

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL SUCCESS STORY



67%

decrease in bicycle collisions over a three year period

45

students participated in Alice Birney Elementary's first ever Bike to School Day

160

4th, 5th and 6th graders received bicycle safety training

Alice Birney Elementary, Eureka, CA

CALTRANS DISTRICT 1, HUMBOLDT COUNTY

There was a time when the sight of children walking and bicycling to school was a familiar scene in communities across California. In fact, in 1969 approximately 50 percent of children walked or bicycled to school. Today, fewer than 15 percent of children do and rates of childhood obesity and overweight are overwhelming.^{1,2}

Concerns about traffic safety are often cited as one of the main reasons children do not walk or bicycle to school.³ And for good reason, as in 2010 alone, over 21,000 California school children were sent to an emergency department and over 1,500 were hospitalized due to pedestrian or bicycle injuries.⁴

Creating safe opportunities for walking and bicycling is critical to improving the safety of young pedestrians and bicyclists and to reducing overweight and obesity among California's youth. As such, Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs are key to reversing these trends. SRTS programs increase the number of children who safely walk and bicycle to school through education and encouragement programs, enhanced enforcement, engineering improvements, and strong program evaluation.

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Alice Birney Elementary, a low-income neighborhood school with a significant history of bicycle collisions in the neighborhood (21 in 2008-2009), began its Safe Routes efforts in 2006 when a Walk Audit was conducted to address safety concerns around children walking and biking to school. Many improvements were identified as needed, however due to lack of funding, few improvements were made right away.

In 2010, the City of Eureka received a State SRTS award for work at Washington Elementary, another school in Eureka. The success of this project was the impetus to form a district-wide SRTS Task Force which soon began



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California Safe Routes to School Technical Assistance Resource Center, a program of California Active Communities

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Implementing Agency

Humboldt Partnership for Active Living,
a Program of the Natural Resources
Services Division of Redwood
Community Action Agency

Location

Eureka, Humboldt County
Caltrans District 1
CA Assembly District 1
CA Senate District 2

Funding

This was a sustainable outgrowth
of a State SRTS Infrastructure award

Participating School

Alice Birney Elementary
92.3 percent of students eligible for
Free and Reduced Price Meals Program

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to take another look at Alice Birney's safety needs. The Task Force conducted another mini-Walkability Assessment that helped bring walking and bicycling safety concerns along student routes to school to the attention of school, Public Works, and City officials.

This was the start of a significant shift away from collisions and driving to school and towards safe bicycling at Alice Birney.

PROGRAM SUCCESSSES

- **Infrastructure Improvements:**
The City of Eureka acted quickly, repainting ladder-style crosswalks, extending the red no parking zone to improve visibility, and later installing bike lanes on a busy street that many children cross to get to school.
- **Bicycle Safety Education:**
A bike club and bicycle safety education began in the Fall of 2010 thanks to a champion teacher who spearheaded efforts to teach 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students bicycle safety skills. In 2012, all students in the 4th through 6th grades received on-bike safety skills training and 45 participated in the school's first Bike to School Day.
- **Leveraged Funding:** A \$5,000 mini-grant from the California Kids' Plates Program in 2012 helped provide 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students with bicycle safety education and basic mechanics instruction.
- **Fewer Bicycle Collisions:** There were 21 bicycle collisions in the Alice Birney neighborhood during the 2008-2009 school year. Thanks to the neighborhood improvements and safety training efforts, bicycle collisions dropped by 67 percent (to seven) during the 2010-2011 school year.



1. "Quick Facts." Safe Routes to School National Partnership. <http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/mediacenter/quickfacts>.
2. Ogden CL, Carroll MD, Curtin LR, McDowell MA, Tabak CJ, Flegal KM. Prevalence of overweight and obesity in the United States, 1999-2004. *JAMA*. 2006;295:1549-1555.
3. Chauhan, C, Yeh J, Fox, P. The Safe Routes to School Program in California: An Update. *American Journal of Public Health*

Published online ahead of print April 19, 2012; e1-e4. Doi:1.2105/AJPH.2012.300703).

4. *California Department of Public Health Vital Statistics Death Statistical Master Files*. Prepared by: California Department of Public Health, Safe and Active Communities Branch. Report generated from <http://epicenter.cdph.ca.gov> on June 6, 2012.

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