



Elementary Students Gain Sense of **Pride** from Bike Train Program

VOLUSIA COUNTY

Public Health Issue

- Children who are physically active and of healthy weight are better able to focus in school and possess higher self esteem than those who are sedentary and likely to struggle with weight problems.¹
- Almost 70% of Pride Elementary’s students are eligible for free or reduced lunch; this may indicate relatively few opportunities for activities that promote good health—like sports, bicycle riding, and eating nutritious foods.²



Program Action

At Pride Elementary in Deltona, FL, students’ unsafe behaviors and several firsthand experiences with bicycle theft set the stage for extending the school’s existing Walking School Bus (WSB) program to include a Bicycle Train. In fact, the remarkable turnaround of one student is what initially sparked the idea. This young lady was known for quarrelling, playing “chicken” games, and showing little regard for traffic after school, so she was given a bicycle to encourage a faster, no-nonsense trip home. What occurred as a result reached a level of success above and beyond what was originally anticipated.

The Florida Department of Health awarded grant money to Pride in 2010 to kick off the WSB and Bike Train. Assistant Principal Kevin Flassig requested that unclaimed bicycles collected by the Sheriff’s Department be donated to the Bike Train program. They obliged, and a local bicycle shop fixed them up at a significantly reduced rate. Program leaders established an incentive system in which students exercising caution and obeying crossing guards receive “punches” on WSB cards. These punches earn them tokens toward prizes, as well as entrance into a monthly drawing for a bicycle. Educational safety literature, helmets, reflectors, bike locks, and more materials were provided by CPPW and the Volusia County Department of Transportation’s Safe Routes to School program. The relationships that were cultivated among CPPW coordinators Deborah Saulsbury and Cathy Klein and Mr. Flassig, the County Crossing Guard Supervisor, and school crossing guards truly enhanced program outcomes. These individuals established a continuous feedback loop that keeps each of them informed of

students’ behavior and safety. Their commitment to this program ensures that future generations of students at Pride Elementary will continue to learn pedestrian and bicycle skills, responsibility for the welfare of themselves and others, and the importance of physical activity (and fun!) for years to come.

impact

- **More than 40 students** participated in Pride Elementary’s Bicycle Train during its first full year. During that time, **22 new and used bicycles** were awarded to students, and a monthly giveaway continues to be in place.
- A **dramatic reduction in unsafe walking and bicycling behavior** before and after school has resulted from the punch card and token incentive system.
- A **district-wide WSB policy** is under review in Volusia County Schools. If passed, it would reach **more than 61,000** elementary school students.

“This was a need I wanted to address for a number of reasons—first, I believe kids need bikes for fun and exercise; second, it would get them home more safely; and third, drivers on the roadways would be safer.”
—Kevin Flassig, Assistant Principal, Pride Elementary

CONTACT

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¹ RWJ Foundation Research Briefs. Summer 2009. http://www.activelivingresearch.org/files/Active_Ed_Summer2009.pdf.

² FL Dept of Education