



Safe Routes to School Bicycle & Pedestrian Safety Education

Program Evaluation Report January 2013

The Safe Routes to School Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Education Program is a collaborative effort between the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Federal funding was provided from WSDOT to OSPI to manage the program and provide grants to school districts through 2012. Key partners in the program were the Bicycle Alliance of Washington and Feet First.



**Washington State
Department of Transportation**



Executive Summary



This program supplies schools with resources necessary to not only teach kids about bike and pedestrian safety but also practicing those activities. The exposure to a wonderful lifelong activity such as biking is an asset to our community. The feasibility of using a bike as transportation in our community is reinforced with our students when they participate in this program. – Teacher participant

The Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Education Program was a two-year, one million dollar grant to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) from the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). Modeled after the successful 2009 SRTS Pilot Program, funded by the Washington State Legislature, the 2010-2012 WSDOT-funded program provided bicycle and pedestrian safety education to students in Grades 5 through 8 in 25 school districts across the state, using curriculum materials developed by the Bicycle Alliance of Washington and Feet First with funding from the grant. Grants to individual districts were in the range of \$20,000 to \$25,000 to cover activities from January 2011 through June 2012. The grant also funded two OSPI SRTS Summer Institutes organized by the Bicycle Alliance of Washington and Feet First, held in Seattle and Spokane during August, 2012. Curriculum materials and other training resources funded by this grant are available to all districts at the Safe Routes to School Web site <http://www.saferouteswa.org/> and OSPI Web site <http://www.k12.WA.US/HealthFitness/SafeRoutes.aspx>.

The goal of the project was to show that by learning bicycle and pedestrian safety skills as part of the regular physical education curriculum at school, students would be able to demonstrate safer bicycling and walking behaviors. The long-term goal of SRTS programs is to increase the frequency with which students walk or bike to school. The grant made use of the National Center for Safe Routes to School (NCSRTS) parent survey and student arrival and departure tally, as well as other surveys developed specifically for this project, to help gather data about the impact of the program.

Conclusions:

During the two years, the grant reached **25** school districts comprising **48** schools, trained **121** teachers, and delivered the curriculum to over **10,000** students between January 2011 and June 2012. Participating districts intend to continue teaching the curriculum to their students, thereby reaching an additional 7,000 to 10,000 students each year.

Safe Routes to School Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Education Program

Following the implementation of the SRTS curriculum, students were walking and biking more safely than prior to the education program, according to a student self-report survey and teacher feedback. The improvement in safety behavior included an increase in stopping at stop signs, biking on the right side of the road, using hand signals, wearing a helmet, walking on the left, where there was no sidewalk, and making eye contact with drivers before crossing the street. Based on data from parent surveys conducted before teaching the curriculum, approximately 55% of the students who were taught the curriculum live within one mile of the school and walked or biked to school.

Additionally, before and after surveys found that the total percentage of students biking to and from school increased. Of the classes that collected both before and after data of their students, 2,820 students were surveyed before and 2,855 students were surveyed after going through the curriculum. Before going through the curriculum, 73 of these students (2.6%) biked to or from school on an average day. After the curriculum, this rose to 102 students (3.6%). For walking to or from school on an average day, there were 442 students (15.7%) before the program which rose to 467 students (16.3%) after the program.

Districts were eager to provide bicycle and pedestrian safety education at school, especially in smaller, more rural areas. The curriculum materials developed for this program were well-received by the teachers and adaptable for different school settings. The training sessions were effective at preparing teachers to implement the curriculum.

Recommendations:

Based on the conclusions and feedback on the program, we offer the following recommendations for future projects and follow-on efforts related to the current project:

Program Implementation

- Update the curriculum based on feedback from the districts that implemented the program 2011-2012 and develop several advanced lessons to use with students who have mastered the safety skills.
- Provide other tools on the SafeRoutesWA.org website, such as information about maintenance and equipment sharing, a place for districts to report participation rates on Bike to School Day, and a forum to discuss lessons learned.
- Consider ways to tie the program into other SRTS encouragement, enforcement and engineering improvements and coordinate efforts with other partners, such as student transportation services and the Department of Health Safe Routes to School programs.
- Assist schools to find funding and support for bicycle maintenance in order to ensure the sustainability of the program.
- Continue to offer teacher trainings in order to prepare new teachers to implement the curriculum.
- Restructure the training so it can be taught by one trainer skilled in both bicycle and pedestrian safety skills to significantly reduce training costs.
- Separate the grades involved to make sizing bicycles more feasible for the age range.

Program Evaluation and Impact

- Repeat the NCSRTS Parent Survey and NCSRTS Student Tallies in 2012-13 in as many of the 25 districts that participated in the 2010-2012 grant as possible.
- Streamline the use of evaluations to increase the likelihood of schools submitting tallies and surveys required by the grant.
- Conduct a 5-year follow-up study (e.g., in Spring 2017) to see what the lasting impact is of this program on increasing student walking and biking to school.

Continue to expand the SRTS Education Programs to other school districts

- Support future SRTS Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Education Programs to replicate this program and help schools increase the number of students who walk and bike safely to school and in their communities.