

# **Safe Routes to School Curriculum**

## **Grades K-2**



**CITY OF**  
**BLOOMINGTON**  
PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION

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## **About the Curriculum**

This curriculum was developed by the City of Bloomington for elementary students in the Bloomington community. It is organized into three grade bands (K-2, 3-4, and 5-6) and is designed to be revisited as students progress through elementary school.

The curriculum includes five lessons, each featuring discussion questions, a presentation, a book suggestion, and optional activities to reinforce the lesson. Each presentation is designed to be delivered in less than 30 minutes, with additional time for a book and/or activity. Little to no prep is needed for the lesson, and little to no materials are required.

Its goal is to empower students with the knowledge and skills to navigate their world more safely and confidently. The curriculum is part of a broader program that includes infrastructure improvements, events, communication efforts, and planning initiatives.

Designed to be short and flexible, the curriculum aims to fit within existing busy schedules. Educators are encouraged to use the components that are most helpful, adapt them to their needs, and make changes as necessary.

Questions or suggestions about the curriculum can be sent to [planning@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:planning@bloomington.in.gov).

## **Our Approach and Principles**

Between the years 2019-2023, there were 10,391 crashes on Bloomington's streets; 443 of these crashes resulted in either a major injury or death. These crashes are more than a statistic to track. These crashes forever impact families, friends, and neighbors throughout Bloomington. As a community, we do not accept these crashes as status quo.

While often referred to as "accidents," the reality is that traffic deaths from crashes are preventable. Our approach views traffic deaths as an urgent public health issue with the goal of using a variety of strategies to eliminate all serious injuries and deaths from crashes, not necessarily eliminate all crashes.

Road and vehicle design strongly influence driver behavior. That's why our approach focuses on streets and transportation systems that reduce risks, promote safe speeds, and accommodate inevitable human error. People will make mistakes, but those mistakes should not cost lives. Self-explaining and self-enforcing infrastructure (such as crosswalks, protected bike lanes, and traffic-calming measures) helps make streets safer for everyone. Our approach also acknowledges the issue of access, acknowledging that distance, cost, and other factors can impact how easily and safely people travel.

Children are especially vulnerable, relying on walking, biking, and buses for independent travel. We do not blame children for mistakes on the road. Instead, we work to address the systems that put them at risk, ensuring that streets, trails, and transit are safe for all users, regardless of age, income, or mode of transportation.

Education, like this curriculum, sits at the top of the Safe Systems Pyramid for traffic safety. It is designed to complement broader changes to socioeconomic factors, the built environment, and other safety measures. Education alone is not a solution but it works best as part of a larger, shared responsibility to create streets that are safe for everyone.



David J. Ederer et al., "The Safe Systems Pyramid: A New Framework for Traffic Safety," *Transportation Research Interdisciplinary Perspectives* 21 (2023): 100905, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trip.2023.100905>.

## More Resources

The City of Bloomington is committed to supporting safe routes to school, and is able to provide resources to support this goal including staff time and trainings, a revolving library of SRTS-related books, event support, signage, bike games and activities, walking school bus training and support, bike bus training and support, bike rodeos, and more.

To learn more about our SRTS initiative and connect with staff visit <https://bton.in/SRTS>.

# Lesson 1: Safe Crossings and Signs

## Safe Routes to School (K-2)

### Lesson Introduction

**Summary:** Crossing the street involves multiple steps and takes practice. This lesson introduces students to the basics including where to cross, how to read signals and signs, and how to check for traffic before stepping off the curb. The goal is for students to feel confident and capable, not fearful, when walking near streets.

**What students will learn:** Students will be able to describe the steps for crossing a street safely, demonstrate how to look left, right, and left again at an intersection, and identify safer places to cross.

### Presentation

This presentation is available via [Google Slides](#). It will introduce street signs, explain what to do at a stop sign vs. a traffic light, and walk through the steps to cross a street: finding a safe place, stopping at the curb, looking left-right-left, checking signals, making eye contact with drivers, and crossing when clear.

### Book

- **Bobby and Mandee's Street Smarts: How to be a Safe Pedestrian** by Robert Kahn  
Topics include the definition of a pedestrian, types of intersections, making eye contact with drivers, and much more.

### Activity

- **Stop/Start Activity:**
  - Prepare two signs including a "Walk" and "Don't Walk" (Attachment A). This is an adapted version of Red Light, Green Light. Students line up facing the teacher. When the teacher holds up a "walk" sign, students walk forward. When the "don't walk" sign goes up, they stop. Any student who keeps moving returns to the start.
  - Create several "intersections" around the room using stop signs (Attachment B). Some intersections should represent two-way stops and others should represent four-way stops. Students travel through the classroom as pedestrians walking to school. As they approach each intersection, students must:
    - Stop at the intersection
    - Decide whether it is a two-way stop or four-way stop
    - Look left, right, left
    - Check that it is safe to cross
    - Walk across safely
    - Teachers can add movement challenges such as giant steps, slow-motion walking, tiptoeing, or teachers may also have students start and stop to music while practicing safe crossing skills.

# Lesson 2: Safe Passengers

## Lesson Introduction

**Summary:** The school bus is one of the safest ways to travel, but the most dangerous moments are right outside it. This lesson covers the danger zone around the bus (where the driver cannot see students), correct boarding and exiting procedures, and safe conduct during the ride.

**What students will learn:** Identify the danger zone around a school bus and describe the correct steps for boarding and exiting safely. Explain why seatbelts must be worn on every trip, describe where to sit safely in a car, and identify what red, yellow, and white car lights mean.

## Presentation

This presentation is available via [Google Slides](#). Students will learn the danger zone around the bus, how to board and exit safely, and how to stay safe during the ride. It covers seatbelts hold you in place if the car stops suddenly, the back seat is the safest spot for children, reading a car's lights helps pedestrians and passengers know what the vehicle is about to do.

## Book

- **Tanya Takes the School Bus** by Martha E. H. Rustad  
The Susie & Sam series is a charming collection of illustrated stories about the new events and first experiences that most young children will encounter in everyday life. In *Susie & Sam Learn About Road Safety* the twins go with mum to the shop and on the way mum teaches them the principles of road safety. The story is presented in a helpful, positive and reassuring way with bright, fun pictures.

## Activity

- **Blind Spot Activity:** Have a student sit in a "driver's seat" (chair facing forward) and stare straight ahead. A partner slowly moves a hand in from behind and to the side. The "driver" raises their hand when they first see movement. Discuss: even with good vision and mirrors, drivers cannot see everything around them.

# Lesson 3: Bike Safety

## Lesson Introduction

**Summary:** This lesson introduces basic bike terms, how to fit a helmet properly, where bikes belong on the road, and the foundational safety habits that make biking better for everyone. Research shows that hands-on, on-bike activities are the most effective way to build real skills, so this lesson is designed to complement, not replace, time on actual bikes.

**What students will learn:** Identify basic parts of a bicycle, explain why a properly fitted helmet matters, know where bikes belong, and recall basic bike safety behavior.

## Presentation

This presentation is available via [Google Slides](#). It covers proper helmet fitting, basic parts of a bike, visibility improvements, basic riding rules, risks of riding at night or at dusk, and sidewalk riding rules for younger bikers.

## Book

- ***The Car That Wanted to be a Bike*** by Lior Steinberg  
This book follows a car named Johnny who dreams of becoming a bicycle as his family's lifestyle shifts towards cycling, exploring themes of urban mobility, sustainability, and finding new purpose.

## Label Activity

Students label the major parts of a bike using Attachment C. This works well directly after the presentation and can be completed as a class.

# Lesson 4: Bus Skills

## Lesson Introduction

**Summary:** Public transit connects communities. Buses carry many people at once, reduce traffic, reduce pollution, and give everyone (including people who can't drive or don't have cars) the freedom to get where they need to go. This lesson builds awareness of what public transit is, why it's good for the community, and how to ride it safely.

**What students will learn:** Explain what public transit is and why it helps the community, and describe basic steps to ride the bus.

## Presentation

This presentation is available via [Google Slides](#). It covers the benefits of public transit, basics of how to ride (waiting, boarding, pulling the stop cord), and how routes and schedules work.

## Book

- ***Maisy Drives the Bus* by Lucy Cousins**  
A simple, cheerful picture book following Maisy as she picks up passengers and drops them at their destinations

## Bus Activity

Students color a bus using Attachment D as a template. Students may also select and draw stops, routes, and label places for the bus to go.

# Lesson 5: Speed, Health, and Safety

## Lesson Introduction

**Summary:** This lesson connects speed to danger in a way young students can feel, literally. Through movement activities and simple science, students discover that faster-moving objects need more distance to stop, which is why speeding cars are more dangerous near schools and neighborhoods. The goal is not to make students afraid, but to help them understand why speed limits exist and why waiting for traffic to pass before crossing matters. This lesson will also help students make the connection between transportation choices, their own health, and the health of their community.

**What students will learn:** Explain why fast-moving cars are harder to stop, describe why they should wait for traffic before crossing, explain why speed limits near schools protect everyone, and understand how transportation affects their environment.

## Presentation

This presentation is available via [Google Slides](#). It introduces force and motion and connects them to why speed limits near schools exist. It gives an overview of why fast-moving objects need more distance and time to stop and drivers need reaction time before they even start braking. Lower speed limits near schools give drivers extra stopping distance. It also connects transportation choices to the health of the neighborhood environment.

## Book

- **Lucy in the City: A Story about Developing Spatial Thinking Skills**  
One night, Lucy the raccoon follows her family out of their den, headed for the best garbage bins in town. Distracted by a jar of peanut butter, she gets separated from her family. How will she ever find her way back to her family and her cozy den? With the help of a friendly owl and his bird's-eye view, Lucy tunes into the world around her and navigates herself home!

## Activity

**Stopping on Command:** Ask a volunteer to run as fast as they can across the room. When you say "Stop!" they must freeze exactly where they are. Try it a few times. Debrief: even a running child can't stop instantly. Explain that a car is much heavier and harder to stop.