

Safe Routes to School: Communities Creating Policy, Environmental and Behavioral Change

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Background on Local School Project

- Safe Routes to School: create safe, convenient, and fun opportunities for children to bicycle and walk to and from schools
- Local School Project: focus on challenges at low-income schools
- 10 locations selected from SRTSNP State Network (CA, DC, GA, IL, KY, LA, NY, OK, TX, VA)
- Goals
 - Develop SRTS school-based programs
 - Build local capacity to apply for state/federal funding
 - Increase safe walking & bicycling at the school & community
 - 18 month period
- Funded by grants from CDC, KP, RWJF to SRTSNP

- Criteria for school selection: school readiness and interest, available partners, availability of data, built environment, and volunteer and staff capacity
- Local coordinators responsible for volunteer management, data collection, program activities and communication
- 6 schools (NY, OK, IL, KY, LA, TX): coordinators were **volunteers**, received **indirect** technical support from SRTSNP & evaluation team
- 4 schools (CA, DC, GA, VA): coordinators were **paid** with funding from Kaiser Permanente, received **direct** technical support from SRTSNP & evaluation team, **greater** data collection responsibility

LSP Schools

- Kawana Elementary: Santa Rosa, California, Urban/City
- DC Prep-Edgewood Elementary: District of Columbia, Urban/ Inner City
- Knollwood Elementary: Belvedere/Atlanta, Georgia, Suburban/ County
- Mt. Vernon Elementary: Alexandria, Virginia, Suburban/ City
- King Elementary: Champaign/Urbana, Illinois, Suburban/City
- Lebanon Elementary: Lebanon, Kentucky, Rural/Small Town
- Drew Elementary: New Orleans, Louisiana, Urban/ Inner City
- Hamlin Park Elementary: Buffalo, New York, Urban/ Inner City
- Highland Park: Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, Urban/ Inner City
- Johnson Elementary: Bryan, Texas, Suburban



SAFE ROUTES^{TO} SCHOOL NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

LOCAL SCHOOL PROJECT

EVALUATION HANDBOOK

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Methods

Instrument	Data Collection Periods	Responsible Party
National Center for SRTS Parent Surveys	Spring, Fall 2008 & Spring 2009	Local coordinator & volunteers
National Center for SRTS Student Tallies	Spring, Fall 2008 & Spring 2009	Local coordinator & volunteers
Caregiver Focus Groups	Fall 2008	Local coordinator & volunteers (Kaiser Permanente-funded sites)
Traffic Safety Observations	Fall 2008 & Spring 2009	Local coordinator & volunteers (Kaiser Permanente-funded sites)
Vehicle Counts	Fall 2008 & Spring 2009	Local coordinator & volunteers (Kaiser Permanente-funded sites)
Exit Interviews	Spring & Fall 2009	Evaluation team

Presentation objectives

- Identify differences in program planning and implementation, mode shift, policy change and program sustainability between sites with paid coordinators vs those with volunteer coordinators
- Examine the processes, challenges & successes of community-driven SRTS programming & evaluation

Project successes

- 62% rate project's overall success as very high or high
- 9 out of 10 sites implemented educational & encouragement activities (e.g. Walk to School Day), some year-round, others 1-2x/year
- Differences between paid vs volunteer coordinators: frequency & quality of activities throughout school year



“In the fall, we had to fight with the school to have Walk and Bike to School Day. In the spring, the school was more than happy to sponsor the event”

Project successes



- Seven sites reported policy or environmental changes
 - Street closures near school
 - Bike racks, sidewalk repair, crosswalks, curb ramps
 - No-idling policy near school
 - Elimination of a “no bicycling to school” policy
- Nine sites applied for and received funding for 5 E’s during project period (local, state, &/or federal funds)

Risk ratios for walking pre-post & by level of support

Outcome	Variable	RR	(95% CI)	P-value
<i>Walked to School</i>	Time period			
	Baseline	1	-	-
	Follow-up	1.29	(1.00-1.65)	0.047
	Kaiser Permanente support			
	No	1	-	-
	Yes	1.51	(1.15-1.97)	0.003
<i>Walked Home from School</i>	Time period			
	Baseline	-	-	-
	Follow-up	1.26	(0.98-1.61)	0.071
	Kaiser Permanente support			
	No	-	-	-
	Yes	1.45	(1.12-1.88)	0.005

Paid versus Volunteer Coordinators

- Sites with paid coordinators were able to secure more resources (grants, volunteers, incentives) & could “fill in” more readily if volunteers weren’t available
- Paid coordinators were also able to enter the schools with less hassle, because they could administer surveys, tallies and curriculum & not burden teachers
- However, paid coordinators often did not delegate enough to volunteers, which may impact a community’s “ownership” of the program

Program sustainability

- 63% stated that their SRTS program was very likely/likely to continue in some capacity with no additional funding after the program ended, largely due to momentum from the previous year's activities
- Sites with paid coordinators were less optimistic that their programs would continue at the same level without support



Challenges in program planning & implementation

- Both paid and volunteer program coordinators experienced challenges in recruiting volunteers
- School personnel and student population turnover is greater in low-income schools, affecting volunteer recruitment and program momentum
- School administrators were engaged and helpful but also acted as gatekeepers to the school and teachers
- School staff and parents were hardest to engage due to competing priorities (academic requirements, crime prevention, workload)
- Politics, posturing & territorial marking can get in the way of collaboration & progress
- Evaluation was often perceived as an extra burden, even at those sites with paid coordinators

Conclusions

- Despite modest resources and a short project timeline, most sites implemented education, encouragement, policy & environmental changes at the school & in the community. Some saw positive trends in walking behavior & attitudes about walking & health
- The strength and depth of the SRTS school team, including local government, school staff (principals, assistants, teachers) & the coordinator affected the extent and effectiveness of the SRTS programs

Final thought

Community evaluation is underfunded and undervalued from the top down to the bottom up. How do we convey that it is a small investment of time & resources that can lead to a larger payout (e.g., increased funding for SRTS at local, state or national level?)

