



Safe Routes to School

It used to be that children walked to school. But for reasons of distance to school, real and perceived dangers in walking or biking, or other factors, the percentage of school children who walk or bike to school today is about 16% versus 42% as recently as 1969. Walking and biking to school can be part of the solution to alleviate annoying and potentially dangerous traffic that surrounds schools daily, and to provide opportunities for children to get much-needed daily exercise.



An international movement called International Walk to School has begun in which schools, communities and parents and students work together, and walk together, to encourage students to walk and bike to school. One means of doing that is by holding an event called “Walk to School Day.” In some schools and districts, this event, typically scheduled for one day in October, has stretched into “Walk to School Week” or “Walk to School Month” during the whole month of October.

Safety first

This event reminds us that it is fun for kids to walk together or bike to school, and also provides a perfect opportunity for parents to teach their children safe walking and biking practices. Seems obvious, but kids do need to be taught how to walk safely on a sidewalk, how to cross a street safely with or without a traffic signal, and the importance of children focusing attention on their surroundings instead of having electronic music playing in their ears. These are safety skills that we can teach our children as we walk with them to school.

In addition, these trips to school will make walkways and bikeways safer and more appealing. By parents, teachers, administrators, and community leaders joining the kids in “Walk to School Day,” a renewed focus is brought to the safety and convenience of neighborhood sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, and roadside features affecting walkways and bikeways. Collaboration between parents, schools and communities can lead to safer, more inviting community environments for walking and biking to school.



National and State efforts

The federal government, through its Safe Routes to School program, provides grant funding for projects that make walkways and bikeways safer. This program, administered through the states, is available to communities collaborating with schools. A nationwide organization in support of these efforts, the National Center for Safe Routes to School, also works to spread the word, identify priorities, and coordinate the work of state and local organizations.

The California State PTA is actively involved in these efforts. We are a member of the Safe Routes to School National Network, and have a representative who is part of their discussions and projects. In addition, State PTA supported AB 57 (Soto), which seeks to continue and expand

**Safe Routes to School
Provides Grant Funding**
<http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/>

Safe Routes to School Activities
[http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/
guide/](http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/guide/)

Classroom Activities
[http://www.walktoschool-usa.org/
eventideas/classroom.cfm](http://www.walktoschool-usa.org/eventideas/classroom.cfm)

the reach of the Safe Routes to School program. We have also supported AB 321 (Nava) to decrease speed limits near schools. Both bills have passed the legislature and await the Governor's signature at the time of this writing.

If your school has not yet participated in Walk to School Day (or Week or Month), please consider planning now for next year! For more information see the following websites: <http://www.iwalktoschool.org/index.htm>
<http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/>

Community Concerns Commission