

BIKE TO SCHOOL DAY

2021

COMMUNITIES GATHER FOR SCHOOL SPIRIT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

This spring, families, schools, and neighborhoods came together to bike, walk, and roll, celebrating an opportunity to gather as a community, engage in physical activity, and promote safety on Bike to School Day. Schools across the country remained at different stages of opening to in-person learning this May, with some having been fully in-person for a while and others still virtual. "As schools have addressed all aspects of returning to in-person learning, promoting opportunities to walk and roll and providing spaces to do so safely are critical to getting students to school on-time and ready to learn," says Nancy Pullen-Seufert, Director of the National Center for Safe Routes to School, the coordinating agency for Bike and Walk to School Days. Recognizing what activities were possible and fit with local health recommendations, Bike to School Day organizers found ways to encourage students to get outside and bike, walk, or roll to school, at school, or wherever they could to celebrate the day. Communities continued to see Bike to School Day as an important event on the school calendar and something students anticipate every year.



More than 1,200 participants registered for Bike to School Day this year with events in 45 states and DC. Registration continued to be available to families, neighborhoods, and entire schools to reflect the range of circumstances for communities. For Bike to School Day, many participants used the day, or multiple days throughout May, to ride in their neighborhoods, on the way to school, or at school. Many others used the event to promote physical activity of any type, highlighting the fun of a walk or roll before the school day begins.

Hearing from event organizers in the post-event survey, it was clear that Bike to School Day represented an important moment for students this year. The event allowed students, parents, teachers, and other volunteers to gather outside and do something that felt "normal" after more than a year of an uncertain school year. For many, Bike to School Day was a chance to re-energize students who have been learning remotely by encouraging a day of physical activity. Safety also remained a foundation of the event.

“ It was important for us to emphasize that providing mobility options for all users was essential for our community’s health.
 – TAMPA, FL ”

A DAY TO BE OUTSIDE AND BE ACTIVE

Physical activity was reported as a motivation for Bike to School Day participation for nearly 70% of communities, according to Bike to School Day organizers. For the event this year, organizers recognized both the general need for more physical activity alongside an increased demand to be more active due to the disruptions caused by the pandemic. Research reveals that overall physical activity for youth decreased throughout the pandemic.¹ In replying to questions about pandemic recovery and providing general comments about their events, organizers illuminated the importance of Bike to School Day in providing everyday activity along with meeting the extraordinary needs brought on in the last year.

“ There were so many school activities that got canceled this year. It was beautiful to celebrate healthy outdoor riding with the kids.
 – DURANGO, CO ”



TAMPA, FL
 MAYOR JANE CASTOR AT BROWARD
 ELEMENTARY SCHOOL'S BIKE TO SCHOOL DAY

“ It was important during COVID for many reasons, particularly: 1) it was a little bit of normal in a topsy turvy world; 2) exposure in cars when kids are not masked led to more COVID cases, so promoting walking or biking while socially distanced helped reduce exposure; 3) this was something we could do safely even during a pandemic and it leads to even more health benefits; 4) all the bikes on the bike rack symbolized community - we’re in this together - so much more than riding isolated in a family car and adding to traffic congestion”
 – GROSSE POINTE, MI ”

1 Bates, L. C., Zieff, G., Stanford, K., Moore, J. B., Kerr, Z. Y., Hanson, E. D., Barone Gibbs, B., Kline, C. E., & Stoner, L. (2020). COVID-19 Impact on Behaviors across the 24-Hour Day in Children and Adolescents: Physical Activity, Sedentary Behavior, and Sleep. *Children (Basel, Switzerland)*, 7(9), 138. <https://doi.org/10.3390/children7090138>

“ During an unprecedented academic year where in-school attendance was impacted by COVID-19 safety measures, we felt that the Bike to School Day provided an excellent opportunity for families to experience some normalcy as part of their school routine. This event also fosters collaboration with community stakeholders who provide support in terms of traffic control (local police department) and refreshments for participants (local grocery store).
– NAGS HEAD, NC ”

BRINGING COMMUNITIES BACK TOGETHER

In the Bike to School post-event survey, two-thirds of respondents highlighted school spirit as the community’s motivation for organizing an event. This year, organizers used Bike to School Day as a chance to bring students and the school community back together after a year or more of either attending school online or in circumstances very different from normal school. The survey asked organizers to provide any thoughts on the events, reflecting on the role of Bike to School Day in the pandemic recovery and the responses on this page say it all.

“ We want the students to participate in time honored events and return to a sense of normal.
– SANTA FE, NM ”

“ Bike and Walk to School Day was a day that we as families, students and residents could get back to some ‘normal’ commute to school routine where we celebrated getting up out of our chairs, our cars, away from our computers and moving.
– LEONIA, NJ ”



“ In person, the gathering was really special because a lot of the kids (and adults) hadn’t seen each other in a while. Almost all the schools in our neighborhood participated, and instead of riding to school (since kids aren’t actually going to school) they rode around the park with the support of our police department.
– WASHINGTON, DC ”

“ More people have been biking more because of the pandemic. The need for bicycle and pedestrian safety is more important now than ever.
- AUBURN, NY ”

“ We have seen a striking increase in students biking to school during the pandemic. We hope events like Bike to School Day will help keep the community aware of what a great option this is for students getting to school.
- TAMPA, FL ”

FOCUSING ON BIKE SAFETY

Bike safety topped the reasons why communities held Bike to School Day events. Organizers noted that walking and biking had become even more popular during the pandemic. Bike to School Day is a chance to bring attention to any concerns about the safety of the built environment, remind drivers to slow down near pedestrians and bicyclists and strengthen student safety skills.

“ We didn't do a large group "Bike to school day" but we did lots of safety activities and events throughout the entire month of May! Kids and families loved all our events. Some stated that these events helped the kids get ready for summer fun!!
- HORTONVILLE, WI ”

JOIN THE ACTION AND KEEP BIKING, WALKING, AND ROLLING!

Bike to School Day will return next spring on **MAY 4, 2022**. On **OCTOBER 6, 2021**, Walk to School Day offers another chance to get outside and walk, bike, or roll before the school day begins.

The fun and activity can keep going throughout the year. Take a look at the Beyond the Event section on walkbiketoschool.org to find tips.

