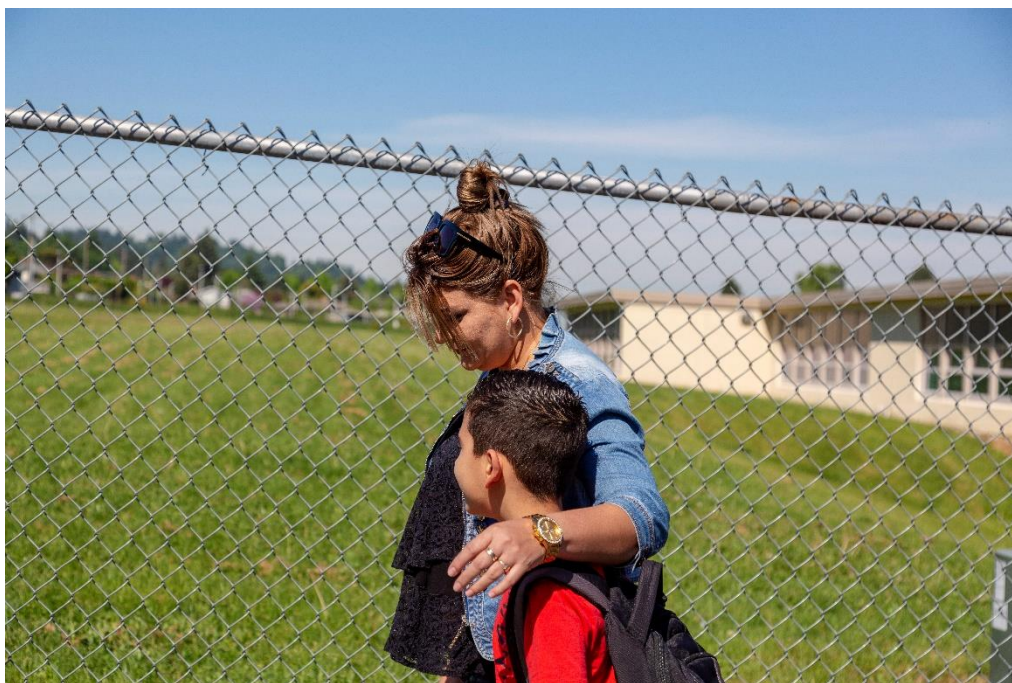
- Communities everywhere have seen an uptick in walking, biking, and outdoor play, and the disparities in access to safe, open spaces have been magnified.
- Many cities are seeing increased speeding due to low traffic volumes, resulting in pedestrian deaths. Determine whether this is happening in your community.

TOOLS

- [Sample physical activity tracker from Beaverton, OR Safe Routes to School Program](#)
- Host an Instagram contest where students and community members can showcase how they are getting around their communities and staying physically active while staying at home.
- Invite students and community members to participate in a remote Photovoice project taking photos of built environment features that either help or hinder them from being physically active while learning at home.

PLANNING FOR THE LONG TERM

- Revise or create a new Safe Routes to School action plan with programming strategies for COVID-19. If you need an idea for where to get started on Safe Routes to School action planning, check out the action plans for several California communities [here](#) (midway down the page).

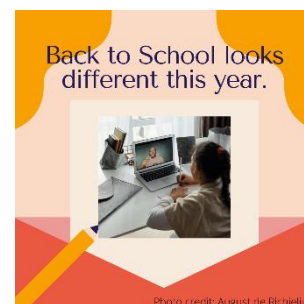


Remote Learning Messaging Toolkit

Use these sample messages to encourage walking, biking, and physical activity during remote learning. You can find the full communications toolkit online [here](#).

Twitter

- Build healthy (and fun!) habits into the remote school day: take a walk or wheel around the block in between classes. Need some inspiration for activities on your walk or ride? Check out this weekly activity calendar 📅: <https://www.docdroid.net/90tpK1r/at-home-weekly-activities-calendar-final-pdf>
- Looking to add variety to your usual walks or rides? Practice the route to school so you're ready to roll when school meets again in person. 🚲🚶♀️
- Active kids learn better. Keep up the movement and activity while learning from home!



Instagram

- Back to school looks different this year. Start your day by taking a walk or a bike ride. Take movement breaks in between classes. Share photos of how you are staying physically active while at learning at home using the hashtag #SRTS2020
- It's Mindful Monday! Get your week started off right by taking a walk and checking in with yourself. It can help improve your focus and ability to learn. (Link in bio.)

Facebook

Here's a week's worth of fun activities for staying active, getting out and moving, and being ready to learn while learning remotely. We invite you to make your own and share it back with us: <https://bit.ly/2EzNrtr>

Newsletter Copy

Throughout the pandemic, the word “essential” has become a buzzword. To support our school community, we're sharing activities to help meet kids' essential needs: meaningful connection with parents/caregivers; movement and physical activity, and socialization with peers through play. Here is a week's worth of activities to stay active and socially connected while learning at home:

<https://www.docdroid.net/90tpK1r/at-home-weekly-activities-calendar-final-pdf>



Sample texts/Outreach messages

Hi there, this is x, the school Safe Routes to School coordinator. I know the pandemic is taking a toll on our community, and I wanted to reach out to check in with you and see how you're doing.

- If people are struggling with covid, food access, or issues related to unemployment, direct them to your community's covid-response page and/or relevant community based organizations.
- If your school is returning in either the hybrid or in-person scenario, ask if they have any concerns or questions about school travel.



Scenario B

Hybrid Learning Recommendations

Photo credit: Gustavo Fring

Many districts are planning to start the year with a hybrid learning model, breaking students up into different cohorts with alternating schedules in order to have fewer students in the building at one time. Some districts are approaching the return to school with staggered days, and others are approaching it with staggered times of day. Both of these scenarios have the potential to impact students' and families' abilities to get to/from school easily and safely, as well as affect traffic around schools.

Safe Routes to School programs are uniquely positioned to support families returning to a hybrid model, since staggered schedules may present new transportation challenges for caregivers who work or who have multiple students on different schedules. The recommendations below outline how Safe Routes to School partners can play a role in connecting families and community members with each other to help students get to and from school in this environment.



Hybrid Learning Scenario Summary

Ongoing cases and concern for COVID-19 continue through the fall, and school districts opt for a hybrid model of in-person and remote learning. Safe Routes to School practitioners will implement a combination of virtual and in-person programming activities, with increased safety precautions and physical distancing measures as required locally. Considerations for Black, Indigenous, People of Color and low-income communities and people with disabilities or underlying health conditions will be high priority.

Key Assumption

States and local communities may or may not see a decline in COVID cases by fall 2020 and decide to continue stay-home orders and/or practice physical distancing. If schools opt for a hybrid version of in-person and remote learning for Back to School 2020, a return to remote learning may be necessary depending on restrictions and increases in COVID-19 cases.

Programmatic Impact

Some activities like bike rodeos or walking school bus programs may be facilitated in-person, while other educational activities will be conducted remotely, such as interactive videos and poster contests.

Individuals will have ranging levels of comfort for in-person activities and Safe Routes to School programming will vary. Parents may revert to driving students to school, resulting in potential increased safety concerns at drop-off/pick-up times. Walking school bus programs and shared bike fleets may or may not be appropriate or preferred.

People Impact

Families, students, teachers and volunteers will experience a variety of health impacts, psychological and emotional fatigue and other COVID-related stressors.

Students may return for in-person learning, while some may opt or be required to participate in virtual learning. Schools may implement combination in-person and remote learning, staggered schedules, and/or reduced bussing to practice physical distancing. Adapting to these changes will be challenging for students, families and educators - particularly for families with limited access to technology and families with multi-age children.

Financial Impact

Safe Routes to School Program Funding may be reduced or reallocated to other areas to support high-need areas, such as staffing, food programs, technology, online learning tools, etc. School transportation budgets may also be impacted as busing and crossing guard services are reduced or increased according to changes in remote/in-person learning procedures.

Schools may have reduced resources with staggered schedules or reduced in-person learning. Some staff may be furloughed or laid off due to budget cuts.

Families and schools in Black, Indigenous, People of Color and low-income communities may be disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

Engagement

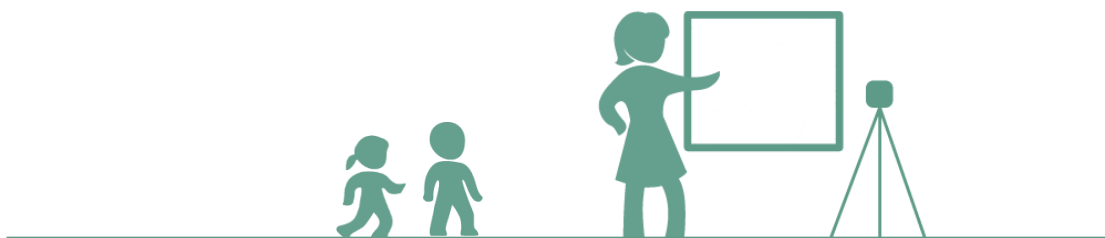
Guiding recommendation: Returning to school in the hybrid scenario is new for everyone: students, families, teachers, school administrators. Take time to connect with members of your community to hear about how the experience is going for them. Determine whether there are ways you can shift or adjust your programming based on what they say they need or want.

STRATEGIES

- Reach out to families in your school community to identify what would help them get their kids to/from school in the staggered scheduling environment. Connect families whose kids may be able to walk/bike to school together.
- Host Zoom calls for families and caregivers to ask questions about walking/biking to school. Connect families that are accustomed to walking and biking with families that are new to it.
- Crossing guards are essential partners in Safe Routes to School programs. Keep them engaged and active in Safe Routes to School efforts through self-paced learning opportunities. Many communities have a difficult time recruiting and retaining crossing guards, so it would be worthwhile to figure out how to keep them on the payroll. Identify additional tasks and responsibilities for crossing guards to keep them involved, such as conducting walk audits.
- Use targeted outreach to engage parents and caregivers who don't usually jump to leadership or volunteer opportunities for a variety of reasons. Work with school community liaisons or engagement specialists to reach out to low-income families, Black and Indigenous families, and families of color. Keep engagement asks specific, bearing in mind not to overburden families with coordinating programs.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Parents and caregivers may be back at work and unable to support the staggered schedules and/or may have lost their job due to shutdowns. Parents from more affluent families may be able to hire help, drive their kids, or form pods with other families.



TOOLS

- Text messaging is a widely accessible tool, while internet applications might not be. Start a group text with parents to coordinate walking school buses, bike trains and share information. For online engagement, explore your local Facebook and NextDoor groups to connect with parent volunteers and advocates, and to organize trainings and bike swaps. TikTok is also a great application for engaging students with fun, interesting video programming.



PLANNING FOR THE LONG TERM

- Identify organizations and groups outside of police departments with positive, existing relationships with schools, and come up with creative strategies to partner and improve engagement through collective impact. Work with youth, families, teachers, and community partners to brainstorm solutions for culturally-informed programming that meets local needs.
- Foster connection, communication and relationships among parents and caregivers who participate in walking programs. Use existing applications or develop contact lists so that families can more easily contact each other, particularly if they need help transporting kids to school.



INNOVATION IN ACTION

In Austin, Texas, the city's Safe Routes to School program employs more than 200 crossing guards. During school closures, they offered self-paced learning opportunities in the form of podcasts, webinars and reading material, so that crossing guards could continue their regular working hours. The Safe Routes to School program staff met with crossing guards individually to understand individual technology and language capabilities, so that learning options were inclusive of everyone's needs. Not only were crossing guards able to engage with continued learning and professional development on their own time, they were able to connect with other crossing guards and broaden their understanding of how significant their role is to the greater Safe Routes movement.

Equity

Guiding recommendation: The switch to hybrid learning is difficult for everyone involved, but it is harder on some people and communities than others. Focus attention and resources in Black, Indigenous, and communities of color that have been most adversely impacted by the virus and the hardships of the hybrid learning scenario.

STRATEGIES

- Utilize a number of outreach methods to reach students and families, including: text messaging, teleparent, social media, NextDoor, paid advertising, culturally-centered radio channels, and local TV.
- Partner with local community groups such as churches, recreation centers, and boys & girls clubs. Be an ally, volunteer, offer bike repairs, and show up for other organizations' priority concerns.
- Translate communications and materials into languages spoken and commonly used in your community. If your community has limited programming options at this time, take this opportunity to translate and distribute materials.
- Host a bike swap program to provide bikes to people who need them most. Engage with your local bike shop to assess bikes, then host a swap using a lottery system where donors could trade for a different bike, and those without a bike could choose from what is available.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Parents and caregivers who have lost jobs or have returned to work may face additional challenges in supporting their kids' attendance at school.
- The first day of Safe Routes to School programming should not be the first time a community meets or sees practitioners. Build in time to get to know the community and open up communication about their history and assets/resources that have worked, and build trust before entering. This is particularly important for practitioners who live or identify outside of a specific community.
- Remember that some students and families may have pre-existing conditions that place them at a higher risk of complications if they contract COVID-19. In encouraging walking and biking, be aware that this may be a reason that families or caregivers are driving their students, and don't force people to disclose personal health information to justify why they are driving.

TOOLS

- To get started hosting a bike swap, use [this Bike Swap Instructions guiding document](#) from MyBikeSkills with instructions and a [bike assessment template](#) to customize and tailor to your needs.

PLANNING FOR THE LONG TERM

- Prioritize engaging with Black and Indigenous communities and communities of color. Center Black lives and voices, and offer culturally-sensitive, trauma-informed programming. Stick through difficult conversations and promote tools to help the community build resilience and heal.
- Stay connected to the Safe Routes Partnership's [blog](#) for reflections on how Safe Routes efforts can support Black Lives, racial justice, and equitable access in your community.



Photo credit: Julian Wan

Engineering

Guiding recommendation: To prevent increased traffic and potential conflicts between students and cars, use engineering treatments to make streets on the way to and around schools safe and appealing for kids walking and bicycling. In the broader community, focus infrastructure improvements in neighborhoods with the least amount of green/open space and slow, safe streets for walking, biking, and physical activity so that kids and community members can be physically active while staying home.

STRATEGIES

- Conduct walk audits virtually, independently, or in small groups following local physical distancing and safety requirements.
- Work with your school and district to ensure there are clear places for students to wait at appropriate distances before entering the school if temperature and other symptom checks are in place.
- Consider modifying driving access to schools to accommodate more space for students to wait at appropriate distances before entering schools and/or create physical separation between where cars are driving and where students are waiting to enter school.
- Use visual cues painted or taped on the ground to indicate which travel mode is appropriate in which space.
- Experiment with tactical urbanism projects and pop-ups to make changes, especially while there may be less car traffic in your community. Activate crosswalks and sidewalks with creative artwork, work on temporary or permanent infrastructure installations and incorporate positive health and safety messaging.
- Share the [NACTO Recovery Streets School Streets guide](#) with your school transportation agency and/or department of public works.
- Focus on low-cost, fixable changes like installing signage related to air quality. With potential for increased driving to and from school, consider programs like the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) [Air Quality Flag Program](#), which encourages schools to raise a colored flag based on how clean or dirty the air is for the day using Air Quality Index colors.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Consider physical distancing, personal protective equipment (PPE), and adhere to local health guidelines when completing in-person audits.
- Include students and families in developing audit materials and completing walk audits in your community to ensure user friendliness and maximum engagement.
- Prioritize infrastructure projects that improve safety in neighborhoods and in communities most adversely impacted by the virus, focusing on Black, Indigenous, people of color, and low-income neighborhoods and communities.

TOOLS

- [NACTO Recovery Streets Guidelines - Schools](#)
- [Tactical Urbanism and Safe Routes to School](#)
- [EPA Air Quality Flag Program](#)



INNOVATION IN ACTION

In Metro-Atlanta, Georgia Commute Schools has an anti-idling initiative that encourages parents to reduce idling in the car-rider line. In partnership with the EPA, they provide Air Quality index flags and two anti-idling signs to schools as an effort to improve air quality during arrival and dismissal periods. Schools hold what are called “Idle-Free” days, which are sometimes held on the same day as Walk to School Days to educate drivers on the importance of turning their engines off.

Education

Guiding recommendation: Teach kids, families, and caregivers how to walk and bike to school and around their communities while abiding by health and safety precautions as well as local guidance or regulations related to COVID-19.

STRATEGIES

- Host bike rodeos, helmet fittings, and other school safety education more frequently to enable small, socially distant participation among students.
- Promote walking and biking as independent, healthy, physically distant ways for students to get to school.
- Teach youth how to use transit maps, read schedules, put their bicycles on the bus rack, etc. In communities with transit, it can be a valuable resource for families with different schedules and shifting needs throughout the pandemic.
- If you have a contract to provide Safe Routes to School educational programming, reach out to your grant administrator to request a change to your scope of work. Try not to reinvent the wheel with materials and content that have already been developed, and instead focus on creative ways of engaging students remotely. You may wish to encourage students to create content that resonates with them.
- Host bike helmet giveaways during “open street” hours. This could take place during regular street closures for outdoor dining, walking and biking, food distribution services, farmer’s markets, etc.
- Design, build, and install a pop-up traffic garden that students and families can visit remotely on their own time.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Families with more than one child may find themselves sending kids to school on different days or with staggered arrival and dismissal times. Families may need to employ various travel modes for their kids.
- Adhere to local health guidance regarding shared equipment like bike racks, bikes, and bike helmets if conducting in-person bike education.
- Activities should reflect the feedback received during Evaluation & Engagement efforts. Community input should inform what Safe Routes to School programs look like through COVID changes.

TOOLS

- [Remote learning resources and lessons from Eugene-Springfield, Oregon Safe Routes to School](#)
- [Safe Routes At Home Family Activity Guide from Wisconsin Bike Fed](#)
- [Palo Alto, CA Online Safe Routes to School Curriculum, including 5th grade assembly and tips for bicycling with kids of all ages](#)
- [Sample lessons for safe walking and rolling while physical distancing from Oregon Safe Routes to School](#)
- [Resources for educators, parents and caregivers on walking and biking: route ideas, safety resources and activities, from Beaverton, Oregon Safe Routes to School](#)
- [MyBikeSkills offers bicycle safety education videos for parents, caregivers and children to learn about biking basics](#)
- [Bike Safety Presentations and Worksheets for ages 5-9, 10+ in English, Spanish, and Hindi from EZ Ride](#) (Haitian Creole and Pedestrian Safety coming soon!)
- [Walk and Roll with SchoolPool Activity Book from King County, Washington](#)
- [Safe Routes to School Distance Learning Modules on Google Classroom via Iowa Safe Routes to School](#)

PLANNING FOR THE LONG TERM

- Develop a Safe Routes to School guide for parents and identify ways they can get involved with and support your local program. Use these [resources](#) on volunteer recruitment and management to get started and this [resource](#) for parent champions.
- Advocate for Safe Routes to School efforts and reinforce the relevance of how physical activity boosts mental health and improves immune response toward chronic and infectious diseases.



[Download this weekly walk and roll activity calendar](#)

Encouragement

Guiding recommendation: Help avoid the return to driving by promoting walking and biking as a safe, fun, and convenient daily activity whether kids are traveling to school or learning remotely.

STRATEGIES

- Promote bike trains as a naturally physically distant travel mode for days students are attending school in-person.
- Promote at-home ideas for staying physically active and engaging with active transportation options. Offer a curated list and simple resources for parents (such as three choices each week instead of exhaustive lists) with ideas for setting family health and wellness goals.
- Coordinate Walking School Buses among students attending school at the same time. Come up with student cohort names/logos to make them more fun and help with organization (similar to sports team names/logos/mascots).
- Share walking/biking activities that have both in-person and remote options available.
- For Walk to School Day in October, encourage both in-person and remote opportunities for participation.
- If your community has closed streets or slowed traffic to create more room for people to walk and bike at appropriate distances, promote routes to school that use those streets.
- Set up a remote Park-N-Walk to promote physical activity for kids who may live too far to walk/bike the whole way to school, but still wish to participate. This can also help alleviate increased traffic around the school.
- Partner with local businesses who have been impacted by COVID-19-related closures to participate in a scavenger hunt where students and families walk & bike to local businesses to earn prizes. Purchase gift cards or merchandise from these local shops to offer as rewards for completing the challenge.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Abide by local health regulations regarding PPE and physical distancing when planning Walk to School Day, walking school buses, and bike trains.
- Plan events that allow for a variety of in-person, remote, and hybrid participation so that students and families with different needs and comfort can still participate.
- It is likely that staff and volunteers will have reduced capacity or ability to support program implementation, either due to restrictions on people on campus or concerns about personal health and safety.
- Take a “two-generation” approach, such as “Safe Routes for All” with programming and options for the whole family.
- Use challenges that allow for a variety of in-person, remote, and hybrid participation so that students and families with different needs and comfort can still participate.

TOOLS

- [Safe Routes to School Toolkit by EZ Ride in New Jersey](#) includes guidance on how to adjust school travel modes to comply with CDC guidance.
- [Walking School Bus with Covid-19 Precautions from Humboldt County, California](#)
- [Walk and Roll While Social Distancing Tip Sheet from King County, Washington](#)
- [Toolkit for Remote Drop Off/Park N Walk/Bus and Walk from Minnesota Safe Routes to School](#)
- [Walk & Roll Activities Calendar](#)
- [Make-Your-Own Walk & Roll Activities Calendar Template](#)

PLANNING FOR THE LONG TERM

- Plan ahead for future Walk/Bike to School Days using this [fact sheet](#). Some communities are considering Winter Walk to School Days. If you are thinking about that and need photos of kids walking and biking in the winter, check out the [Safe Routes in All Weather photo library](#).



Evaluation

Guiding recommendation: Connect with members of your community to understand transportation needs and preferences both related to the part-time return to school and the pandemic more generally. Assess how the programming and infrastructure your program is working to support kids' safe travel to school can also support community members to meet essential needs.

STRATEGIES

- Survey, talk with and listen to youth, parents, caregivers, teachers, and other partners to identify how the changes to school attendance days/times help or hurt peoples' ability to get around and meet essential needs. Use Evaluation to inform programming and funding opportunities.
- Conduct quick surveys of students/families about their transportation challenges related to the hybrid return to school. Adjust programming based upon the responses you receive.
- Evaluate whether the hybrid return to school increases traffic volume and speeds around schools at certain times of day.
- Make a prioritization list of communities most in need and try to direct resources to those communities first.
- Collaborate with local partners and agencies who provide essential needs and services. Mutual aid efforts and food distribution centers could be opportunities to give away bike helmets, educational materials, bike swaps, etc.
- If your community has already undertaken Open Streets, Play Streets, Slow Streets, or any other innovative approaches to making more public space available for people to be outside, assess what neighborhoods these are available in. Support community members to self-determine whether something like this is desired and if so, the approach to increasing public space and safe opportunities for recreation and travel that would be most beneficial to them and their neighborhood.
- Take a walk or ride around your community and take note of infrastructure challenges. Consider using/imagining a transportation mode you don't usually take—for example, if you usually drive to the grocery store/park/school, what would this trip look like if you had to walk? Bike? Take transit?

CONSIDERATIONS

- Some districts are approaching the return to school with staggered days, and others are approaching it with staggered times of day. Both of these scenarios have the potential to impact students' and families' abilities to get to and from school easily and safely as well as affect traffic around schools.
- Communities everywhere have seen an uptick in walking, biking, and outdoor play, and the disparities in access to safe, open spaces have been magnified.
- Many cities are seeing increased speeding due to low traffic volumes, resulting in pedestrian deaths. Determine whether this is happening in your community.

TOOLS

- [Sample physical activity tracker from Beaverton, OR Safe Routes to School Program](#)
- Host an Instagram contest where students and community members can showcase how they are getting around their communities and staying physically active during hybrid learning.
- Invite students and community members to participate in a remote Photovoice project taking photos of built environment features that either help or hinder them from being physically active during hybrid learning.

PLANNING FOR THE LONG TERM

- Revise or create a new Safe Routes to School action plan with programming strategies for COVID-19. If you need an idea for where to get started on Safe Routes to School action planning, check out the action plans for several California communities [here](#) (midway down the page).



Hybrid Learning Messaging Toolkit

Use these sample messages to encourage walking, biking, and physical activity during hybrid learning. You can find the full communications toolkit online [here](#).

Twitter

- Returning to school in a hybrid model? Walk one day, bike another day! Don't forget to wash hands, wear a mask, stay physically distant from others on your way to and from school.
- We know this is a hard way to go back to school. Infuse a little fun into the day by walking or wheeling to school. We know there will be smiles behind those masks.
- Kids headed back into the school building this fall? Remember: driving them isn't your only option! Walking or biking is a two-fer: get your steps in while getting your kid to school in a healthy and safe manner.

Facebook



(Photo Credit: Gustavo Fring for Pexels)

Back to School is different this year. With staggered schedules and online classes, it can feel like getting your kids to school in a safe and healthy way is yet another thing to figure out. Let us help! The Safe Routes to School program is here to help support our school community to walk and bike to and from school. Walking and biking are healthy choices during the pandemic, since they are outdoors, can be done while maintaining safe physical distance, and help your kids arrive at school ready to learn.

Newsletter Copy

As we prepare for the return to the classroom, we recognize that there are mixed feelings about the staggered schedules for in-person and online learning. The Safe Routes to School program is here to support you however we can. As you consider your plans for getting your student to/from school, we encourage you to consider walking or biking as a healthy, outdoor, physically distant option. Please reach out to us with questions about school transportation!



Photo credit: Andy Falconer

Scenario C

In-Person Learning Recommendations

Returning to school in person will not be the same experience as it was before COVID-19. Every aspect of the school day will have to change when students and staff members return to buildings, starting with the trip to and from school.

Safe Routes to School programs have a crucial role to play when it comes to supporting community members in safely traveling to and from school in person. More than ever, schools and families need safe, convenient routes for walking and biking as a socially distant option for traveling around the community and getting physical activity—especially for families who do not feel safe riding the bus or do not own cars. At the same time, Safe Routes to School programs will have to make significant changes to core activities such as Walk to School Day, Walking School Bus programs, and in-class education; and may not be able to rely on traditional sources of funding and support from educators and volunteers. These recommendations will help you anticipate how social distancing, safety regulations, and new demands placed on families and educators could impact your program, and how you can prepare now to support students and families navigate the return to school and adapt to permanent changes in daily life.



In-Person Learning Scenario Summary

Whether or not COVID-19 cases decline by fall 2020, local communities may decide to lift stay-home measures and return to normal activities. Accordingly, Safe Routes to School practitioners may be expected to resume in-person fall activities, taking increased safety precautions and physical distancing measures as required locally. Balancing schools re-opening with ongoing concerns among individuals will be a delicate balance. Considerations for Black, Indigenous, People of Color and low-income communities and people with disabilities or underlying health conditions will be high priority.

Key Assumption

States and local communities may or may not see a decline in COVID cases by fall 2020 and decide to lift stay-home orders and return to normal activities. COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted Black, Indigenous, People of Color and low-income communities.

Programmatic Impact

Schools return to “normal” activities and in-person learning resumes with adjusted safety precautions. Safe Routes to School programming will pick back up after a likely lengthy period of inactivity.

Individuals will have ranging levels of comfort for in-person activities and Safe Routes to School programming will vary. Parents may revert to driving students to school, resulting in potential increased safety concerns at drop-off/pick-up times. Walking school bus programs and shared bike fleets may or may not be appropriate or preferred.

People Impact

Families, students, teachers and volunteers will experience a variety of health impacts, psychological and emotional fatigue and other COVID-related stressors.

Students will return to school for in-person learning. Students and families may be eager for face-to-face activities following a period of isolation. Others may not feel safe engaging in-person for a variety of reasons, impacting parent and volunteer participation. For example, people in high-risk categories may be concerned for increased exposure to COVID, and will opt out of in-person events. Parents may want to drive their kids to school to reduce risk of exposure. Students with immunocompromising issues could be “outed,” and/or left out of in-person activities.

Financial Impact

Safe Routes to School Program Funding may be reduced or reallocated to other areas to support high-need areas, such as staffing, food programs, technology, online learning tools, etc. School transportation budgets may also be impacted as busing and crossing guard services are reduced or increased according to changes in remote/in-person learning procedures.

Schools may have reduced resources with staggered schedules or reduced in-person learning. Some staff may be furloughed or laid off due to budget cuts.

Families and schools in Black, Indigenous, People of Color and low-income communities may be disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

Engagement

Guiding recommendation: The experience of returning to school in person is not monolithic. For some, it may be a welcome return; for others it may be filled with anxiety and countless other emotions in between. Take time to ask members of your community how they're doing and what they need to make the return as healthy, safe, and comfortable as possible.

STRATEGIES

- Host Zoom calls for families and caregivers to ask questions about walking and biking to school. Connect families that are accustomed to walking and biking with families that are new to it.
- Reach out to parents, caregivers, volunteers, Walking School Bus leaders, and community partners. Check in with them to see how they are doing and what they need, including needs that are not necessarily related to Safe Routes to School. Work with them to connect with the students they interact with through their Safe Routes to School program to do the same.
- Explore alternative communication methods to strengthen engagement in your Safe Routes to School program.
- Use targeted outreach to engage parents and caregivers who don't usually jump to leadership or volunteer opportunities for a variety of reasons. Work with school community liaison or engagement specialists to reach out to low-income, Black, and Indigenous families, and families of color. Keep engagement asks specific and task-oriented, keeping in mind to not overburden families with coordinating programs.
- Connect with teachers to understand how you and Safe Routes to School programming can help them meet the unique needs they are facing going back to school.

CONSIDERATIONS

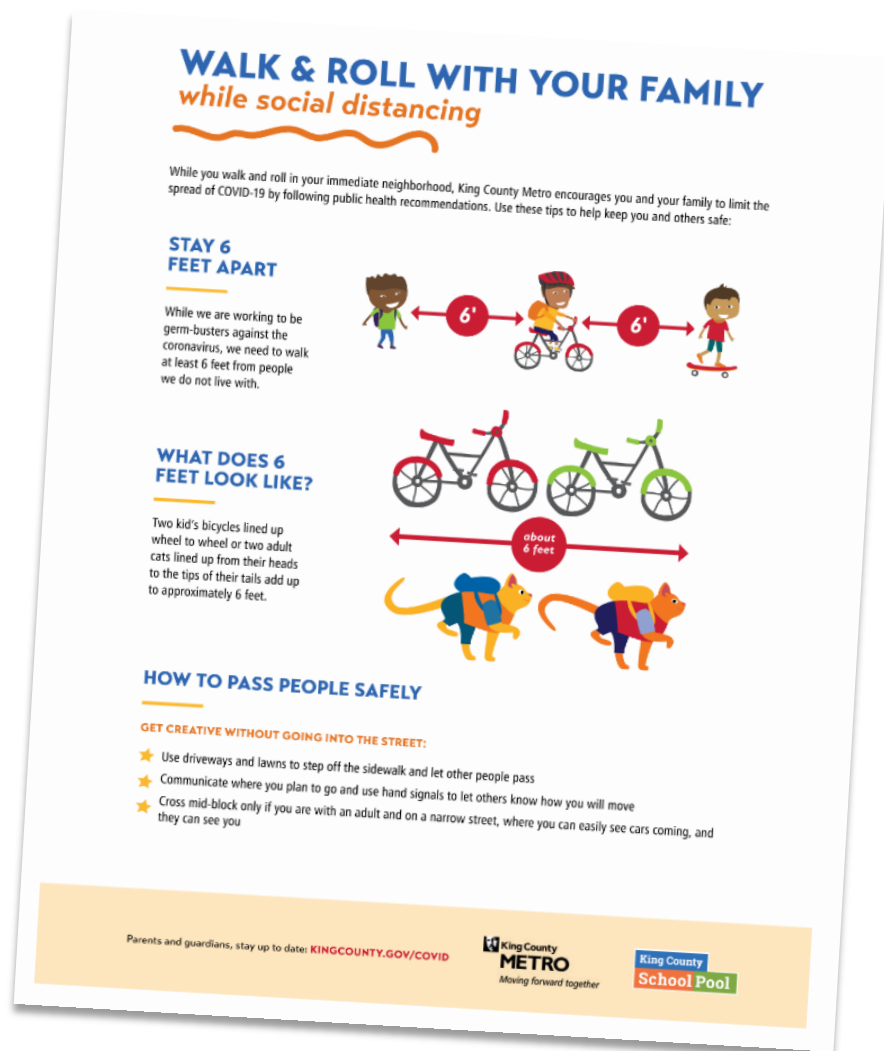
- While you may be passionate about walking and bicycling to school, remember that not everyone feels the same. Meet people where they're at. Listen to what they are experiencing, what they need, and what they want before launching into traditional messages about the benefits of walking and biking. Be prepared to make modifications accordingly.

TOOLS

- Use the [Safe Routes Community Engagement cards](#) to spark curiosity, encourage free expression, and engage diverse people in a variety of settings. These activities are great for outreach events, planning meetings, training sessions, and classroom instruction, and should be organized in accordance with local guidelines.

PLANNING FOR THE LONG TERM

- Identify organizations and groups outside of police departments with positive, existing relationships with schools, and come up with creative strategies to partner and improve engagement through collective impact. Work with youth, families, teachers, and community partners to brainstorm solutions for culturally-informed programming that meets local needs.
- Foster connection, communication, and relationships among parents and caregivers who participate in walking programs. Use existing applications or develop contact lists so that families can more easily contact each other, particularly if they need help transporting kids to school.



Equity

Guiding recommendation: The COVID-19 pandemic has not affected all communities equally. Focus attention and resources on Black, Indigenous, and communities of color that have been most adversely impacted by the pandemic.

STRATEGIES

- Utilize a number of outreach methods to reach students and families, including text messaging, teleparent, social media, NextDoor, paid advertising, culturally-centered radio channels, and local TV.
- Partner with local community groups such as churches, recreation centers, and boys & girls clubs. Be an ally, volunteer, offer bike repairs, and show up for other organization's priority concerns.
- Translate communications and materials into languages spoken and commonly used in your community. If your community has limited programming options at this time, take this opportunity to translate and distribute materials.
- Host a bike swap program to provide bikes to people who need them most. Engage with your local bike shop to assess bikes, then host a swap using a lottery system where donors could trade for a different bike, and those without a bike could choose from what is available.

CONSIDERATIONS

- The first day of Safe Routes to School programming should not be the first time a community meets or sees practitioners. Build in time to get to know the community and open up communication about their history and assets and resources that have worked, and build trust before entering. This is particularly important for practitioners who live or identify outside of a specific community.
- Remember that some students and families may have pre-existing conditions that place them at a higher risk of complications if they contract COVID-19. While encouraging walking and biking, be aware that this may be a reason that families or caregivers are driving their students, and don't force people to disclose personal health information to justify why they are driving.

TOOLS

- To get started hosting a bike swap, use this [Bike Swap Instructions guiding document](#) from MyBikeSkills with instructions and a [bike assessment template](#) to customize and tailor to your needs.

PLANNING FOR THE LONG TERM

- Prioritize engaging with Black and Indigenous communities and communities of color. Center Black lives and voices and offer culturally-sensitive, trauma-informed programming. Stick through difficult conversations and promote tools to help the community build resilience and heal.
- Stay connected to the Safe Routes Partnership's [blog](#) for reflections on how Safe Routes efforts can support Black Lives, racial justice, and equitable access in your community.



Photo credit: Ketut Subyanto

Engineering

Guiding recommendation: Walking and biking are safe, healthy, physically distant options for students whose parents and caregivers do not feel comfortable putting them on the bus and do not own cars. Focus engineering treatments on slowing traffic speeds and using quick-build approaches to prevent increased traffic and potential conflicts between students and cars, and ensure that families are safe walking or biking to and from school. In the broader community, focus infrastructure improvements in neighborhoods with the least amount of green/open space and slow, safe streets for walking, biking, and physical activity.

STRATEGIES

- Work with your school and district to ensure there are clear places for students to wait at appropriate distances before entering the school if temperature and other symptom checks are in place.
- Consider modifying driving access to schools to accommodate more space for students to wait at appropriate distances before entering schools and/or create physical separation between where cars are driving and where students are waiting to enter school.
- Use visual cues painted or taped on the ground to indicate which travel mode is appropriate in which space.
- Share the [NACTO Recovery Streets School Streets guide](#) with your school transportation agency and/or department of public works.
- Host walk audits of routes to school from neighborhoods with students newly deemed walkers/bikers due to decreased bus capacity. Propose temporary or quick build recommendations to local departments of public works and/or school transportation offices. Consider physical distancing, PPE and health guidelines when completing in-person audits, and develop instructions for conducting virtual audits independently or in smaller groups.
- Experiment with tactical urbanism projects and pop-ups to make changes, especially while there may be less car traffic in your community. Activate crosswalks and sidewalks with creative artwork, work on temporary or permanent infrastructure installations, and incorporate positive health and safety messaging.

- Work with students to create wayfinding signage to encourage physical distancing, share reminders to wear PPE, and ease congestion and confusion during drop-off and pick-up. Wayfinding signs to classrooms may alleviate the stress of having to navigate campus with COVID restrictions in place. Use temporary wayfinding signage to direct students and families on safe routes to school.
- Engage city planners and engineers to adjust timing of crossing lights during school drop off and pick up hours. Request that they automate traffic signals so that students are not routinely touching buttons to cross the street.
- Focus on low-cost, fixable changes like installing signage related to air quality. With potential for increased driving to and from school, consider programs like the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s [Air Quality Flag Program](#), which encourages schools to raise a colored flag based on how clean or dirty the air is for the day using Air Quality Index colors.
- Work with your school to reduce congestion at pick up and drop off by staggering start and dismissal times by grade or by mode. If dismissal times are staggered by mode, dismiss walkers/bikers first to allow the time to get off campus before cars are moving.
- Install or increase the number of bike racks available to account for increased bike riding to school, and locate racks away from areas prone to crowding.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Consider physical distancing, personal protective equipment (PPE), and adhere to local health guidelines when completing in-person audits.
- Include students and families in developing audit materials and completing walk audits in your community, to ensure user friendliness and maximum engagement.
- Prioritize infrastructure projects that improve safety in neighborhoods and in communities most adversely impacted by the virus, focusing on Black and Indigenous communities, communities of color, and low-income neighborhoods and communities.



TOOLS

- [Tactical Urbanism and Safe Routes to School fact sheets](#)
- [NACTO Recovery Streets - Schools](#)
- [EPA Air Quality Flag Program](#)
- Obtain temporary wayfinding signage through [Walk Your City](#) or repurpose lawn signs that many communities have used to congratulate graduates
- Find examples of changing and automating traffic signals to promote walking and biking in [Seattle, Washington](#) and [Chattanooga, Tennessee](#)
- Use this [factsheet](#) on improving school arrival and dismissal to increase safety for kids walking and wheeling
- Innovation in Action: In Metro-Atlanta, Georgia Commute Schools has an anti-idling initiative that encourages parents to reduce idling in the car-rider line. In partnership with the EPA, they provide Air Quality index flags and two anti-idling signs to schools as an effort to improve air quality during arrival and dismissal periods. Schools hold what's called "Idle-Free" days, which are sometimes held on the same day as Walk to School Days to educate drivers on the importance of turning their engines off.

PLANNING FOR THE LONG TERM

- Use engineering and infrastructure improvements to chip away at the inequities in access to safe, convenient transportation options and places for outdoor recreation that have contributed to inequitable disease burden among Black and Indigenous communities, communities of color, and low-income communities.



Education

Guiding Recommendation: Teach kids, families, and caregivers how to walk and bike to school while abiding by health and safety precautions as well as local guidance or regulation related to COVID-19.

STRATEGIES

- Promote walking and biking to school as healthy, physically distant ways for kids to get to school.
- If walking or biking in groups, instruct kids, families, and caregivers to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) and use hand sanitizer. Provide this if possible.
- Students who had previously been bussed may be deemed walkers due to shortages in bus capacity to meet physical distancing requirements. Work with your school district to promote walking and biking, disseminate existing Safe Routes to School maps, and connect families that are accustomed to walking and biking with families that are new to it. Parents and caregivers may view the suggestion coming from the district to be more credible than from Safe Routes to School advocates.
- Host physically distant “walk to school” practice days to familiarize families with the safest routes to school.
- In addition to walking and rolling, incorporate school bus activities or remote drop off into Safe Routes to School education and encouragement programming. For example, provide education on how to safely wait for and board the school bus with distancing measures in place.
- Create a standardized set of protocols for health and proper sanitation when engaging in Safe Routes to School activities like bike rodeos, Walk to School Day events, Walking School Buses, etc. Consider what precautions need to be taken such as physical distancing, providing personal protective equipment (PPE), and sanitizing shared equipment like bike fleets and helmets.

CONSIDERATIONS

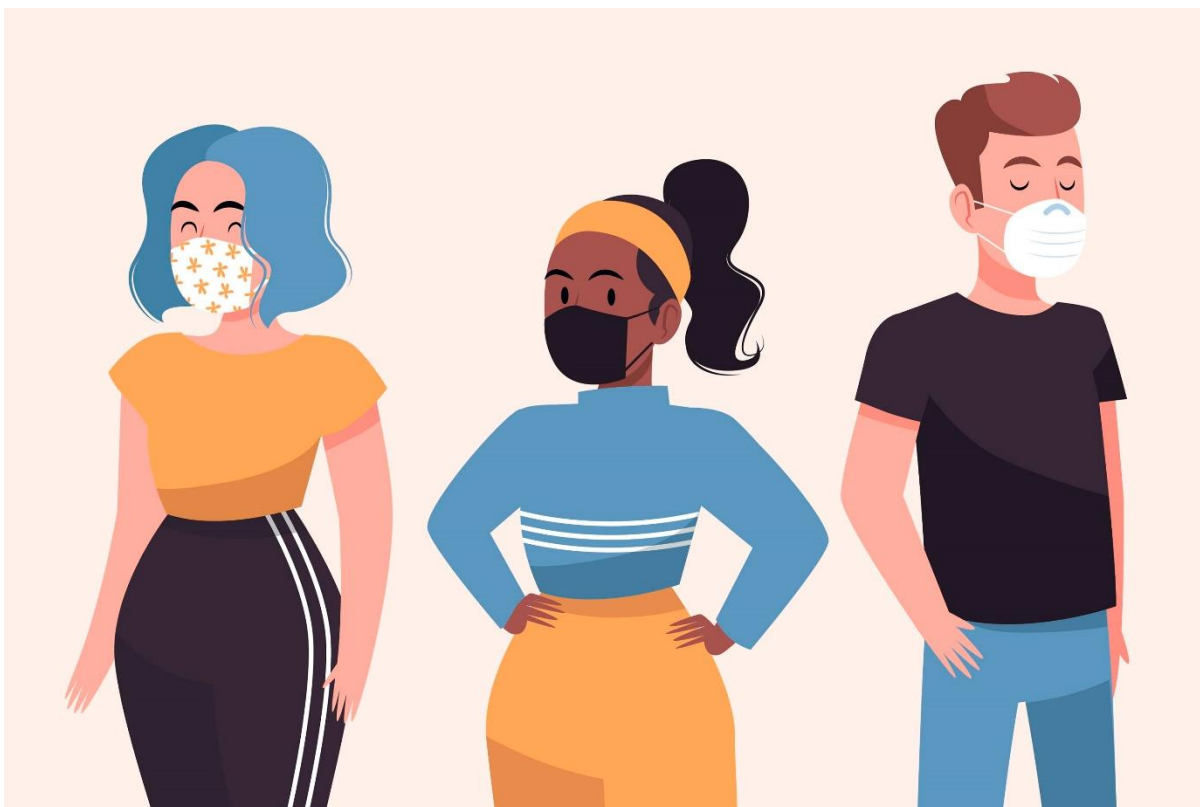
- Parents and caregivers may be more receptive to the idea of walking and bicycling to school if it comes through a trusted entity, such as a principal or the school district.
- Local regulations change quickly. Stay apprised of current regulations and be prepared to adapt when local guidance changes.
- It is likely that staff and volunteers will have reduced capacity or ability to support program implementation, either due to restrictions on people on campus or concerns about personal health and safety.
- Activities should reflect the feedback received during Evaluation & Engagement efforts. Community input should inform what Safe Routes to School programs look like with COVID-19 changes.

TOOLS

- Example of sanitation and health protocol for bike fleets developed by [St. Paul Public Schools](#)
- [Socially Distanced Pedestrian Rodeo Guidelines from Safe Moves](#)
- Use this [guide](#) to develop walking route maps for new walkers

PLANNING FOR THE LONG TERM

- After the school year begins, work with teachers and school administrators to discuss how your Safe Routes to School program can continue to offer traffic safety education and physical activity programming. Develop a Safe Routes to School guide for parents and identify ways they can get involved with and support your local program. Use these [resources](#) on volunteer recruitment and management to get started and this [resource](#) for parent champions.
- Consider how bicycle skills education can be incorporated into physical education in order to support kids safe, physically distant, independent mobility to school. Get started [here](#).
- Advocate for Safe Routes to School efforts and reinforce relevance of how physical activity boosts mental health and improves immune response toward chronic and infectious diseases.



Encouragement

Guiding Recommendation: Promote walking and biking to school as safe, healthy, fun, and appealing ways to get to school.

STRATEGIES

- Release communications that share that walking and biking to school are viable options; driving is not the only choice!
- Tailor walking school bus programs to adhere to local health regulations. For example, limit the number of students in each walking school bus, use visual cues to encourage students to stay 6 feet apart from one another, and distribute PPE (such as masks with your program logo!). Note that walking school buses are included as a transportation strategy for schools that reopen during the COVID-19 pandemic in guidance from the [Harvard School of Public Health](#).
- Provide incentives that support student health, like masks and hand sanitizer.
- Promote walking and biking to school as ways for parents, families, and caregivers to stay active while traditional gyms and fitness opportunities are closed.
- Check in with volunteers about their ability or willingness to participate. If they are willing and able to participate, ensure they are up to speed on current local health guidelines and requirements regarding PPE and physical distancing.
- Set up a Remote Drop Off/Remote Park-N-Walk for people who live too far to walk the whole trip, but wish to walk or bike part of the way. This can also help alleviate increased traffic around the school.
- If your community has closed streets or slowed traffic to create more room for people to walk and bike at appropriate distances, promote routes to school that use those streets.
- Reprogram funding to offer mini-grants or stipends to small businesses, parents, caregivers, and local community members to serve as Walking School Bus leads, corner captains, or remote drop-off site coordinators.



CONSIDERATIONS

- It is likely that staff and volunteers will have reduced capacity or ability to support program implementation, either due to restrictions on people on campus or concerns about personal health and safety.
- Consider safety precautions for physical incentive items (toys, pencils, stickers) and follow quarantining guidelines before distributing to students and families. Explore online games or activities that could be earned in place of physical incentives.
- Your school district may have regulations about volunteers. Previous volunteers may have new concerns about how they are willing to engage.
- Often, businesses are willing to offer incentives—but be mindful that many businesses are struggling now due to the pandemic. Consider whether it is appropriate to partner with local businesses to offer prizes such as gift cards or coupons.
- Take a “two-generation” approach, such as “Safe Routes for All” with programming and options for the whole family.

TOOLS

- [Safe Routes to School Toolkit by EZ Ride in New Jersey](#) includes guidance on how to adjust school travel modes to comply with CDC guidance
- [Walking School Bus with Covid-19 Precautions from Humboldt County, California](#)
- [Walk and Roll While Social Distancing Tip Sheet from King County, Washington](#)
- [Toolkit for Remote Drop Off/Park N Walk/Bus and Walk from Minnesota Safe Routes to School](#)

PLANNING FOR THE LONG TERM

- Plan ahead for future Walk/Bike to School Days using this [fact sheet](#). Some communities are considering Winter Walk to School Days. If you are thinking about that and need photos of kids walking and biking in the winter, check out the [Safe Routes in All Weather photo library](#).
- This is a unique moment in history where people are walking and biking more. Focus communications on how people can incorporate this new habit into their life for more than recreation.



Evaluation

Guiding Recommendation: Evaluate how the coronavirus pandemic has affected student travel mode. If capacity allows, assess impact on broader community transportation as well.

STRATEGIES

- Continue conducting school travel tallies to determine whether the pandemic has affected travel mode. Transition to electronic school surveys to collect data for travel tallies, modes of travel, and travel routes. Continue offering paper surveys to those with limited or inconsistent internet or technology access. Consider safety measures needed to continue with paper surveys.
- Survey, talk with and listen to youth, parents, caregivers, teachers and other partners to identify needs, experiences, and possible solutions due to COVID-19 and the changing environment. Use evaluation to inform programming and funding opportunities.
- Make a prioritization list of communities most in need and try to direct resources to those communities first.
- Assess how shifts in traffic volume and speed have affected active transportation rates and safety.
- Collaborate with local partners and agencies who provide essential needs and services—mutual aid events and food distribution centers could be opportunities to give away bike helmets, educational materials, bike swaps etc.
- If your community has already undertaken Open Streets, Play Streets, Slow Streets, or any other innovative approaches to making more public space available for people to be outside, assess what neighborhoods these are available in. Support community members to self-determine whether something like this is desired and if so, the approach to increasing public space and safe opportunities for recreation and travel that would be most beneficial to them and their neighborhood.
- Use the built environment to gather data. Invite people to share thoughts and concerns on a community comment board, a sidewalk chalk display, or a comment box set up at a food distribution center.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Recognize that teachers, like all of us, are bearing additional cognitive and emotional load dealing with the effects of the pandemic. This may not be the time to ask them to conduct school travel counts.
- Communities everywhere have seen an uptick in walking, biking, and outdoor play, and the disparities in access to safe, open spaces have been magnified.
- Many cities are seeing increased speeding due to low traffic volumes, resulting in pedestrian deaths. Determine whether this is happening in your community.

TOOLS

- Assess mode shift in your community by conducting a traffic count. Get started with these [trainings and materials](#) from the National Bicycle and Pedestrian Document Project, and explore innovative apps like [CounterPoint](#) for non-gendered and gender observed options.

PLANNING FOR THE LONG TERM

- Revise or create a new Safe Routes to School action plan with programming strategies for COVID-19. If you need an idea for where to get started on Safe Routes to School action planning, check out the action plans for several California communities [here](#) (midway down the page).



In-Person Learning Messaging Toolkit

Use these sample messages to encourage walking, biking, and physical activity during hybrid learning. You can find the full communications toolkit online [here](#).

Twitter

- Looking for a safe and healthy way to get back to the classroom? Driving is not your only choice! Walk or bike back to school
- Taken up walking or biking while staying home? Keep up the fun by walking or wheeling to school. It's a safe, healthy, and fun way to get back into the swing of the school year!
- Wash Hands 🖐 Mask on 😊 Outdoors 🌳 6 feet apart 🚲 🚶 📏 ♀
- Walking and rolling look a little different this year, but are still a fun, healthy, and safe way to get to school!
- A friendly reminder to residents of [community], students are returning to school [date]: please drive slowly and be aware of students walking and wheeling to school!

Facebook

- Back to school time is here. Things feel different than in years past, but we are here to help make your student's trip to and from school as fun, safe, and healthy as possible! While physical distancing measures are in effect, it may feel like driving your child is the only option. Remember that walking and biking are great healthy choices for school travel. In fact, the World Health Organization recommends walking and biking to get around to maintain physical distance and #StoptheSpread.



Newsletter Copy - In-Person

As we prepare for the return to the classroom, we recognize that there are mixed feelings about the return. The Safe Routes to School program is here to support you however we can. As you consider your plans for getting your student to/from school, we encourage you to consider walking or biking as a healthy, outdoor, physically distant option. Please reach out to us with questions about school transportation!

Sample text/Outreach Messages

Hi x, this is [insert name]. I'm reaching out to see if you are interested in learning more about walking and bicycling as a safe healthy option for your student to get to school this year. We can offer safe walking routes, tips for maintaining physical distance, and try to connect you with other walking and wheeling families in your neighborhood.

Hyperlinks referenced in this document

Back to School 2020 Working Group - <https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/blog/introducing-back-school-2020-working-group>

Bike Swap Instructions Guiding Document – <https://shorturl.at/ipwyX>

Bike Assessment – <https://shorturl.at/cvzAB>

Safe Routes Partnership Blog - <https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/blog>

StreetStory Tool for Virtual Walk Audits (Berkeley SafeTREC) - <https://safetrec.berkeley.edu/tools/street-story-platform-community-engagement>

DIY Traffic Gardens and At-Home Traffic Garden Activities - <https://www.trafficgardens.com/fun-at-home>

Tactical Urbanism and Safe Routes to School - <https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/resources/fact-sheet/tactical-urbanism-and-safe-routes-school#:~:text=2017%20%2D%20Fact%20Sheet,Tactical%20Urbanism%20and%20Safe%20Routes%20to%20School,walk%20and%20bicycle%20to%20school.>

Walk and Roll While Social Distancing Tip Sheet from King County, WA - <https://kingcounty.gov/depts/transportation/metro/travel-options/rideshare/programs/schoolpool/social-distancing.aspx>

Remote Walk and Bike to School Day - <https://www.facebook.com/walkbiketoschoolday/>

Family Resources for Staying Active During COVID-19, WALKSacramento - <https://www.walksacramento.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Family-Resources-for-Staying-Active-During-COVID-19.pdf>

Alliance for Healthier Generations Kohl's Healthy At Home Campaign - <https://www.healthiergeneration.org/campaigns/kohls-healthy-at-home>

Walk and Roll Poster Contest from San Francisco Bicycle Coalition - <https://sfbike.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Art-Contest-combined-flyer-1-1.pdf>

Walk & Roll Activities Calendar – <https://shorturl.at/gPQU7>

Make-Your-Own Walk and Roll Activities Calendar Template - https://www.canva.com/design/DAECip5epfA/nTdBBb4p4CUyDbnWSen0fQ/view?utm_content=DAECip5epfA&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=sharebutton&mode=preview

Walk and Roll Activity Bingo from Eugene-Springfield Safe Routes to School - <https://www.facebook.com/EugSpfldSRTS/photos/a.10150283993614857/10158184252989857/?type=3&theater>

Fact Sheet: Walk and Bike to School Day - <https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/resources/fact-sheet/walk-school-day>

Safe Routes in All Weather Photo Library -

<https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/resources/website-video/safe-routes-all-weather>

Sample Physical Activity Calendar, Beaverton, OR Safe Routes to School -

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1LZQ_YPj89VrhvXYd8Rwqu4xEZJSFz59B/view

Safe Routes to School Action Plans - <https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/safe-routes-school/local-work/safe-routes-launch/communities>

NACTO Recovery Streets School Streets Guide - https://nacto.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/200708_School-Streets.pdf

Air Quality Flag Program - https://cfpub.epa.gov/airnow/index.cfm?action=flag_program.index

Safe Routes to School Toolkit, EZ Ride, NJ - <https://ezride.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/EZ-Ride-Safe-Routes-to-School-Travel-Toolkit-5.pdf>

Walking School Bus with COVID-19 Precautions, Humboldt County, CA -

http://hcaog.net/sites/default/files/starting_a_wsb_during_covid_0.pdf

Walk and Roll While Social Distancing Tip Sheet, King County, WA -

<https://kingcounty.gov/depts/transportation/metro/travel-options/rideshare/programs/schoolpool/social-distancing.aspx>

Toolkit for Remote Drop Off/Park N Walk/Bus and Walk, Minnesota Safe Routes to School -

<http://dot.state.mn.us/mnsaferoutes/training/bus%20stop%20and%20walk/index.html>

Remote Learning Resources and Lessons, Eugene-Springfield, OR Safe Routes to School -

<https://www.eugenespringfieldsrts.org/online-resources>

Volunteer Toolkit - <https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/resources/toolkit/volunteer-toolkit>

How to Be a Parent Champion for Safe Routes to School -

<https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/resources/fact-sheet/be-parent-champion>

Safe Routes Community Engagement Cards - <https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/healthy-communities/safe-routes-engagement-cards>

Walk Your City - <https://walkyourcity.org/>

Automating Traffic Signs Article, Seattle, WA - <https://sdblog.seattle.gov/2020/05/07/seattle-takes-new-steps-to-fine-tune-traffic-signals-for-people-walking-and-rolling-during-covid-19-health-crisis/>

Automating Traffic Signs Article, Chattanooga, TN -

<https://www.wrcbtv.com/story/41983286/pedestrian-crossings-automated-to-reduce-touch-points-in-downtown-chattanooga>

Fact Sheet: Keep Calm and Carry on to School – Improving Arrival and Dismissal for Walking and Biking - <https://saferoutespartnership.org/resources/fact-sheet/keep-calm-and-carry>

COVID-19 Pandemic Guidance, Harvard School of Public Health -

<https://schools.forhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2020/06/Harvard-Healthy-Buildings-Program-Schools-For-Health-Reopening-Covid19-June2020.pdf>

Bike Fleet Sanitation and Health Protocol, Saint Paul Public Schools -

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NpEkPpNdsZGHkI219Q4XI90Hu2R7Ri-g/view?pli=1>

Socially Distanced Pedestrian Rodeo Guidelines, Safe Moves – <https://shorturl.at/cOTY9>

Guide to Creating a Walking Route Map - <https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/resources/fact-sheet/walking-route-map-guide>

Fact Sheet: Roll Bike Education into Your Physical Education Program -

<https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/resources/fact-sheet/walking-route-map-guide>

National Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project -

<http://www.bikepeddocumentation.org/index.php/downloads>

Counterpoint - <https://www.counterpointapp.org/>

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