

Pedestrian Safety Education Workshops Launch at Culver City Elementary Schools

Jim Shanman, Culver City Safe Routes to School Coordinator

Remember “Stop, Look and Listen”? Many of us were taught that in elementary school decades ago, and for good reason. Most kids walked or biked to school in the early seventies and basic safety education was a must.

Today, only about 20% of Culver City elementary students walk or bike to school. And while the Culver City Walk & Rollers – the city-wide Safe Routes to School Program – is doing much to encourage kids to be more active on their way to school, the Program is also providing valuable safety education along the way.

For example, last year education packets were sent home to all CCUSD families that included safe routes to school maps and information on how to walk, bike and drive safely in school zones. More recently, Culver City Police launched their bike patrol with education as a priority.

This year, pedestrian safety workshops have been introduced at all the elementary schools. After successful pilot programs last year at Linwood E. Howe and El Marino, the program has been rolled out during P.E. at all the elementary schools. The immersive and engaging Traffic Safety City that is used in the demonstration, mimics a real urban landscape. The City features a floor layout depicting roadways, sidewalks, crosswalks and railroad tracks and is enclosed by large format photos of easily recognized buildings and landmarks, such as schools, police and fire stations and houses.

After introductory discussions on safety, children are lead through the City and continue the grade-appropriate conversation on where and how to cross streets safely, when and where to safely exit a vehicle and what to do in an emergency. “Stop, Look and Listen” has become “Look left, right and left again and back too, and make eye contact with drivers before crossing” This helps students discern the difference between when it’s OK to cross (walking person) and when it is SAFE to cross (walking person, traffic is clear AND motorists see you).

And why is this important? This is a great opportunity to provide essential safety education to all K-5 students and reinforces the value of active transportation. Combined with the encouragement programs at each school, the workshops will help institutionalize pedestrian and bicycle safety education in Culver City.

The City was designed by YES, Inc.’s Tana Ball, longtime Safe Routes to School instructor and taught by Kellie Morris, the Culver City Walk & Rollers’ lead safety instructor who incorporates train-the-trainer techniques for the PE teachers so they will be able to offer the programs in future years. Adds El Marino PE Instructor

Steve Siegel "The students enjoyed the assembly and gained knowledge that will hopefully make them safe in the future."

For more safety information on the Safe Routes to School Program, including safety tips, please visit <http://www.ccwalkandroll.com>