



Photo courtesy Governor's Council on Physical Fitness

SR2S Team¹

Easy Win:

Show the SR2S video at Walk to School Day and to stakeholder groups to build support. Attract a multidisciplinary team of concerned citizens and community agency representatives by describing how safer routes to school benefit health, safety, neighborhoods, education, and the environment.

Outcomes:

Local support for SR2S

Community resources to encourage and enable walking and bicycling

SR2S champion and team leader

Knowledge and skills to complete the planning process

WHAT IS THE SR2S TEAM?

- A group of volunteers that complete the SR2S planning process
- May be an existing team (e.g. Coordinated School Health Team)

WHO IS ON THE TEAM?

- A small core team of parents, students, teachers and a few others
- A larger community team or task force representative of key stakeholder groups

WHY HAVE A SR2S TEAM?

- To provide leadership and continuity for SR2S in the community

WHEN DOES THE TEAM MEET?

- Evenings, before school or any time members can meet
- Regular e-mail or phone communications between meetings
- Year 1 meetings are often monthly
- Year 2 and beyond meetings may be less frequent but are critical to sustain the effort and oversee long-term objectives

WHERE?

- Any convenient location
- At the school or nearby, if possible
- Walk to School Day and walking/biking assessments of routes require larger meeting spaces, such as gymnasiums, cafeterias or libraries

Optional Materials:

- SR2S Team Invitation Letter (CD)
- Who's Missing Checklist (CD)
- Visioning Activity
- Teamwork Tips
- Win-Win Responses to Doubters
- Your Role in SR2S—Appendix Y
- Fast Facts—Walk to School Day module
- SR2S DVD—binder pocket
- SR2S Newsletter, Volume 1 (CD)
- Other Resources—Appendix O

Communication Power:

- Have a SR2S kick-off assembly for staff, students and parents
- Send invitations to join the SR2S team to parents, law enforcement, trail and bicycling groups, local government officials, road authority, nonmotorized design experts and others

Remember:

The SR2S champion is very important member of the team. She/he cares passionately about improving the safety of walking and bicycling routes to school and is a committed advocate of the importance of physical activity.

¹ The Safe Routes to School team is both a small, core group of individuals who meet regularly and carry out the SR2S activities, and a larger group of stakeholders who provide specialized knowledge and expertise. In some communities, the larger group is called the Safe Routes to School Task Force. A task force may provide guidance to several schools or an entire school district. However, each school needs a core team of volunteers.

Optional SR2S Team Checklist and Meeting Topics

| Steps | By When | By Whom |
|--|---------|---------|
| 1. Complete and send SR2S invitation letters to parents and community stakeholders. Attach Walk to School Day flyer. | | |
| 2. Recruit team members at SR2S information meeting or the Walk to School Day follow-up. Use the SR2S DVD or Powerpoint, and provide Volume 1 of the SR2S newsletter. | | |
| 3. Kick-off SR2S with a school assembly for staff, students and parents. | | |
| 4. Conduct monthly meetings to plan and carry out Safe Routes to School activities. See "Meeting Topics" (below) for meeting ideas. See "Teamwork Tips" (end of module) for building a team. | | |

Meeting Topics

September- Plan walk to School Day (see the Walk to School Day module).

October- Hold Walk to School Day and SR2S information meeting. Use visioning exercise (see SR2S Team module). Set a meeting schedule. Send SR2S invitation letter out.

November- Distribute and collect parent and student SR2S surveys (see Behaviors and Attitudes module). Recruit stakeholders who are missing from team.

December- Analyze survey data; identify findings to share with school community.

January- Finalize the date for the walking audit (see Safe Routes module). Decide how maps will be obtained and start the map procurement process (see "Maps and Map Options" in the Safe Routes module).

February- Identify routes to be assessed during the walking audit. Pick date to assess school property and drop-off/pick-up locations.

March- Prepare and copy maps (see Safe Routes module). Send walking audit invitations to dignitaries.

April- Send out walking audit press release 5-7 days before event. Conduct walking audit and list recommendations. Collect year-end survey data if appropriate.

May- Create draft Action Plan (see Making Change module). Plan for fall Walk to School Day.

Summer- Collect cost and funding information and finalize plan.

Year 2 and Beyond- Implement plan. Seek necessary approvals, present proposal to stakeholder groups, obtain funding, etc., as outlined in plan.

SR2S Team Invitation Letter



Note: print on school stationary

Dear Parents and Community Members:

[SCHOOL NAME] has recently begun a Safe Routes to School (SR2S) initiative. SR2S is a national and international movement to make it safe, convenient and fun for children to walk or bike to school.

A SR2S team is forming and we need you to be part of the team! Our children's health and safety is a concern we all share. Join us for an informational meeting about SR2S on [DATE] at [TIME] at [LOCATION]. (Option: refreshments and child care will be provided).

The benefits of SR2S are many. When routes are safe, students can get the regular exercise they need for good health by walking or biking to school. Studies have shown that physically active kids have improved mood and concentration and that physical fitness is related to better test scores on some standardized tests. We want our students to get the physical activity they need and to be safe.

Many of you know how congested traffic gets near the school at the beginning and end of the school day. As part of SR2S we will assess traffic and safety conditions around the school. In addition, we will hold a walking and/or biking audit later in the year and invite the entire community to join us in assessing the safety of routes students use to walk and bike.

For more information please call me or contact SR2S coordinator [COORDINATOR'S NAME] at [COORDINATOR'S PHONE NUMBER]. See you on [DATE OF MEETING]!

Sincerely,

[PRINCIPAL NAME]



SR2S Team

Who's Missing Checklist

Use this checklist as a reminder to recruit experts to be members of your core team or task force. Ask yourself if you have people with the knowledge, skill and passion to Educate-Engineer-Enforce-Encourage-Evaluate SR2S. For example, having a representative from the state, city or county road authority is essential in order to have the expertise needed to identify traffic speed and street crossing problems and solutions.



CORE TEAM

- ☐ School principal or assistant principal
- ☐ Parents (including parents of students with special needs)
- ☐ Students
- ☐ Teacher(s)
- ☐ Law enforcement officer
- ☐ Local road authority (department of public works, county road commission, or MDOT)

EXPANDED TEAM OR SR2S TASK FORCE

- ☐ District-level school personnel (e.g. superintendent, district transportation director)
- ☐ City or regional planner
- ☐ City or village manager
- ☐ City council member or other elected official
- ☐ City or county recreation specialist
- ☐ City or county public health official or educator
- ☐ Coordinated School Health Team member
- ☐ Trail and/or bicycle group representative
- ☐ Neighborhood association or block club member
- ☐ Faith-based group
- ☐ Local non-profit agency
- ☐ Local service club or other charitable organization

Ask yourselves, "Given the safety hazards and threats to good health that face our students, who do we need on our team?" Once you answer this question, work hard to get these people involved.



SR2S Team

Visioning Activity¹

Use this visioning activity at the Walk to School Day follow-up meeting, at the first meeting of your SR2S team or during SR2S team training. Conduct the activity after viewing the SR2S video or PowerPoint presentation.

The goal of the visioning activity is for team members to identify what they hope to see three-to-five years from now as a result of Safe Routes to School.

A team member, or an outside trainer, can lead the exercise.

VISIONING ACTIVITY DIRECTIONS

- Tell the group that a five-year vision for the school community provides motivation to support SR2S over time.
- Remind them that some types of change happen slowly. Safe Routes to School will work toward short- and long-term changes. Some strategies, such as encouragement programs, can be implemented quickly. Other changes can take longer and may require significant funding.
- Ask those present to introduce themselves and describe the three-to-five year vision they have for Safe Routes to School in their community.
- Tell participants that all visions are welcome and useful.
- Write the visions on flip chart pages or white board.
- After all visions are stated, mention common themes if those appear.
- Remind participants that consensus is not needed. People are identifying what will keep them motivated individually.
- Alternative: If the group is large or if time is short, give every person a card as they enter the room. Explain the purpose of the exercise and ask every member to write their vision on the cards. Collect the cards and read all or some of the visions to the group when time permits. Names are not needed if the card approach is used.

¹ The visioning activity was adapted from the National Safe Routes to School Instructor Training Course developed by the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center in 2005.

SR2S Team

Teamwork Tips

Each Safe Routes to School team is unique, but avoiding a few common pitfalls early on can maximize long-term success.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS:

- Decide who will organize an agenda for each meeting and what the meeting schedule is.
- Send meeting reminders to all members, even if they can't make every meeting. Be sure to notify your expanded team for events like Walk to School Day and key activities such as walking or bicycle audits or an action planning meeting.
- It takes a team to raise the SR2S child. Many people with different strengths are needed to build the foundation and ensure the success of SR2S. Some team members bring specific expertise that will be needed to successfully administer a walking and/or bicycling audit, or to develop a SR2S Action Plan. For example, a representative of the local road authority can assist with identifying possible infrastructure treatments or can help the team by providing cost estimates.
- Think about team member roles and responsibilities. Some team members should have higher visibility in the community because they assume the role of spokespersons and recognized SR2S champions. Having a recognizable champion contributes to success. Refer to Appendix Y—Your Role in SR2S.
- Scarce resources are a fact of life and conflict happens. One team member's priority may not be another member's priority. Sometimes a vote is required to resolve differences. Be a good sport about the outcome!
- Revisit the goals and objectives of SR2S often.
- Share the workload; delegate tasks so that a single person is not overburdened.
- Revisit the list of visions generated by the team earlier.
- Thank each other often.
- Respect everyone's vision for SR2S.
- Celebrate victories.
- Laugh a lot.
- Go on walks or bike rides together!



SR2S Team

Win-Win Responses to Doubters

Safe Routes to School teams help educate community members on the benefits of SR2S and on how SR2S solutions can improve other areas of community life. Below are questions and comments that SR2S team members have heard—and responses that work!

These win-win messages are especially important when SR2S is new in a community.

Concern: I don't want my child to walk to school because I am afraid that someone will harm my child on the way.

Response: I understand your fear. While research shows that the incidence of these crimes is very low, SR2S doesn't encourage walking or biking until routes are safe. However, even then, students should walk or bike with others. And, walking school bus programs are an example of how adult supervision of walkers and bikers addresses this concern.

A walking school bus is when an adult leads the way along a route and picks up, or drops off, children at designated spots. A big benefit to the adult is that they get daily exercise too! (refer to the "Fast Facts" page in the Walk to School Day module)

Concern: Our school staff is too busy to tackle another project and our volunteers are stretched way too thin.

Response: I understand the pressures on schools to do more with less. School involvement is very important, but school personnel and parent volunteers don't have to be the prime mover.

For example, bicycle, pedestrian, and trail groups have a strong interest in SR2S. Planning commissions, community business associations and neighborhood organizations also have great interest. If we identify someone outside of the school to coordinate SR2S, does that make it feasible?

Also, Coordinated School Health Teams are blossoming in many schools. Do you have one? SR2S is a good fit for the interests and efforts of Coordinated School Health Teams.

Concern: We don't have enough law enforcement officers as it is. We can't patrol around the school everyday, even if speed violations are commonplace.

Response: I understand the stress your police department faces. I wonder what you think about some strategies other departments have used? For example, could an officer be present to ticket offenders everyday, for a short duration? Perhaps return for intensive ticketing on a periodic basis? Or, another strategy is to permit citizens to report speeders, after which the police department sends a warning letter to offenders? Is that possible in our community? Do you have other thoughts?

If more people can safely walk and bike in our community, we will have more eyes on the street. This can help reduce crime.

Concern: As a business owner, I have to think about my profit margin. If I change the driveway customers use to access my business, so it is safer for pedestrians, it will hurt my business.

Response: Many communities have found that business volume increases when patrons can safely walk to and from a business establishment. The more people on the street, the more visibility your business has!

Also, as a business owner you must care about the costs associated with poor health. Physical inactivity is a leading contributor to chronic health conditions that cost business owners across the state billions of dollars a year. By increasing walking and biking, community health improves.

Concern: Is the school or school district responsible for the safety of students walking and biking to school as part of SR2S?

Response: You may choose to consult with a risk management expert if this is your concern. Their approach is to weigh the risks against the benefits of an activity. The risks exist, but are much less than the benefits in many peoples' opinions.

continued on next page

SR2S Team

Win-Win Responses to Doubters, cont.

Concern: Students must take the bus in our rural community. Safe Routes to School doesn't apply to our situation.

Response: Safe Routes to School is about both how students travel to school and the need our youth have to be more physically active. See “Walk to School Day Ideas” in the Walk to School Day module for some examples of ways communities modify SR2S to meet their needs. Also see “Fast Facts” in that module.

OTHER CONCERNS

Keep a list of other concerns among team members or community stakeholders. Develop your own win-win responses to those concerns. Contact the Safe Routes to School office at 1-800-434-8642 and share the responses your team members come up with, or use the Safe Routes to School website to share your good ideas, www.saferoutesmichigan.org.