

Chapter Three: Education



“Walk safe, drive safe”

Education

Introduction

The Safe Routes to School education emphasis focuses efforts among students to teach bicycle, pedestrian, and traffic safety as well as healthy and active lifestyles. While student education might be a large part of the education scope, it must go beyond that and reach parents, drivers, and the community at large. Efforts should be made to teach all motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists their responsibilities while utilizing the transportation network.

Some education tools employed should be to teach bicycle and pedestrian safety as part of classroom or physical education curriculum, developing safety campaigns for the community, organizing community Bicycle Rodeos, providing safety materials for bicyclists and pedestrians, and how to properly use safety products, such as helmets.

Current Education Activities

Below is a list of activities that are undertaken by the Sioux City Community School District, the Sioux City Police Department, the Woodbury County Sheriff's Department, Mercy Medical Center, St. Luke's Regional Medical Center, Albrecht Cycle Shop, and Opportunities Unlimited.

Fuel Up to Play 60

The Sioux City Community School District has received a grant sponsored by the NFL and the National Dairy League for the Fuel Up to Play 60 campaign in some of the schools throughout the district. While the program is not specifically targeted for walking and/or biking to and from school, its focus is to promote a healthy and active lifestyle.

Pamphlets Available at Parent-Teacher Conferences

The Woodbury County Sheriff's Department is available to provide educational material on bicycle safety at the Sioux City Community School District Parent-Teacher Conferences. See Appendix C: Handouts, for a copy of what is generally distributed.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Presentations

The Woodbury County Sheriff's Department is available to provide a bicycle and pedestrian safety presentation to students or groups when requested. The Sioux City Police Department will also give presentations in regards to safety on all subjects when requested. The Sioux City Police Department has brochures on pedestrian safety that are available.

"Stranger Danger" Presentations

The Woodbury County Sheriff's Department will provide a presentation on "stranger danger" when requested by the school or a group. On average, they give two to three presentations a year throughout Woodbury County.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Program

The Woodbury County Sheriff's Department partners with Mercy Medical Center and visits each town in the county during the summer months to put on a bicycle and pedestrian safety program for children in the community. The Sheriff's Department and Mercy hold a bicycle rodeo, fit and provide helmets, and teach participants about bicycle and pedestrian safety. On average, 120-150 kids within the county are reached annually through this program.

Bicycle Rodeo

Mercy Medical Center is available to do bicycle rodeos in the Sioux City area upon request.

Annual Kids Safety Fair

Mercy Medical Center and St. Luke's Regional Medical Center hold a Kids Safety Fair annually in May. Organizations are invited to house a booth at the Longlines Recreation Center in downtown Sioux City and pass along safety information to attendees. Topics on bicycle and pedestrian safety are covered during the fair.

Got a Brain? Get a Helmet!

Opportunities Unlimited in Sioux City is an organization which provides residential rehabilitation services for individuals who have sustained a traumatic brain injury, a spinal cord injury, or other physical disability. Opportunities Unlimited, with permission, has tailored this Alberta, Canada program for the Sioux City Schools. It is a grant funded program that does receive private donations as well. The curriculum is given to the school counselor who in turn presents it to the second graders at the school. After the program has been presented, the students are asked to do an essay about bike safety and maintenance from which winners are chosen to receive a new helmet. On average, Opportunities Unlimited provides four helmets per class. During the spring of 2011, 250 helmets were passed out. The program is followed up by an assembly to review the curriculum where the winners are announced and students learn a bicycle safety song. The program is to help prevent brain injuries and to dismantle the stigma that wearing a helmet "isn't cool." The program teaches kids how to properly wear their helmets and encourages them to personalize their helmets with stickers. Opportunities Unlimited provides information and activities to other programs such as Beyond the Bell and Girls Inc. Currently the program is only in Sioux City but Opportunities Unlimited is hoping to expand it to the Tri-State area in the next couple of years. Funding is an issue since numerous helmets can be costly.

Albrechts Cycle Shop

Upon request from companies or organizations, Albrecht's Cycle Shop will visit different locations and help with fitting children's helmets properly and inspecting children's bicycles to alert parents of a potentially unsafe issue with the bicycle to have corrected.

Obstacles and Deficiencies

Below is a list of obstacles and deficiencies regarding education in the schools and in the community.

Educating the Community

Disseminating information community-wide and reaching motorists that travel near schools is difficult. There are many issues to cover including bicycle and pedestrian safety, traffic safety, health and environmental benefits, etc. Efforts should be made to reach the traveling public in various formats.

Classroom Time

Teachers have limited time and resources to devote ample time to educating students on bicycle and pedestrian safety.

Funding

While there are programs available for funds to assist in education programs, there is a lot of demand for those funds.

Crossing Guard Education

The Sioux City Community School District does not have a formal program in place for crossing guard and student safety patrol education. The Sioux City Police Department has a School Resources team with an officer housed in the middle and high schools and one of the officers speaks to the guards about what to watch out for.

Recommended Education Projects

Based on current activities being done within the schools and community and the obstacles and deficiencies noted above, a list of recommended projects has been developed.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Education Event (Spring)

According to the Sioux City Police Department, the first motor vehicle/bicycle crash of 2010 occurred on May 31st and the last happened on October 8th. When the weather starts to warm up and kids get their bicycles out, this would be an opportune time to teach children about traffic safety rules and how to safely bicycle and walk to school or throughout the community. Ideally, this event could take place during Physical Education class using time and resources to teach children proper maintenance to their bicycle and how to correctly wear safety equipment.

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) to motorists

Start running PSAs on bicycle and pedestrians out in the community during the spring when the weather becomes nice and children are starting to walk and bike more. A PSA would help remind drivers that they should be more aware when traveling since they might encounter bicyclists and pedestrians.

Bicycle Rodeo

Again, it's vital to educate children and adults on the importance of bicycle safety, particularly in the spring months when bicycling becomes more prominent. A good time to do a bicycle rodeo is during the annual Kids Safety Fair. Opportunities Unlimited expressed an interest in potentially putting together a bicycle rodeo for the Safety Fair. Having many organizations involved in a bicycle rodeo would make the event well rounded and give both children and adults plenty of information on how to keep kids safe while bicycling.

District-wide Crossing Guard Education Program

During SIMPCO observations, there was a noted need for a district-wide crossing guard education program for the student safety patrol. The Iowa Bicycle Coalition has developed a Crossing Guard Training Program based on the Florida Crossing Guard Training.¹ The Iowa Bicycle Coalition travels around to state providing the training, which is geared toward adult crossing guards and school officials. The training covers topics such as, how to recognize and deal with hazards, law and traffic control devices, what to do in case of an emergency, and others. The training is a one-day event that begins at 9 AM and ends at 4 PM. More information can be found at: <http://iowasaferoutes.org/crossingguard>. Additionally, another training course such as this should be tailored toward student safety patrols, which gives the students practical experience helping people cross the street by using verbal cues.

Development of Safe Routes Maps

Developing Safe Routes maps so that children are aware of the safest and most efficient routes to school is necessary. Based on the parent survey results, the top three concerns that kept parents from allowing their children to walk and bike to school were: amount of traffic along route; speed of traffic along route; and the safety of intersections and crossings. The individual PTA/PTOs along with the community should develop a map of the safest routes to school for the children based on the following criteria:

- Sidewalk on at least one side of the street if it's a through street and not a dead-end;
- Sidewalk conditions – use sidewalks that meet city code;
- Crosswalks that are clearly painted and visible to motorists;
- Traffic signals; and
- Low Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT).

The above criteria along with local knowledge of potential dangers should be used to identify the safest routes to school for students.

Safe Routes to School Link on Sioux City Community School District Webpage

While there is a plethora of Safe Routes to School information readily available on the internet, it would be beneficial for the Safe Routes to School Plan to be linked to the Sioux City Community School District website. Additional links and information should be on the website as well so that Safe Routes to School information is easily accessible for parents who are utilizing the school district's website.

¹ Iowa Safe Routes to School: Crossing Guard Training http://guide.saferoutesinfo.org/case_studies/education.cfm

Safe Routes to School Assembly

As noted above in the current education activities section, there are many organizations that are presenting information on bicycle and pedestrian safety as well as various other safety topics. Most of these programs are done on a request basis. Each school should take advantage of these opportunities and set a goal to hold two assemblies per year. These could be done in October, before or during Walk to School Day, and in May in conjunction with Bike to Work Week.

Driver's Education

Drivers are instructed to share the road with bicycles and pedestrians during driver's education.² In general, drivers should give enough room to bicycles and yield to both pedestrians and bicyclists when in doubt. Yet, the behavior of bicyclists and pedestrians is often very different. Under Iowa law, bicycles have the same rights and responsibilities as motor vehicles on the road, so experienced bicyclists will often ride in the street with traffic.³ However, child bicyclists are not likely to be as predictable as experienced riders. Child bicyclists are more likely to behave like a pedestrian by riding on the sidewalk and crossing the road at crosswalks. Child pedestrians are also much less likely to exhibit predictable behavior than adults. Therefore, drivers should be better educated about how to drive near locations where children are present (schools, playgrounds, etc.). One such program occurred in Dorset County, England, where parents spend an hour with an experienced driving instructor that gives defensive driving suggestions with consideration to child pedestrians and bicyclists.⁴

² Iowa DOT: Driver's License Manual <http://www.iowadot.gov/mvd/ods/dlmanual/section3.pdf#page=13>

³ Iowa Bicycle Coalition: Iowa Bicycle Laws <http://www.iowabicyclecoalition.org/bikelaws>

⁴ Safe Routes to School Guide: Education http://guide.saferoutesinfo.org/case_studies/education.cfm