This module will look at ways different organizations are educating and encouraging youth to be safe bicyclists and pedestrians. Education and encouragement activities for this age group take a variety forms and intend to impart healthy habits for life. Since children see, hear, and process information differently than adults, education programs must be crafted specifically with the child’s developmental ability in mind.

The rates of childhood activity levels have dropped in the previous generation so these types of programs are even more necessary today. We will look at the trends in activity and specific programs that addresses the barriers to more active youth.
This is a brief overview of what we will be going through today, starting with the current need for programs, what you need to know when working with this age group, examples of successful programs that are already underway across the country.
In the United States, there has been a drop in physical activity in the last generation. One way this has been measured is through the proportion of students walking to and from school. These declining rates of physical activity have been matched by an increasing level of youth (those under age 19) engaging in sedentary activities. (3.5 hours day/TV, etc).

Info on walking to school from the CDC report (http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/kidswalk/then_and_now.htm)
Over that same time frame, obesity rates have more than doubled among children 6 to 11 years of age and more than tripled among those 12 to 19 years of age. The information above is for all youth between the ages of 6 and 19. These are the rates for obese youth, but the rates for youth that are overweight or at the risk of being overweight was at 31% in 2001.

Dropping activity levels alone are not responsible for this growth in youth obesity, diet also plays an important role, but the decline in physical activity cannot be ignored. The health impacts of obesity include diabetes, cardiovascular health issues, and lifelong problems. Overweight adolescents have a 70% chance of becoming overweight or obese adults.

There are a number of other issues that stem from youth becoming less active or more restricted in how they get place to place. Being able to travel independently, whether on bike or on foot, is seen as an important part of youth psychological development.

When this type of transportation is limited either out of parental fear, land use patterns, or distance, the burden then falls to a parent or guardian to provide transportation to and from school, soccer practice, etc.

One final area, although these are not the only 3 reasons more activity in youth is needed, is the idea that activity is a lifetime habit and by walking and biking to locations when a child is younger will lead to a more active lifestyle in adulthood. As already discussed, childhood obesity greatly increases the risk of adult obesity. Habits are hard to break and so it is all the more important to start healthy habits early.
Critical Need: Barriers to Biking & Walking

Long distances 62%
Traffic danger 30%
Adverse weather 19%
Fear of crime danger 12%

(CDC, 2005)

Note: Sum of percentages is more than 100% because respondents could identify more than one barrier.

The most commonly cited barriers to biking and walking to school are listed above. These reasons can be extrapolated to see why more kids aren’t walking and biking to other locations, outside of school. Finding ways to break these barriers down will be essential in changing behaviors. Whether the barrier is perceived (such as weather) or real (distance), both will impact travel behavior.

Long Distances:
Land use patterns are changing, suburban sprawl and the separation of residential and commercial areas is increasing the distances between locations.

Traffic Danger:
Around schools due parental driving is a concern. But as parents increasingly worry about traffic danger and choose to drive, it can increase the risk to those who are walking, etc. This cycle is difficult to break but is being addressed by some of the Safe Routes to School campaigns. Incidents involving youth walking and biking have dropped.

Adverse Weather:
Weather patterns haven’t drastically changed over the last generation, so weather being a barrier may be more of a perception than an actual barrier.

Fear of crime danger, such as “stranger danger” or children needing to walk or bike thru “unsafe” areas.

http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/kidswalk/then_and_now.htm
Before we begin to discuss the programs that are available to encourage walking and biking, it is important to consider some factors that make working with youth different than changing adult behaviors.

Children have specific needs when it comes to teaching. Programs should be tailored to these needs and attention paid to more successful learning styles when working on skill building activities such as bicycling. Their developmental stage makes it appropriate to focus on specific skill building areas when going through safety education.

The age of the child should be considered when selecting a program or intervention within a community. The student age will inform the level of skill, such as if the safety class should focus on pedestrian safety or bike helmet fittings. For instance, Safe Routes to school begins with pedestrian safety for younger children before graduating to hands on bicycle safety classes which we will discuss.

Any program should include the involvement of the parents, guardians, and wider community to help reinforce lessons at home and encourage behavioral changes for the whole family. Often, special permissions are needed when working through school districts so it is important to get buy in and support from the youth’s family.
When creating a program that is working on educating or encouraging youth to ride or walk more frequently, it should be noted that some learning styles have been seen as more effective than others. Especially when working on specific skill building, having the lessons really focus on experiential activities—actually leaving the classroom to practice looking both ways before crossing the street—are essential to supplement in classroom learning.

Similarly, youth getting to work in groups helps reinforce lessons and learn from their peers who they may want to mimic. Mimicking good behavior in an experiential lesson takes advantage of the natural learning styles in youth, and is also a fun, interactive way for kids to learn.

Looking for ways to continually reinforce the lessons from a class or workshop also help to create those healthy habits and act as reminders to the students. We’ll see some examples of ways to reinforce these learnings in the programs we discuss.
Finally, before we delve into specific types of programs want to spend a moment on specific aspects of youth development that should be considered when creating curriculum. This list is more specific to working on skill building around biking and walking safely.

Physical differences include having about 1/3 less the field of vision of adults and taking longer to judge where sounds is coming from. This is especially worrisome in dealing with traffic, add to that children can be hidden from view by parked cars or other objects and it makes it increasingly important to encourage children to slow down, look both ways, and practice coming to full stops before entering the street.

Other factors to consider:
· May be impatient and impulsive.
· Concentrate on only one thing at a time. This is likely not to be traffic.
· Have a limited sense of danger.
· Often mix fantasy with reality.
· Imitate the (often bad) behavior of others, especially older children and adults.
· Are concrete (versus abstract) thinkers and do not extrapolate well from one situation to another.
There are a number of programs to help reverse this trend of inactivity and that attempt to get at the perceived barriers that meet the needs of youth specifically. We will be reviewing some of the main programs that have seen success in a number of jurisdictions. Each program focuses on education or encouragement, or both, that will create safe and active youth.

- Encouragement Programs:
  - Safe Routes to School
    - Walking School Bus, Bike Train
    - Walk + Bike Day
- Education Programs:
  - Safe Routes to School
  - Bike Skill Camps
  - Earn-a-Bike Programs
The Safe Routes to School program is perhaps most familiar to people. This is a federal program that partners with elementary schools in the community that works towards getting more students to bike and walk safely through the 5 E’s.

The five E’s of Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Engineering, and Evaluation create a complete program that addresses the barriers to walking and biking to school and works with students to help change behavior.

The program began in Denmark in the 1970s due to concern for child pedestrian crash rates. The model was then replicated in the states during the 1990’s because fewer children are walking and biking to school. Since that time, the Safe Routes program has seen great success in increasing the rates of students walking and biking in communities across the country. There is ample evidence of success in the program getting more students to walk and bike to school. In Portland, OR during the 2009/2010 school year more than 1/3 of all students are choosing an active mode to school daily, a substantial increase from Fall 2006 evaluations when the program began and significantly higher than the national average of 16%.

We will focus on the Education and Encouragement activities of the program but there is a national clearinghouse of information at www.saferoutes.org that has resources to start programs or learn more about how communities are implementing these 5 E’s.
Encouragement strategies such as contests and rewards are an essential part of most Safe Routes to School programs. They generate excitement and interest in being active which is really important for this age group. The emphasis is really about having fun while walking and biking and creating positive reinforcement for these activities through rewards and community activities.

And when the kids get excited they can put that pressure on their parents to allow them to participate. Encouragement programs are best when can incorporate into education activities.

They can be the easiest part of a program to start up and perhaps most effective. In the evaluation for the City of Portland in 2009, this encouragement step was reported by parents as having the most impact on changing their student’s behavior.
There are a number of ways to create encouragement programs, but these tend to be the most popular and well known. They include elements of community building and can reinforce lessons from safety education.

Bike Train and Walking School Bus: Is everyone familiar with this?
- It involves getting some parent volunteers to act as “drivers” of the bus and pick up students in the area and they all walk together.
- Provides a safe walking environment (safety in numbers) and introduces people who have never walked or biked before an easy way to try.
- Volunteers can be doing education events...reinforcing how to bike or cross safely.

Study in New Zealand: 10% of all of the students used a walking school bus when it was developed, 60% of whom had previously driven to school.
- Ongoing success depends on support of school and sharing workload of volunteers.
- Benefits to children for independence, healthy habits, community building. (Concern for psychological benefits)
- Still relatively new so not a lot of studies or ability to judge their success over time. Parents are becoming more familiar with this idea and asking for it in Portland.

- Bike and Walk Days can be once a week, a month, or a year.
- Marketing campaign and awareness for the event. There are then rewards for those who walk and bike like stickers, water bottles and swag.
- In Portland, we saw schools who had regular days either weekly or monthly have increased incidences of walking or biking to school AND other locations in Portland during other days in the week.

Recognizing that not everyone will live close enough to walk or bike the entire way, Stop and Walk Campaign encourages parents to park their car 2 or 3 blocks away and walk the remaining portion to school. Eases congestion surrounding school, allows those who live far away to still “participate”

iWalk cards are ways for kids to track how often they are walking and biking to school and at the end of a certain period, they are rewarded with small prizes or raffles based
Education is focused on improving student ability to walk and bike safely. It includes programs for parents, neighbors, and other drivers in the community.

Education programs can have long lasting effect for participating students by encouraging safe behaviors and raising awareness amongst drivers.
Bike helmet fitting, child booster seats, crossing safety, bike classes are all classes that could happen depending on the age of the child. Biking classes are for older kids (4th grade), while information on how to cross the street safely start with younger kids.

Effort to educate drivers and parents could be through signage around the school to “slow down” and be aware of children in the neighborhood. These could be fliers passed out to drivers or information on why the school is participating in Safe Routes or tips sent out in newsletters that go out to households.

Educational strategies have been developed that have “key messages” to share with each type of audience that are based on effective education strategies. (available with the National Safe Routes Clearinghouse: www.saferoutesinfo.org) For instance, they found it is most effective for children to work in hands on learning environments and group activities. For adults, it is making the issue relevant to them by focusing on money saving techniques, and health and safety concerns.
Bicycle Rodeos and Skill Camps are focused on getting kids out on their bikes to develop specific skills in a controlled environment. These are often done in conjunction with schools or other bicycle advocacy groups within a community. They do require some adult volunteers, sometimes they will have local law enforcement come and help lead the lessons, and groups of youth in roughly the same age group.

There is a free booklet available online through a grant from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration through the New York State Governor’s Traffic Safety Committee called “An Organizer’s Guide to Bicycle Rodeos” that gets into more detail about how to set up a program and suggested activities within the actual event.
The focus on the bicycle skill camps are really about helping children avoid the most common and dangerous types of crashes this population has. It is done through simulated barriers on the course and practicing stopping and starting, looking for traffic, and the importance of good safety gear such as helmets and reflective equipment.
This is from “An Organizer’s Guide to Bicycle Rodeos” which can be found online or as a part of our handouts. These activities (which are described in more detail) attempt to address the main causes of crashes for youth as we discussed, and build on needed skills for bikers based on their abilities and ages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Event  (ages 5+)</th>
<th>Intermediate Event  (ages 9+)</th>
<th>Advanced Event  (ages 10+)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registration and Inspection</td>
<td>All of Basic Event, plus:</td>
<td>All of Basic &amp; Intermediate, plus:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bike and helmet fit, start and stop</td>
<td>“Rock dodge”</td>
<td>Closed street section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scanning</td>
<td>“Demon driveway”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance- “snail race”</td>
<td>“Crazy crossroad”</td>
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These earn-a bike or “Recycle-A-Bicycle” programs began in NYC in an effort to give lower income and underserved youth access to transportation options while building vocational skills. One program in New York City annually salvages 1200 bicycles from the waste stream, diverting 36,000 pounds of waste from the landfill and providing bicycles to those in need. Similar programs are now happening in communities across the country, in at least 31 states and serve all populations of all incomes and abilities. They are most commonly run through community organizations or schools.

The program focuses on teaching youth how to repair bicycles and use the bikes safely. After logging a certain number of hours or successfully repairing bikes, the youth have earned their “free” bike and now have the skills to maintain it going forward. The program in Portland, OR found that those who participated shared the knowledge of maintenance with friends and relatives, adding further value to the community.

Benefits of the program including teaching cycling and vocational skills, personal and business management, community engagement, environmental benefits and increased self esteem. Also positive inter-generational skills and relationships are built.

Also called: Community Bike, Free Bike, and Bike Library Programs. In Portland, OR it is the “Portland Bike Club”.

Summary: Education & Encouragement

- Low rates of activity within this population
- Programs focus on specific needs to overcome barriers
- Interventions increase ability of students to ride or walk safely and have access to bicycles
Open the floor to questions or discussion on any of the topics and programs.

Potential discussion questions:
  How can a city support a Safe Routes Program in their city?
  What are potential barriers to a successful program?
  Can elements of the program be used for other bike/walk programs? Which?