

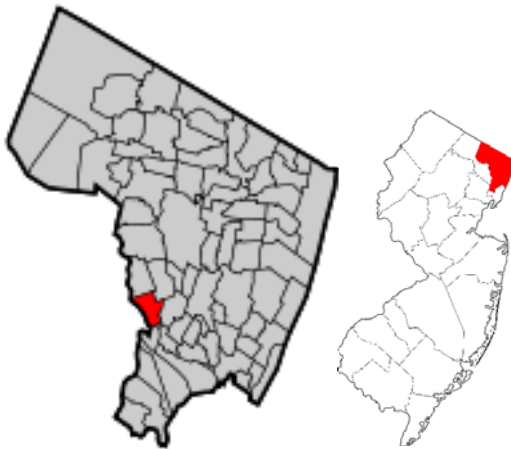
NJ SRTS: GARFIELD



INTRODUCTION

New Jersey Safe Routes to School (NJ SRTS) Resource Center, created and supported by the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) with funding from the Federal Highway Administration, enables and encourages safer and more accessible walking and bicycling environments for children in New Jersey through education, training, and research. Safe Routes to School projects result in physical improvements to the environment as well as encouragement programs that promote walking and bicycling to and from school.

NJDOT contracts with the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey (VTC), through support of the NJ SRTS Resource Center and Transportation



Garfield City, Bergen County, NJ

Management Association (TMA) Regional Coordinators, to contact federal-aid Safe Routes to School funding recipients to assess grantees' experiences in applying for and implementing SRTS-funded programming in their community. VTC used this information to assess the program's effectiveness and to identify strategies for improving access to the program in the future. In 2015, the NJ SRTS Resource Center conducted phone interviews with recipients awarded SRTS grant funds from 2007 to 2015 and queried about grantee experiences, progress, challenges, and plans for the future. These interviews yielded: 1) an analysis of the grant implementation process,

and 2) case studies detailing grants awarded to four NJ municipalities—Brick Township, Garfield City, Montclair Township, and Ridgewood Village.

BACKGROUND

Named for the 20th U.S. President, Garfield City, New Jersey, is an urban community located in the Northern New Jersey-New York City metropolitan region. Garfield is well-served by major roadways (US Route 46 and the Garden State Parkway) and by NJ TRANSIT rail and bus. In the 19th century, the city attracted immigrants to its growing textile and chemical industries. Today, Garfield is an ethnically diverse community where 42% of residents are foreign born and more than 66 languages are spoken at home.

THE PROBLEM

Garfield sought to address issues of childhood obesity and unsafe commuting conditions. Despite Garfield's well-connected street grid and its efforts to institutionalize walking to school as a way of life, the city experienced a rise in childhood obesity and recognized that fewer than half of its students walked to school. Unsafe commuting conditions contributed to low walking rates. All Garfield walking routes were located along heavily-traveled municipal and county roads. Although mitigated by the presence of crossing guards, parked cars reduced visibility along some roads and drivers routinely exceeded the posted 25 mph speed limit. Further, conditions at many locations impeded safe walking and bicycling routes including: nonexistent or poorly maintained sidewalks, commuter rail crossings, the presence of parked cars, inadequate drainage (flooded intersections during rain events), and outdated or poorly marked school crossings.

GETTING STARTED

In 2005, Darleen Reveille, a registered nurse with the Garfield Health Department, recognized the obesity problem and organized the Garfield Childhood Obesity Intervention Task Force. Working with Ramapo College nursing students, the Task Force conducted health assessments of fifth and sixth grade students and found students were more obese on average than children in other New Jersey communities.

This finding prompted the desire to address the problem—initially through the establishment of a

community-wide health initiative called Garfield F.U.N. (Fitness, Unity, and Nutrition)—and later through the SRTS program. F.U.N. sponsored programs to promote activity in children with additional support from the Garfield Park and Recreation Department, Garfield YMCA, and Garfield Boys and Girls Club. This early teamwork served as a starting point for the Garfield SRTS program and encouraged involvement by other stakeholders including the Garfield governing body, the Garfield Police Department, and the Garfield Board of Education.

In 2006, the Robert Wood Johnson Active Living Research Center (ALRC) selected Garfield as one of six communities to participate in its City Safe Routes to School Program. ALRC hosted a three-day workshop in Garfield to bring together local stakeholders. Workshop participants identified issues as well as assets in the community with the goal of matching resources to problems and eliciting commitment from those in attendance to take action. According to the post-workshop report, “Garfield presents a near textbook example of what can be accomplished with a dynamic local champion who has not only excellent connections to elected officials and city staff, but is fortunate enough to work with professionals who believe that childhood obesity is a serious problem that should be acted upon. The same is true of the schools.” ALRC cited Ms. Reveille as the guiding force behind the program.

The workshop and the work of the partners contributed to the establishment of Garfield Wellness Council and an interest in SRTS funding as a means to support healthier behaviors among students. At the first meeting of the Garfield SRTS effort, Leigh Ann VonHagen (Rutgers-VTC) presented an overview of the US and NJ SRTS programs. Ms. Reveille observed that the presentation resonated with those in attendance, especially the benefits of health and wellness for students walking or bicycling to school. They began working with a grant writer who has worked on another city effort, the Mayors Wellness Campaign. The City selected two schools—Roosevelt Elementary and Woodrow Wilson Elementary—to help develop the initial SRTS grants. The grant stakeholders conducted a community-wide town hall meeting and the principals from those two schools helped to develop the Garfield SRTS program.

Garfield Demographics

	Garfield City	Bergen County	New Jersey
Population	31,265	926,330	8,904,413
Population 5 to 14 years (%)	13.0%	12.5%	12.7%
Median age (years)	35.4	41.5	39.4
Households	10,875	335,550	3,189,486
Median household income (\$)	\$45,469	\$85,806	\$72,093
Per capita income (\$)	\$22,630	\$44,002	\$36,582
Persons below the poverty line (%)	16.3%	7.4%	10.8%
Persons with Bachelor's degree or higher (%)	17.0%	44.0%	34.2%
Land area (sq mi)	2.1	233.0	7,354.2
Population per square mile	14,888	3,975	1,211

2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Garfield Race & Ethnicity

	Garfield City	Bergen County	New Jersey
White	83.5%	70.4%	68.3%
Black	5.6%	5.8%	13.5%
Asian	2.8%	15.6%	9.0%
Other race	5.6%	5.9%	6.6%
Two or more races	2.5%	2.2%	2.5%
Hispanic or Latino	34.4%	17.9%	19.0%
Foreign Born	42.0%	30.2%	21.7%

2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Garfield School Characteristics

	Garfield City	Bergen County	New Jersey
Students in targeted schools	2313	NA	NA
Students in area or district	4,778	133,773	1,372,755
Students receiving free or reduced lunch (count)	3,191	27,520	516,704
Students receiving free or reduced lunch (%)	66.8%	20.6%	37.6%
Spending per student	\$20,409	\$20,561	\$19,651
NJ District Factor	B	NA	NA

NJ Department of Education. Enrollment Data, 2015.

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/data/enr/>

KEY ACTORS

Ms. Reveille served as primary contact throughout the Garfield SRTS effort, acted as project manager for both non-infrastructure grants, and supported the work on the infrastructure grants. Principals at Roosevelt Elementary and at Woodrow Wilson Elementary managed the infrastructure projects near their respective facilities. The City of Garfield administered all financial matters for the SRTS grants.

Numerous organizations and individuals acted as champions. Local newspapers provided an editor and other support and Bike New York contributed content for the public education campaign. Partners for Community Health, Hackensack Medical Center, VTC, and Amerigroup provided technical and financial support. Collaboration among partners occurred during the grant development phase and continued throughout the SRTS effort. For example, Ms. Reveille, with support from the National Center for Bicycling and Walking and VTC, developed a case study and walkability audit to document the process and access future needs.

GARFIELD SRTS GRANTS

Garfield received three grants through the NJ SRTS program. In 2007, Garfield received an \$18,000 non-infrastructure grant for a series of curriculum-based SRTS activities at the Thomas Jefferson School. A 2009 non-infrastructure grant improved connections between the Garfield YMCA and three elementary schools, Christopher Columbus, Washington Irving, and Woodrow Wilson Schools. In 2012, Garfield received its first infrastructure improvement grant. With \$280,000 in SRTS grant funds, Garfield advanced pedestrian safety at the Washington Irving School and James Madison School. Improvements focused on increased visibility of school zones and crosswalks and helped distinguish school crossings from other pedestrian crossings.

PARTNERS

The [Bergen] Record & the Herald News
Newspapers in Education Program
Active Living Resource Center
Bergen County Department of Public Works
Bike New York
Boswell Engineering
Boys and Girls Club of Garfield
City of Garfield
Garfield F.U.N. (Fitness, Unity and Nutrition) Program
Garfield Board of Education
Garfield Chamber of Commerce
Garfield Childhood Obesity Intervention Taskforce
Garfield Health Department
Garfield Office of the Mayor
Garfield Parks and Recreation Department
Garfield Police Department
Garfield School Safety Task Force
Garfield School District
Garfield YMCA
Hackensack University Medical Center
Mayors Wellness Campaign,
New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute
National Walking and Biking to School Day
New Jersey Department of Transportation
New Jersey League of Municipalities
North Hudson Community Action Corporation
North Jersey Media Group Foundation
Partnership for Community Health
Ramapo College of New Jersey, Nursing Program
Safe Routes to School National Partnership
Vertices, LLC
Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center,
Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy,
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
William Paterson University



GET UP AND GO (2007)

Grant Type: Non-Infrastructure Project

Grant Amount: \$18,000

Purpose: Education programs * Teacher training

* Community program

The problem

Despite having a well-connected street grid, fewer than half of Garfield students walked to school, contributing to childhood obesity in the community. Grant recipients sought ways to institutionalize walking to school, counter parental concerns that limited student walking and bicycling to school, and inspire lifelong behaviors of active transport.

What they did

The Get Up and Go campaign developed a series of curriculum-based SRTS activities to instruct students in how to walk and bicycle safely to school and to encourage students and their parents to embrace walking to school as part of their community's culture. The program started at the former Thomas Jefferson Middle School and involved middle school students in the campaign. However, grant stakeholders communicated the message to a much broader audience through its partnership with the Newspapers in Education (NIE) program and effectively reached populations far beyond the City's geographic footprint.

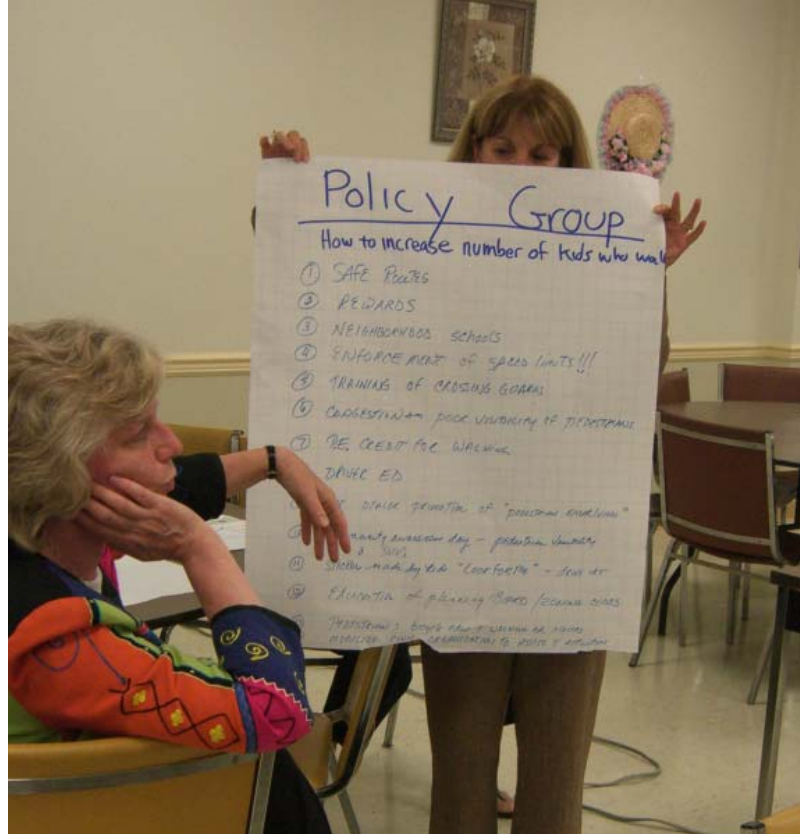
Challenges

Ms. Reveille found the grant process time consuming but not difficult. She credited technical assistance provided by Rich Loveless of NJ Department of Transportation during the early grant process. She provided information to Mr. Loveless and he administered the grant proposals and documentation.

Ms. Reveille indicated that the key actors worked with a great team representing many Garfield departments and organizations who collaborated and cooperated well. She identified no specific problems with the administration of the grant

Impacts & Achievements

"The Record" and the "Herald News" NIE Program created newspaper-based student activities centered on safe bicycling and walking strategies and published these activities in both newspapers for an eight-week period during the school year. The newspapers reached Garfield's approximately 5,000 students in all nine of its public schools and



Left: 4th & 5th grade students from Roosevelt School

Above: Teachers, parents, students & local leaders participate in a SRTS workshop

Below: Garfield Police instruct students in bicycle safety



were distributed to more than 30,000 students each day in four North Jersey counties—Bergen, Passaic, Hudson, and Morris.

NIE supplemented this effort with a workshop for teachers held at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, NJ. At the workshop, teachers learned more about the Safe Routes to School Program and the newspaper-based curriculum aligned to the New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards. The Record and Herald each also published letters from students and sponsored an art and essay contest related to this project. The papers distributed special topic newspapers to students' home to foster discussion among parents and students about walking to school. A school-based poster contest complemented the NIE activities. Entered posters were displayed in the library and a bicycle awarded as a grand prize.

With its ability to reach more than 400,000 daily readers and 30,000 students, the public awareness campaign of this project had considerable potential to educate students, their parents, and the general public on the health and safety benefits of walking and bicycling to school. The NIE project received a third place award in the special projects category at the annual Newspaper Association of American Newspapers in Education Content Awards.

YMCA SRTS PROGRAM (2009)

Grant Type: Non-Infrastructure Project

Grant Amount: \$30,000

Purpose: Walking program between before-school care location & school * Mapping * Community events

The problem

The Garfield YMCA provided before-school care for three elementary schools: Washington Irving, Woodrow Wilson, and Christopher Columbus. Children traveled by bus to their respective schools, leaving at 8:15 am to arrive by the 8:30 am start time. Program coordinators wanted to implement a walk to school program from the YMCA to each elementary school and to teach children how to safely walk to school. They also sought cooperation and support from parents.

Additionally, Garfield wanted to improve confidence among students walking and bicycling to school and to better familiarize them with their surroundings, the best routes to school, and locations of important safety and health resources.

What they did

This grant had two main components. The first developed a walk-to-school program from the YMCA before-school care program. The second promoted student confidence in walking to and from school through the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping and other activities. Students mapped their walking paths and increased their familiarity with area resources that would enhance safety and healthy lifestyles.

For the YMCA walk to school project, the grant proponents wanted to implement a program where children attending the before-school care program would walk to school instead of traveling by bus. Organizers chose to capitalize on good weather and ran the walk-to-school program from the start of the school year through October and from March to the end of school. They obtained releases from the parents and assuaged initial parental concern. Two YMCA counselors walked groups of approximately 15 children to school twice a week initially. The children loved the program. The small groups allowed easy conversation between the children with the counselors. The exercise the children received allowed them to arrive at school more focused, calm, and ready to learn. The YMCA quickly expanded the program to every day during pleasant weather and reported that the children expressed disappointment on days when they had to take the bus.

To promote student confidence in walking and familiarity with area resources, the Garfield Student Mapping project included:

GIS for Kids: Interactive community asset mapping

Safe Havens: Students photo-documented businesses designated as safe resources, places to render assistance to a child in need while walking or bicycling in the community. Students focused on locations identified by the Garfield Helping Hands program, initiated by the Garfield Chamber of Commerce and the Garfield Police Department in 2002.

Healthy Food Resources: Students walked or bicycled throughout the community to map locations identified by a nutritionist's review of menus. Student uploaded menus as part of the project.

Painted Foot Prints: Students identified the best route for designated schools along the City

walkways. Students created stencil design and participated in painting activities.

SRTS Community Events: YMCA Fun Walk/Run and other activities.

Wansoo Im, Ph.D., a GIS specialist and owner of VERTICES LLC, worked with students from Rutgers University and Garfield students to: 1) create maps to document safe and attractive walking routes to school or other areas they traveled by foot and 2) inventory places such as community parks and recreation centers where they could engage in healthy activities. Garfield High School students assisted in the inventory.

Challenges

The Garfield team learned that the grant application and funds had to be administered through an online grant management system (SAGE) and the YMCA could not serve as lead agency. They had to work through the City on the administrative aspects of the grant.

Initially, Garfield experienced resistance from parents about walking the children between the YMCA and the schools. Parents stated concern about the length of travel distances, the strain on children's backs from heavy backpacks, and general safety. Moreover, parents offered resistance as walking and bicycling required changing established routines for dropping off and picking up their children.

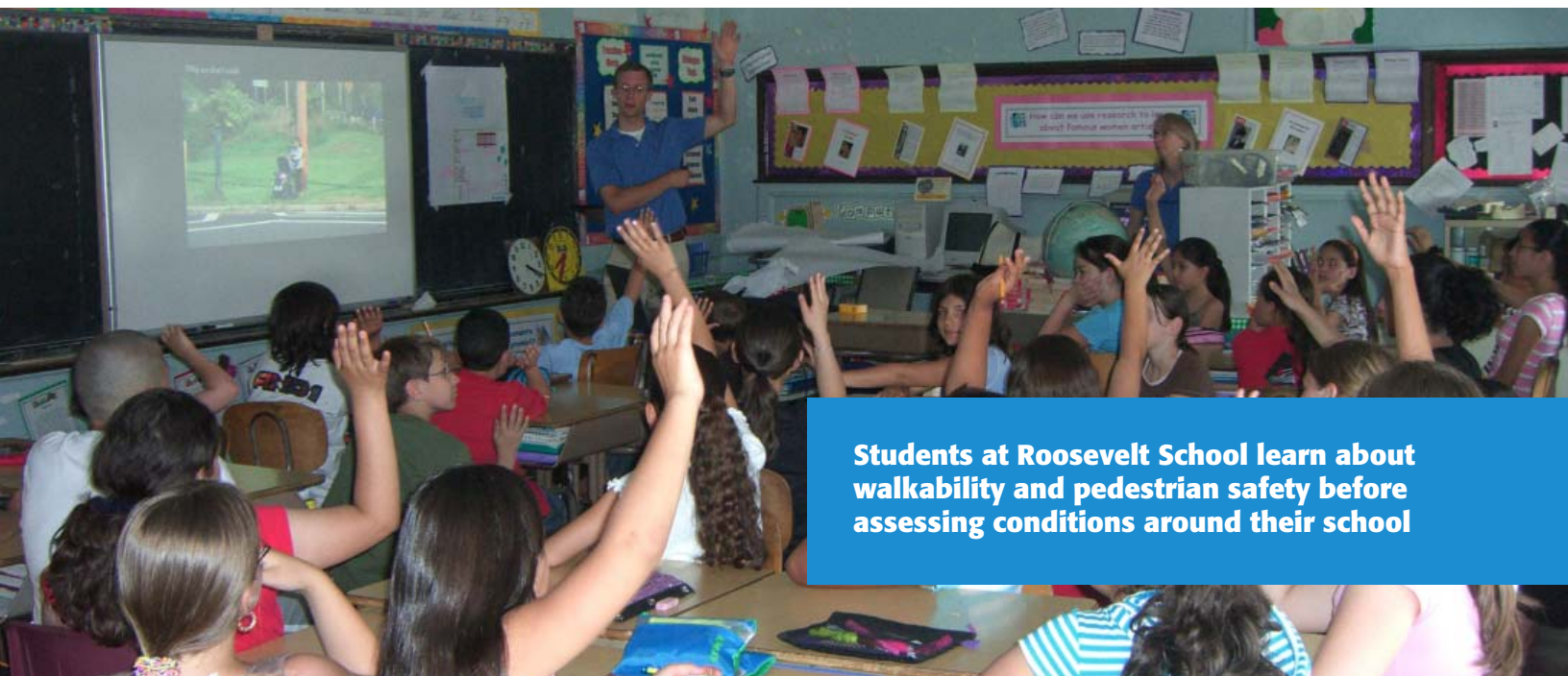
Organizers also had to overcome parental perception that the adoption of walking and bicycling programs occurred as a result of a desire to cut the costs of busing. The enthusiasm of the

children helped counter this concern. The children were disappointed when they had to take the bus due to inclement weather and during the off-season (November-March) when buses were used.

Impacts & Achievements

This grant achieved its desired results. According to the director of school-aged childcare at the YMCA, Mr. LaSpisa, children who participated in the walk-to-school program learned how to be safe and how to conduct themselves while walking to school. Children had time to socialize and talk to their counselors about their concerns for the day. They received exercise and arrived at school more focused and ready to learn. The YMCA program also increased parental awareness of the benefits of their children walking to school. While not the primary aim of the program, the YMCA reduced its program costs by not operating buses for part of the school year.

Through the mapping project, the students created maps of safe walking routes that met their personal needs for getting between home and school and to other sites of interest such as to area parks, the library or the YMCA. The children became much more familiar with their surroundings and the location of safe havens. This resulted in a much safer environment for walking. Organizers expanded the mapping project to include an inventory and an audit of healthy community assets such as the location of parks, recreation centers, community gardens, and the walking distances between the assets. Garfield F.U.N. distributed the map via its website.



Students at Roosevelt School learn about walkability and pedestrian safety before assessing conditions around their school

WASHINGTON IRVING & JAMES MADISON SCHOOLS SAFETY PROJECT (2012)

Grant Type: Infrastructure

Grant Amount: \$280,000

Purpose: Safety signage installation * Crosswalk improvements
* Curb, curb ramp & sidewalk improvements * Drainage
improvements * Bicycle racks

The problem

The Washington Irving & James Madison Schools Safety Project sought to increase driver awareness to school zones, reduce driver speeds in these zones, and create a safer walking and bicycling environment for all school students—all aimed at improving parental acceptance of SRTS and encouraging more children to walk or bicycle to and from school.

What they did

Garfield undertook several improvements to increase visibility of school zones and crosswalks and to distinguish school crossings from other pedestrian crossings. The project resulted in the installation of safety measures at two schools, both housed in the former Thomas Jefferson Middle School building. These measures included:

Signage: Flashing school advance signs with speed indicators; Garfield considered the use of solar-powered units to reduce costs.

Crosswalks: Textured pavement crosswalks outlined with long-life thermoplastic traffic stripes; Garfield considered the use of an in-pavement LED lighting system.

Curb ramps: Detectable warning surfaces on all existing and new curb ramps, where required

Curbing and sidewalks: Replacement concrete curb and concrete sidewalk in front of both schools and where deteriorated or missing along walking routes

Drainage improvements: At the intersection of Alpine Street and Lanza Avenue

Bicycle racks at both schools

Challenges

Garfield City staff indicated that the Department of Public Works experienced some difficulty when painting the intersections but reported no other problems.

Impacts & achievements

The impacts of Garfield's improvements are still to be determined. Nonetheless, Garfield pursued a careful and thoughtful set of physical upgrades designed to improve visibility and safety in school zones and crosswalks. Improved signage and crosswalks created better visibility of walking routes. Curb ramps resulted in improved accessibility along walking routes and sidewalk replacements reduced tripping hazards; both changes made the area easier for students with physical disabilities to traverse. Improved drainage eliminated hazards associated with crossing at flooded intersections that sometimes forced students into traffic. Bicycle racks provided much needed safe storage of bicycles. All told, these improvements should result in greater safety and a healthier walking and bicycling environment and ultimately encourage parents to allow their children to walk or bicycle to and from school more frequently.

LESSONS LEARNED

Strong leadership * Working with partners * Broad-based support
Ms. Reveille and the Garfield Health Department provided leadership for the establishment of the Garfield Childhood Obesity Intervention Task Force as well as the Garfield SRTS program. Early success through community events, Walk to Work Day and National Walk to School Day both held in 2005, showcased the Task Force as an organization committed to building a healthier community. The Task Force quickly followed these events with the launch of the F.U.N. (Fitness, Unity, and Nutrition) Program in January 2006 and the Summer 2006 pilot Ramapo and Meadowlands Survival Camp to teach Garfield teachers and students how to integrate fitness and nutrition activities into their academic curriculum, and ultimately, their everyday lives.

F.U.N. promoted healthy living among Garfield families by encouraging participation in walking clubs, creating safe routes to schools, and providing tips on healthy eating habits. After creating the F.U.N. concept, the Garfield Health Department worked with a grant consultant and graphic designer to create a brand identity for the project using grant funds awarded by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services in May 2006. In October 2006, the designer

created both a brochure and poster featuring a walking map, healthy tips for families, a replica of the United States Department of Agriculture's updated food pyramid, and contact information for health resources in Garfield.

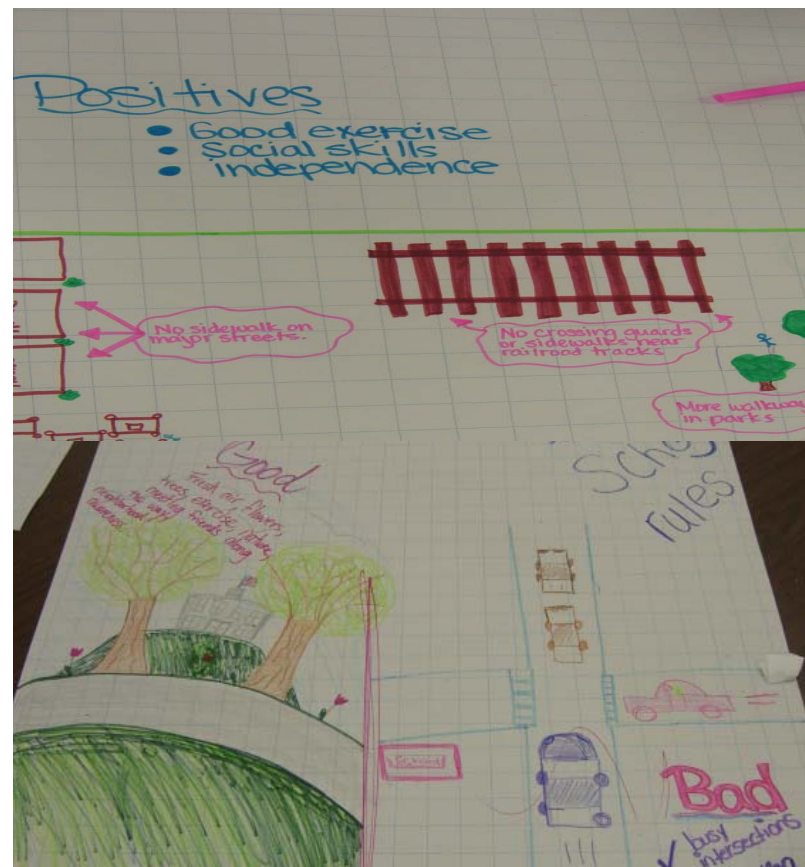
The SRTS program in Garfield has been well received as evidenced by its broad base of stakeholders; many of them are still partners a decade later. The stakeholders have integrated SRTS and other initiatives and programs to make Garfield a healthier community. In 2012, the Garfield Recreation Department staff who had participated in the safety training curriculum program took over the safety program. Working in conjunction with the Garfield Police Department, they purchased a fleet of 10 bicycles for use by the students in their safety courses. They held a bicycle rodeo that has encouraged more bicycle riding to school.

The Garfield Get Up and Go campaign received regional recognition and served as a model for other communities in New Jersey. Ridgewood, NJ, adopted a similar program.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

The success of the Garfield SRTS program spurred enthusiasm that continues to this day. Presently, the Garfield school community is looking to expand its bicycling program and make physical improvements at schools throughout the district. During the FY2014 funding round, Garfield sought, and received approval for, work at five elementary schools and the Garfield Middle School. The project calls for the installation of textured pavement crosswalks and curb ramps with detectable warning surfaces, replacement of deteriorated or missing curbing and sidewalks, installation of speed tables with signage, and new bicycle racks.

Reville offered that despite the early resistance to the program, encouragement and education brought about by SRTS programs changed parents' minds about walking to school. As a result of the success of the SRTS and related programs, Roosevelt Elementary School, Woodrow Wilson Elementary School and James Madison Elementary School have active SRTS programs; they have "taken ownership" and continue to support the program.



Above: Community feedback from SRTS Workshop at Roosevelt School

Below: New signage at Roosevelt School



RESOURCES

Active Living Resource Center. *How Garfield, N.J., Got Its Kids Moving More and Eating Better*. Washington, DC: National Center for Bicycling & Walking, 2008.

Garfield Health Department. "Have F.U.N. in Garfield." *Garfield F.U.N.* <http://www.garfieldfun.org/>

Kossler Dutton, M. "Kids urged to walk, bike to school." *USA Today* 14 Jul. 2008. http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/education/2008-07-10-environment-walking_N.htm

The NJ SRTS Resource Center supports public officials, transportation and health professionals, and the general public in creating a safer and more accessible walking and bicycling environment through primary research, education, and dissemination of information about best practices in policy and design. The NJ SRTS Resource Center is supported by the NJ Department of Transportation with funds provided by the Federal Highway Administration. The NJ SRTS Resource Center is managed by the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center, at the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.



Above right: Notice of SRTS Workshop, Roosevelt School

Below: New sidewalks with ramps and warning strips near Roosevelt School



On cover:

Above left: New signage at the Roosevelt School

Above right: Bicycle safety checkup with Garfield Police

Below: Walk-to-School Day event, Roosevelt School