

Checklist:

Working With Your School District Board to Support Healthy, Active Students



This checklist offers questions and actions to consider when preparing to work with your school board in support of Safe Routes to School, whether through official board policies, revised procedures, or other approaches. It should be used with its companion document, *Cultivating Support for Safe Routes to School: A Guide to Building Relationships with School Board Members and Superintendents*.

1. Do Your Homework

Research: Explore the Basics

- Who is on the school board? What are their basic profiles?
- What is the district's mission and vision?
- What current district transportation policies exist – either board policies or internal transportation department policies?
- What has been in the news recently about the board or the district?

Get the Inside Scoop: Explore Board Nuances

- Is there anyone you know that may already have a working relationship with a board member? Would the superintendent or other district or school staff have insight into the board's dynamics?
- What are the main priorities for different board members? Which board member might be your best ally?
- Are there tensions on the board? How can you navigate that?

Take the Pulse of Your Community: What Are the Key Issues and How Do Walking and Bicycling Fit In?

- What do community members see as key community needs and priorities, and how can that inform your efforts? Talk to a wide variety of community members from different demographic groups, sectors, and neighborhoods.
- What are the general attitudes toward walking or bicycling? What are the attitudes of parents?
- How do students travel to and from school? What barriers exist to safe walking or bicycling to school?
- Are there school initiatives, such as skills training in PE, that support walking and bicycling?
- Who are current champions for walking and bicycling? For student health? For equity? What kinds of coalitions exist that could support your efforts? If there's not a promising coalition, gather your allies and start one!

Resources and People

- District Website; District Policies and Regulations
- Board Meeting Minutes; Past Board Meeting Attendees
- Local Paper & Relevant Blogs
- School Travel Data (may need to be collected)
- Parent Handbooks
- School Arrival and Dismissal Plans
- Superintendent and District Office Employees
- Principal and School Secretary
- Transportation Safety Director
- School Wellness Committee
- Students, Parents, and PTA
- Neighborhood Groups and Community Members

2. Determine Your Goal

- Do you know your ultimate goal? What change do you want to see?
- What is your plan to get to your goal? Work with your allies to map out each step, the relationships, and your timeline.
- What is the best timing to request your key priorities? Do budget negotiations happen at a given time, and if so, should you avoid introducing other topics at that time? Will elections affect the board's attention or membership?

Resources and People

- District Calendar
- Community Stakeholders, Champions, and Allies
- Safe Routes to School Coalition

3. Make Connections: Meet Board Members and Explore Their Interests and Concerns

- Which board member or members are likely to be friendly to your goals? Schedule a one on one meeting with your best prospect.
 - Be prepared with talking points that link physical activity and health to core district themes: academic success, classroom behavior, and attendance.
 - Be friendly, and listen and learn about the board member's initiatives, concerns, and main goals. Can you connect your goal to those issues?
 - Identify resources, technical assistance, or other support you can provide to the board or district as ideas are explored and implemented.
 - If the board member is supportive, what steps can he or she take to help? Be as specific as you can. Is the board member willing to champion your idea to the rest of the board?
- Can you engage board members by inviting them to attend a bicycle rodeo or join a walking school bus?
- Can you join a committee and contribute to district goals? The district wellness committee may be a good place to support your goals and establish yourself as a credible, constructive force.

Resources and People

Data, Statistics, and Other Materials Showing the Need for and Benefits of SRTS Activities (program data, interviews and videos, reports and testimonials)

- School Administration and Staff
- Students and Parents
- Community Partners
- Health Department
- Law Enforcement

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Craft Your Proposal: Get Detailed

You've determined your goal and connected with board members. Now, what specific elements must be in your proposal to meet community needs?

- Assemble and assess the data you've collected from your research and conversations with community members and the board. What would your coalition and community members like to see take place?
- Think about the effects your basic proposal would have on different groupings of children and community members. Are you addressing the needs of lower income children, children of color, children with disabilities, children of different ages, and residents of different neighborhoods? Consider whether there are unintended consequences of your proposal.
- Develop a detailed proposal. Explore suggested language. What's the best approach that is realistic, ambitious, equitable, and aligns with community goals and the board's vision?

Resources and People

- [Safe Routes to School District Policy Workbook](#)
- Data and Stakeholder input
- Safe Routes to School Coalition

4. Attend Board Meetings

Learn and Inform

- What do board discussions reveal about the challenges and concerns faced by the district? Can your goals be of help?
- Can you ask to be given time to present on the board meeting agenda?
 - Be concise and well prepared. Use relevant data to tell a story that shows the need.
 - Explain how you can be of service to the board.
- Invite your coalition members, allies, and other stakeholders to join you at meetings, especially students and parents.
- Coordinate so that each speaker conveys a different perspective that contributes to the main message.

Resources and People

- Safe Routes to School Coalition
- School Administration and Staff
- Students and Parents
- Community Partners
- Health Department
- Law Enforcement
- Neighborhood Groups

5. Continue the Momentum

Celebrate Your Success & Show Your Thanks

- What are some fun and creative ways to publicly thank supportive board members, other leaders, students, and parents?
- Are there appropriate ways for you to return the favor and support others in their related goals?

Implement!

- Have you developed a plan for collaborative implementation, assessment, and reporting?
- Do you need to go back to the board for assistance with a snag or unexpected hurdle?
- Are there other opportunities to continue working with the board? What's your next goal?

Resources and People

- District Event Invitations
- Community Testimonials
- Local Press and Radio
- School and District Newsletters
- Social Media
- Partner Newsletters
- PTA News
- Everyone Who Helped Achieve Success

Additional Resources

- [Cultivating Support for Safe Routes to School: A Guide to Building Relationships with School Board Members and Superintendents](#)
- [Healthy Students, Thriving Districts: Including Safe Routes to School in District Policies](#)
- [A Primer to Understanding the Role of School Boards and Principals](#)
- [A Primer for School Boards and Principals](#)
- [Safe Routes to School District Policy Workbook](#)

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