

# Sample Safe Routes to School Policy for New Jersey School Districts

## Support for Active Transportation

The (insert New Jersey School District name) School District ("District") supports active transportation, including walking and bicycling, to and from school {optional: *as long as students live within walking distance and there are adequate facilities*}. Walking, bicycling, public transit use, and other forms of active transportation not only save costs related to busing students, but they also allow students to engage in physical activity, which reduces the risk of obesity and related chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and cancer. Physical activity also improves mental health, attendance, and academic performance. Further, replacing automobile trips with active commutes reduces one's carbon footprint and decreases traffic congestion and air pollution, which is of particular benefit to students with asthma. Fewer automobile trips also reduce the risk of injury to students from collisions with motor vehicles.

District acknowledges that the choice of which mode of transportation to use when traveling to and from school rests with students and/or their families, rather than with District or individual schools. Accordingly, District shall prohibit individual schools from restricting any mode of active transportation used to travel to and from school. Notwithstanding the foregoing, where unusual traffic or other dangers make active transportation exceptionally unsafe, individual schools can discourage, but not prohibit, students from engaging in active transportation to and from school.

## Support for Safe Routes to School

District supports Safe Routes to School programs, events and activities because active transportation can:

- Increase physical activity levels for students,
- Improve student health,
- Decrease automobile congestion and related danger of injury to students,
- Reduce air pollution and related greenhouse gas emissions,
- Reduce costs related to busing, and
- Improve attendance rates and student achievement.

District further supports efforts to increase participation in Safe Routes to School programs, events and activities in those schools with the fewest resources, and among low-income students, students with health challenges, and those with physical and mental disabilities.

District will assess and if necessary and to the extent possible, make needed improvements to make it safer and easier for pupils to walk and bike to and from school. When appropriate,

the District will work together with local public works, public safety, and/or police departments in those efforts. District will explore the availability of Federal Safe Routes to School funds, administered by the State Department of Transportation, to finance such improvements.

## Walking School Buses, Bicycle Trains, Walk to School Day and Other Promotional Activities

District supports the creation of Walking School Bus and Bicycle Train programs at each school to encourage students to walk to school daily.

District supports events that encourage students to engage in active transportation to and from school and that promote active, healthy lifestyles for the community at large. Events may include Walk to School Days, Bike to School Days, Bike Rodeos and School Walk-a-Thons.

## Roles of Districts, Schools, Parents/Guardians, and Students

The roles of the District, students and their families regarding travel to and from school are as follows:

- a. District/Schools. The role of District and individual schools is to support safe travel to and from school, and particularly to encourage active transportation. Notwithstanding certain exceptions, District and individual schools assume no liability for injuries or other damages, including property damage that may occur while a student is in transit to and from school.
- b. Parents and Guardians. The role of parents and guardians is to make informed decisions about which mode of transportation best suits their student in light of (i) the student's personality, age, maturity, physical and cognitive development, and decision-making abilities, and (ii) the street, traffic, crime, and other relevant conditions likely to be encountered by the student when traveling to and from school. Parents and guardians are legally responsible and otherwise accountable for their student's safety and well-being when the student is traveling to and from school – a responsibility in the care of property, in the observation of safety rules, and in the display of courtesy and consideration towards others. The District assumes no liability for injuries occurring outside school property.
- c. Students. The role of students is to be safe and responsible while traveling to and from school, following state and local law and the rules established by their families, and obeying school rules while traveling on school campus. Students should act as good role models for their peers by observing all traffic and safety rules, caring for property, and being courteous to others.

## Minimizing Driving

Because automobile collisions are a leading cause of death among school-age children, District supports efforts to increase traffic safety by minimizing driving to and from school. District respects the many constraints on families' time and budgets and recognizes that driving is sometimes a necessary or practical alternative to active transportation. Yet, in light of automobile collision data and the numerous benefits of active transportation, District commits to working with all stakeholders, including school administrators, students, families, public safety personnel, and relevant government agencies, to minimize driving to and from school. Decreasing the number of automobile trips, whether by engaging in active transportation, taking public transportation, or carpooling, will reduce automobile congestion and related collisions and create a safer environment for active transportation. District will encourage pupils to use public transit when available and appropriate for travel to school and will work with local transit agency to provide transit passes for pupils.

## Incorporation into Student and Parent Handbooks

All schools shall incorporate this Safe Routes to School Policy into their Student and Parent Handbooks.

## Incorporation into School Wellness Policy

This Safe Routes to School Policy is hereby incorporated into District's School Wellness Policy. District shall ensure that the School Wellness Policy reflects this addition.

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### Sourced by:



### Provided by:

