

SRTS CASE STUDY:

Longmont, Colorado

Eagle Crest students SOAR and reduce traffic

SafeRoutes

National Center for Safe Routes to School



CASE STUDY

Introduction

In less than a year, a nearly 40 percent reduction in motor vehicle traffic resulted at Eagle Crest Elementary School when students and parents embraced the school's Safe Routes to School program and chose to SOAR or Step Often and Ride to school.

“There are no cars waiting to drop students off,” says Physical Education Teacher Jason Goldsberry, who is the school's SRTS coordinator. “It almost seems like a ghost town.”

In the 2004–2005 school year, 75 percent of Eagle Crest's 650 students arrived at school by motor vehicle. The number declined slightly when the fifth grade was temporarily moved to the middle school, but even then, 60 percent of the students continued to arrive by motor vehicle. In the mornings before school, the principal actually helped direct traffic, says Buzz Feldman, Longmont SRTS Coordinator and owner of High Gear Cyclery.



Activities

Funding for the Eagle Crest project came from the Colorado Department of Transportation. Longmont was awarded a two-year grant of just under \$75,000 that was designated for programs at five schools, Feldman says. At the end of the two years, Longmont still had money available from the grant, and officials went back to CDOT and requested adding two more schools to the project. Eagle Crest was one of those schools added in fall 2008. The SOAR team consists of parents, teachers and the principal.

Before the non-infrastructure encouragement and education program began, students and parents responded to a survey that documented how they arrived at school, Feldman says. Next, a school-wide marketing effort began with 5th grade students creating posters to inform students about SOAR's environmental and health benefits and to encourage participation. Information was included in the school's newsletter to parents to inform them about SOAR. Students learned ways to bicycle and walk to school safely. The school participated in the Freiker program, which uses a solar-powered counter to record student bicycle trips to school using a tag attached to each child's bicycle helmet. The tags can also be attached to backpacks to count students who walk to school. Funds were used to purchase motivational prizes. The resulting increase in participation led the school's PTO to purchase three additional bicycle racks.

At Eagle Crest, Goldsberry reviews totals twice a year and awards students prizes for high participation. “It really motivates the kids to continue on with the hope of not only better fitness and environmental quality, but also the chance to win some prizes,” he says. “We're very health conscious. It's such a natural fit.”

An added benefit has been the family time that results from parents walking or bicycling to school with their children. “We have great community buy-in,” Goldsberry notes. “It's become a habit: even in snow and rain, kids SOAR to school.”

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Milestones

With a current student population of 450, fewer than 100 motor vehicles pass through the school drop-off each morning. Prior to the SOAR program, motor vehicle transportation accounted for 60 percent of trips to school.

Bicycle racks are full, and even in mid-January 2009 in cold temperatures, 76 bicycles were parked outside the school.

Additionally, Goldsberry tracks total mileage of students arriving by some other means than motor vehicle. Their average length of trips to school is one mile, and students have nearly circled the globe with their mileage totals.



“We’ve got parents involved; they love the sense of community it’s created,” Feldman says. “Now, regardless of weather, we’re not seeing the car traffic.”

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