



SPARE THE AIR YOUTH

INCLUSION & EQUITY IN SCHOOL COMMUTE PROGRAMS

Overcoming language, cultural, and
physical barriers to participation

MARCH 2015

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INTRODUCTION

Spare the Air Youth is a regional program that aims to educate, inspire and empower San Francisco Bay Area youth and their families to walk, bicycle, carpool, and take transit. A partnership between the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, Spare the Air Youth promotes effective ways to reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions by providing a regional resource for students, parents, teachers, and program providers.

SPARE THE AIR YOUTH IS PART OF MTC'S CLIMATE INITIATIVES PROGRAM.

LEARN MORE AT www.sparetheairyouth.org



SRTS events and activities should be intentional about including all students and their families.

INTRODUCTION

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a national movement to improve children's health and well-being by encouraging them to walk and bicycle to school. However, well-meaning SRTS events and activities can unintentionally leave students out.

This guidebook identifies potential obstacles to participation and suggests creative outreach, low-cost solutions, and flexible program implementation to overcome language and cultural barriers, safety concerns, or physical handicaps.

For more information, and for additional translation resources:

www.sparetheyairyouth.org

[www.sparetheyairyouth.org/
multilingual-resources](http://www.sparetheyairyouth.org/multilingual-resources)

This guidebook includes:

Chapter 2:

Communicating with Families

Chapter 3:

Addressing Personal Safety Concerns

Chapter 4:

Increasing Access to Active Transportation

Chapter 5:

Additional Resources

A photograph of a woman and a child riding bicycles on a paved path. The woman is on the left, wearing a dark shirt and glasses, riding a bicycle with a rear rack. The child is on the right, wearing a light-colored shirt and pants, riding a smaller bicycle. The background shows trees and a utility pole. The entire image has a warm, orange-tinted overlay.

02

COMMUNICATING WITH FAMILIES



Safe Routes to School programs engage diverse communities when materials are offered in multiple languages.

COMMUNICATING WITH FAMILIES

To encourage families that do not speak English, are learning English, or have recently immigrated to participate in Safe Routes to School programs, it is important to communicate how the program can

benefit families and address parental concerns. Hiring a bilingual staff person is the best way to communicate and form relationships with a community.

ISSUE	SOLUTION
Families do not see participation as important or relevant to them	Communicate the benefits of walking or bicycling to their families, such as improving health and spending time together
Non-English speaking families are not participating in activities or events	<p>Hire a bilingual staff person or translator, provide materials in other languages</p> <p>Partner with local organizations that have the confidence of the community, such as health organizations and the school family advocate</p>
Low participation rates	<p>Create simple ways for parents to get involved</p> <p>Hold events in different locations throughout the community and at different times so people can attend</p>

COMMUNICATING WITH FAMILIES

CONNECTING WITH NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING FAMILIES

Provide Materials in Multiple Languages

Some concepts can lose their meaning and be confusing when translated literally. Also, words may have different meanings depending on the regional dialect.

- Ask families with native speakers to help communicate the message to others.
- Use images to supplement words so that handouts are easy to read and understand.

Gratis!
Taller de habilidades de bicicletas para los niños y Entrenamiento de seguridad para los padres

Pico Rivera Rutas Seguras a la Escuela tendrá un taller para enseñar a los padres como andar en bici y caminar seguramente con los niños. Durante el taller, los niños aprenderán habilidades de bicicletas de profesionales capacitados.

Bicicletas y cascos se proveerán para aquellos que no los tienen. Se alienta a los niños a traer sus propios si los tienen.

PREGUNTAS?
Contacta a Jessie Holzer, 949-292-2615, PicoRiverSRTS@gmail.com

Miércoles 9 de abril

Registración: 1:00pm
Plaza de Birney (al lado de la cafetería)

Presentación para los padres: 1:30pm
Cafetería

Niños: Vengan a andar en bici!

Padres: Que sus niños sean seguros!

PICO RIVERA SAFE ROUTES to SCHOOL

Use a Variety of Media

In schools where families speak different languages, it can be a good idea to present information in multiple ways.

- Use a variety of mechanisms to communicate the benefits of walking and bicycling to parents.
- Have students perform to their parents, such as through a school play.
- Encourage youth-produced PSAs to educate parents on why biking and walking are fun and healthy events.
- Provide emails, print materials, etc., in multiple languages.
- Use a phone tree
- Reach out to parents in a phone tree, PTA, and at events
- Engage an assistant who speaks multiple languages
- Employ staff from similar ethnic backgrounds to parents at the school.
- Parents increasingly use texting more than emails. Find out how parents communicate with each other and use their methods.

Public Service Announcements



Students from Philadelphia teach bike safety education.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=9WTmXqOp8pc



City of Lights volunteers in Los Angeles worked with day laborers to develop this Spanish-language video “PRECAUCIÓN: Tu Familia También Usa La Bicicleta” or Precaution: Your family also uses the bicycle.
<http://vimeo.com/37971012>

CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITIES

Meet People Where They Are

Some families may not feel comfortable coming to your events or participating in formal PTA and organizations.

- Attend established meetings to reach groups who may not participate in school PTAs or other formal meetings.
- State required English Learner Advisory Committees (ELACs) are good partners.
- Conduct outreach or table at school events (such as: Movie nights, family dance nights, Back to School nights, etc.)

Residents are often aware of traffic and personal safety issues in their neighborhoods, but don't know how to address them.

- Provide a safe place for parents to voice concerns to start the conversation about making improvements. Listen to their concerns, help parents prioritize, and connect them with the responsible agency to address the concerns.
- Encourage staff or parent volunteers to host house meetings, in which a small group gathers at the home of someone they know to voice concerns and brainstorm solutions.

- Seek common goals for community improvement that can be addressed through collaborative efforts with all parent groups.
- Consider inviting law enforcement or public works staff to build a better relationship between officers and residents so they feel comfortable voicing future concerns. Note that some groups may have complex relationships of police mistrust, such as among undocumented communities. Again, asking for police representatives who are from the community works best.
- When looking for volunteers, start by looking to friends and neighbors to build your base group.
- Be creative; consider going to community events like Farmer's Markets and neighborhood gathering spots to recruit. Try different ways of engaging with participants; the City as Play Design Workshops have creative ideas for asking attendees to build their visions.
- Look for small victories: adding a crossing guard, signage and paint gives parents confidence that their issues can be addressed.

Include more parents by:

- Making staff available one-on-one outside of meetings, such as with 'coffee and conversation' meetings or house meetings
- Attending existing meetings in their communities
- Starting a focus group to discuss a variety of issues relevant to the community

Encourage meeting attendance by:

- Offering and advertising food
- Providing translation, ideally by having a trusted community member host or help at the meeting
- Providing free childcare so that families can bring their children
- Highlight the benefits of walking and bicycling: improved health, building community, saving time and money.

COMMUNICATING WITH FAMILIES



Hiring staff from within the community or partnering with community organizations encourages parents to participate.

“Turnover of school staff, principals and even student/parent populations is greater in low income schools, which makes identifying program champions/volunteers and maintaining momentum for activities challenging.”

- SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL LOCAL SCHOOL PROJECT: A HEALTH EVALUATION AT 10 LOW-INCOME SCHOOLS, FEBRUARY 2010

Host Parent Workshops

All parents desire for their children to be successful. Workshops are a good opportunity to articulate how services and programs can reduce barriers to students' success and help them be successful.

- Create simple ways for parents to get involved and help put on events and activities with their children, who can often help navigate the situation.
- Hold a “Parent University,” or workshops where parents can voice their concerns.
- Listen to and act on parents' suggestions to build trust in the community and address concerns
- Include an icebreaker activity to introduce yourself and to make the participants more comfortable sharing their thoughts and opinions.

Consider a Parent University

The Alhambra Unified School District organizes one-day Parent University events about helping their students succeed that include a variety of workshop topics, skits performed by students, free food, and childcare.

COMMUNICATING WITH FAMILIES



Communicate that walking and biking for commuting is a good form of exercise and gives parents an opportunity to spend time with their children.

Establish Flexible Programs

Create a trusting and welcoming environment by not requiring participants to provide information about themselves, which could be a deterrent to undocumented immigrants.

- Establish a training program for volunteers that does not require background checks or fingerprints since some parents who would like to volunteer may not be able to pass background checks.

Often working parents have limited time to volunteer with their children's schools. The hours and benefits associated with many jobs can make it challenging for parents to be available for school activities and take paid time off.

- Host meetings and events at varying times to accommodate differing work schedules.
- Make specific requests and delegate so no single person has to do the majority of the work.

Communicate Health Benefits

Families who are less well-connected to the school community may not be as aware of the benefits of SRTS programming.

- Publicize to parents that walking and biking to school is exercise and to children that it is fun, like an additional recess.
- Health fairs can highlight biking and walking to create an association between those commute options and their benefits. Encouragement competitions such as the Golden Sneaker Award and Pollution Punch Card can show how many calories students have burned.

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ADDRESSING PERSONAL SAFETY CONCERNS





Students are much more likely to walk and bike if their personal safety is not threatened.

ADDRESSING PERSONAL SAFETY CONCERNS

“A Seattle study found that children are five times more likely to use active travel to school when traffic danger and neighborhood safety are not concerns of their parents”

- SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL LOCAL SCHOOL PROJECT: A HEALTH EVALUATION AT 10 LOW-INCOME SCHOOLS, FEBRUARY 2010

In some communities, personal safety concerns associated with crime and gang activity are significant barriers to walking and bicycling. These can include issues of violence, dogs, drug use, and other deterrents that can take precedence over SRTS activities in communities. These neighborhoods may lack sidewalks or other facilities that offer safe access to school, and major roads may be barriers.

Demonstrate that Safe Routes to School and other youth-focused staff are allies to community concerns by taking these larger issues seriously and finding ways of addressing them explicitly through activities and events.

COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMS

Neighborhood Watch Programs

Establishing neighborhood crime watches, parent patrols, and safety zones can involve the community in addressing personal safety concerns as supervision reduces the risk of bullying, crime, and other unsafe behavior

- Set up parent patrols to roam areas of concern. Safe Passages or Corner Captain programs station parent or community volunteers on designated key street corners to increase adult presence to watch over children as they walk and bicycle to school.

- Issue special hats, vests, or jackets to give the volunteers legitimacy and identify them as patrol leaders.
- Walkie-talkies allow parents to radio for help if they are confronting a situation they have not been able to resolve.
- Work to identify “safe places” like a home along the route where children can go to in the event of an emergency, or create a formal program with mapped safe places all children can go to if a situation feels dangerous.

“Reach out to community groups and organizations that have strong resident participation, such as churches, youth groups neighborhood associations, hospitals, restaurants and government agencies. Build on your community’s assets by engaging already active groups.”

- IMPLEMENTING SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL IN LOW-INCOME SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES, JUNE 2010

Example community watch programs include:

- **The Safe Passages in San Francisco Program** places trained volunteers at high-risk corners along 11 blocks in the Tenderloin. www.tenderloinsafepassage.org
- **The Safe Passages in Chicago Program** has led to a 20 percent decline in criminal incidents around participating schools, a 27 percent drop in incidents among students, and a 7 percent increase in attendance over the past two years in high schools that currently have the program. www.cps.edu/Pages/safepassage.aspx
- **Safe Passages in Los Angeles organizes** parents, teachers, police and local business owners to staff street corners, escort students and patrol routes to school so that gang members stay away. www.advancementprojectca.org/?q=SafeRoutes

ADDRESSING PERSONAL SAFETY CONCERNS



Students can join Walking School Buses and Bike Trains to safely use active modes for the school commute.

SchoolPool with a Group

SchoolPool, or commuting to school with other families and trusted adults, can address personal safety concerns about traveling alone.

- Form Walking School Buses, Bike Trains, or carpools. For information about how to set up a SchoolPool at your school, read the Spare the Air Youth SchoolPool guidebook.
<http://www.sparetheairyouth.org/schoolpool-guidebook>
- SchoolPools are a great way of building community. See resources online at www.sparetheairyouth.org/walking-school-buses-bike-trains for more information.

Sponsor Neighborhood Beautification Projects

Clean neighborhoods free of trash and graffiti can create a sense of safety and help reduce crime rates.

- Host neighborhood beautification projects around schools, such as clean-up days, graffiti removal, and tree planting to help make families feel more comfortable and increase safety for walking or biking to school.
- Host a community dialogue about positive and negative uses of public space.



A teacher at Acorn Woodland Elementary in Oakland leads student and parent volunteer work sessions to pick up trash, paint over graffiti, and install plantings around their school.

www.hopcollaborative.net/our-work/built-environment

ADDRESSING PERSONAL SAFETY CONCERNS

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Teach students and their families about appropriate safety issues. Parents may not want students to walk or bike if they are not confident in their child's abilities.

Safety Information for Students

- Use time at school, such as during recess, PE, or no-cost after school programs, to teach children how to bike and walk safely.
- Utilize either existing curricula or bring in volunteer instructors from local advocacy groups and non-profit organizations.
- Teach children what to do in the event of an emergency and where to report suspicious activity or bullying.
- Provide helmets and bikes during the trainings will allow all students to participate regardless of whether or not they have access to these items.
- Open Streets events such as San Francisco's Sunday Streets, Oakland's Oaklavia, and others are also a great way of creating safe zones to teach new skills in the street.

Safety Information for Parents

- Provide information about how to get to around safely.
- Develop and distribute suggested routes to school maps that highlight streets with amenities like sidewalks, lighting, low speeds, and less traffic.
- Identify informal shortcuts and cut-throughs that students may take to reduce travel time. Consider whether these routes may put students at risk (for example, by cutting through a fence, across a field, or near railroad tracks) and work with your city planners to improve the route.
- Provide flyers for parents about how to find other families groups to commute with or what to do in the event of an emergency to educate themselves and their children.
- Offer pedestrian safety training walks. Make these fun and interactive and address parents' safety concerns as well as provide tips for them to teach their children to be safe while walking.

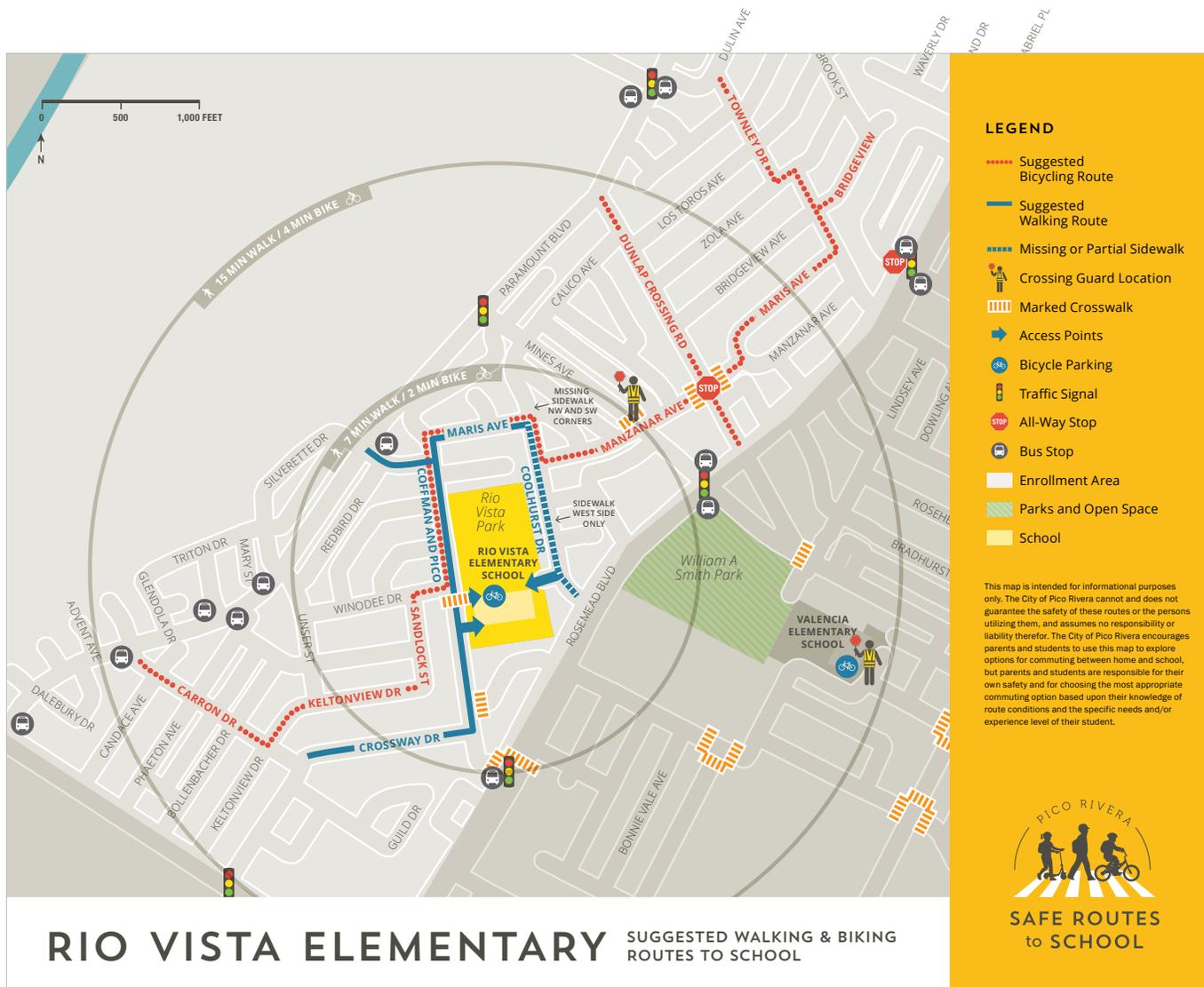
Sample safety information materials:

- www.sparetheairyouth.org/multilingual-resources
- www.saferoutesinfo.org/program-tools/education-tip-sheets
- www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TS/Pages/saferoutes.aspx
- www.saferoutes.vermont.gov/resources/tips_tools

Existing bicycle and pedestrian safety curricula:

- www.nhtsa.gov/ChildPedestrianSafetyCurriculum
- www.saferoutestoschools.org/curriculum.html
- www.bikeleague.org/ridesmart
- www.btaoregon.org/get-involved/walkbike-education

ADDRESSING PERSONAL SAFETY CONCERNS



Providing information about how to get around safely can help motivate families to walk and bike.



04

INCREASING ACCESS TO ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION



Boy with mobility impairment testing out a trike at the Tour de Palm Springs 2014 in Coachella Valley, Riverside County. Photo: Josh Zipperman, Burke-Rix Communications

INCREASING ACCESS TO ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

“Children with disabilities are more likely to rely on walking and bicycling in order to live independently later in life.”

- INVOLVING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN SRTS, MAY 2010

Some students may have less access to Safe Routes to School programs because they do not own bikes, helmets, and bike locks, or may be physically unable to ride a traditional bike.

GIVE STUDENTS ACCESS TO BICYCLES

Before conducting bicycle education or encouragement programs, help students and families get bicycles so everyone can participate.

- Some local bike shops may have earn-a-bike programs or bike drives where families can purchase used bicycles inexpensively.

- Consider hosting a bike swap or bike drive, in which families bring their outgrown bicycles and receive a ticket for a new (to them) bicycle.
- If possible, purchase a bicycle fleet for your school or school district, so all students have a bicycle for educational activities.
- Students can practice the bicycle rules of the road while holding a piece of PVC tube in front of them to mimic handlebars. If you can't provide a bicycle for all students, consider having all students using this technique so students don't feel left out.

INCREASING ACCESS TO ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

IN-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Low-Cost Incentives

- Encourage students to walk and bike to school with incentives like ‘front-of-the-line’ and ‘no homework’ passes, classroom parties, and extra recess. Classroom contests that challenge kids to walk and bike are a fun and easy way to motivate children.
- Purchase bulk items like stickers, temporary tattoos, and mood pencils.
- Use stamps to mark participating student’s hands. Health departments often have free helmets, while bike shops may donate helmets, bicycles, or lights for raffle prizes.

Note: Avoid color combinations, symbols, or temporary tattoos associated with gangs.

After School Programs

After-school bike clubs can teach safety skills, bike maintenance, and how to live a healthy lifestyle.

- Establish free after-school programs so all students can participate.
- Earn-A-Bike programs teach bicycle maintenance and safety while increasing

access to bicycling by letting students keep the bike they built. Typically students attend a series of classes where they learn about bike parts as they assemble donated parts. Students also learn how to ride safely on the road.

- Bike donation programs are a great way to reach more students. Middle school students can solicit bikes and learn how to fix them.
- Get parents riding through family biking programs, which are offered throughout the Bay Area and KIDical Mass.



Bikes Not Bombs in Boston, MA offers all-girl Earn-A-Bike programs that helps overcome gender discrepancies in bicycling rates.

The Golden Sneaker Award

In the Golden Sneaker Award contest, students compete for who can walk or bike to school most often. The winning classroom receives a trophy with a sneaker spray-painted gold and mounted on a piece of wood. Each month the trophy rotates to a different winning room. It includes a one-time, minimal cost to build the trophy. For more information visit: www.alamedacountysr2s.org/events/golden-sneaker-contest-two/

Latina Women on Wheels

This program empowered women living in the Canal Area of San Rafael by giving them access to independent transportation. Through a partnership with the nonprofit Parent Services Project, the Marin County Bicycle Coalition recruited participants, provided childcare and meals during the program, and taught women how to ride and navigate bike infrastructure.

www.bikeleague.org/content/recap-latina-women-wheels

INCREASING ACCESS TO ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Secure Bike Parking

Where bicycle parking is not available, bicyclists are forced to lock to trees and signs, which increases the chances of theft.

- Communicate this issue to your school, school district, or local government.
- Work with them to apply for grants and purchase bike racks for schools that children and parents can use.
- Purchase rental locks for students who do not own a lock. Write donation request letters to local bike shops.

Bicycle Co-ops

Bicycle co-ops, which are volunteer-run non-profit organizations that teach bicycle repair and maintenance, help families purchase bicycles and accessories.

- Families can rent time from a volunteer mechanic for a small fee, and learn how to properly maintain a bike, saving money in the long term
- Meet with co-op organizers to discuss respectful coordination, recognizing and publicizing the community benefits they are providing.

INCLUDING STUDENTS WHO CANNOT WALK OR BICYCLE

Remote Drop-Off

Some students live too far from school to reasonably walk or bike.

- Suggest remote drop-offs for parents to drop their children off a couple blocks from the school so they can walk the rest of the way. Volunteers wait at the drop-off and walk with students at a designated time to ensure they arrive to school safely and on time. Remote drop-off sites can be underutilized parking lots at churches or grocery stores that give permission for their property to be used this way.
- Identify potential park and walk areas on route maps

Including Disabled Students in SRTS Programs

Solomon Elementary School in Chicago, Illinois, created an “Everyone Can Participate in Sports Day” that included wheelchair sports and pedestrian safety instruction all students could take part in.

Including Students with Disabilities

Some students may not be able to walk or bike to school because of physical or mental disabilities, but they can still be included in SRTS programs.

- Invite children with physical disabilities to participate in school infrastructure audits to learn how to improve school access for all.
- Students with mental disabilities may have differing capacities for retaining personal and traffic safety information, but programs like neighborhood clean-ups and after-school programs can be fun ways to socialize and participate with other students.
- Involve special education instructors and parents of disabled students in the planning and implementation of these programs to better determine the needs of children with disabilities.
- Create SRTS materials that recognize students with disabilities. Include pictures of students with disabilities in program messaging to highlight that SRTS programs are suitable for all students.

05

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

EQUITABLE SRTS

- SRTS National Partnership's Implementing Safe Routes to School in Low-Income Schools and Communities www.saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/pdf/LowIncomeGuide.pdf
- Austin SRTS's Taking SRTS to Urban & Low Income Schools www.saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/pdf/Webinar-NikkiTrevino.pdf
- Portland, OR Community Cycling Center's Understanding Barriers to Bicycling Project www.communitycyclingcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Understanding-Barriers-Final-Report.pdf
- Safe Schools/Healthy Students program's Strategies for Engaging Immigrant and Refugee Families www.promoteprevent.org/sites/www.promoteprevent.org/files/resources/strategies_for_engaging_immigrant_and_refugee_families_2.pdf
- SafeTREC and SRTS National Partnership's SRTS Local School Project: A health evaluation at 10 low-income schools www.saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/pdf/Health_Evaluation_Feb_2010.pdf
- National Center for SRTS's Involving Students with Disabilities www.saferoutesinfo.org/sites/default/files/resources/Involving_students_with_disabilities.pdf

- SRTS National Partnership's: Students with Disabilities www.saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/pdf/Serving_Students_with_Disabilities_SRTSNP_11_4_09_FINAL.pdf
- City as Play Design Works <http://vimeo.com/11583278>

YOUTH EARN-A-BICYCLE PROGRAMS IN THE BAY AREA

- Cycles of Change's Oakland Upcycle Program (Oakland) <http://www.cyclesofchange.org/programs/oakland-upcycle/>
- The Crucible's Youth Bike Program (Oakland) <http://thecrucible.org/youth-programs/bike-program/>
- The Bike Hut (San Francisco) www.thebikehut.com/
- Bike Kitchen (San Francisco) <http://bikekitchen.org/>
- Trips for Kids Earn-a-Bike Program (San Rafael) www.tripsforkids.org/marin/programs.htm

MULTI-LINGUAL RESOURCES

- California Walk to School Headquarters www.caactivecommunities.org/w2s-resources/multilingual-resources/
- Safe Drop-off and Pick-up Dos and Don'ts

English:

www.sfsaferoutestestschool.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/2009_Pickup_Dropoff_Dos_Donts_Kids_English.pdf

Chinese:

www.sfsaferoutestestschool.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/Pick-up_Drop-off_Chinese.pdf

Spanish:

www.sfsaferoutestestschool.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/2009_Pickup_Dropoff_Dos_Donts_Kids_Spanish.pdf

- Spare the Air Youth Multilingual Resources

www.sparetheairyouth.org/multilingual-resources

- Safe Walking in [Spanish](#) and [Tagalog](#)
- Safe Biking in [Spanish](#) and [Tagalog](#)
- Why SR2S? in [Tagalog](#)
- Health Facts in [Spanish](#)
- Safety Talking Points in [Spanish](#)

THIS GUIDEBOOK WAS PRODUCED FOR THE SPARE THE AIR YOUTH PROGRAM,
A PARTNERSHIP OF THE BAY AREA AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
(BAAQMD) AND THE METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION (MTC).
LEARN MORE AT WWW.SPARETHEAIRYOUTH.ORG.

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METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

