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ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FORUM

ON YOUR BIKE!

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Moving in the Right Direction

Welcome to the latest supplement to accompany the LEEF Newsletter. It has been produced by the Environmental Education Forum to help teachers learn about issues surrounding transport at school and in their local communities.

It has been designed to give you ideas on projects that the school can become engaged in and can be used in a range of learning areas across all four key stages. Please feel free to photocopy this resource and pass it on to a colleague who may also be able to make use of it.

Travelling Into Trouble!

Most of us will know just how much the journey to school has changed since we were at school - more traffic, longer journeys, more to carry, more pressures on time. The most quoted statistic is that 20% of cars on the road in urban areas at the morning peak of ten minutes to nine are taking children to school. But you may not be aware of the dramatic changes that have occurred in just the last ten years:

- Since 1994 the proportion of primary aged children walking to school has declined from 61% to 50%.
- There was an increase from 30% to 41% in the number being driven to school.
- Children aged 16 and under made 62% of all their trips as car passengers.
- The average length of the journey to school for secondary pupils has gone up by well over a third.

Directly and indirectly this problem touches everyone through its effects on **health, local air quality, climate change through CO₂ emissions and congestion.**

Taking Action

However there are positive steps we can take to begin to reverse this trend in our schools, at home and at work. This supplement will help you and your children understand the problem and be part of the solution.

How Will This Supplement Help Me?

This supplement will provide you as a teacher with a range of projects and resources that you can use in and out of school to help start to look at transport in a more sustainable way.

Inside you will find:

- Information on The Roads Service Travlewise NI programme with ways to get involved in **'Walk to School Week' (19-23 May 2008)** and the 'Best Foot Forward for Schools' programme.
- Sustrans' education work, and many case studies of successful projects already on-going in schools all over Northern Ireland.
- Information on how to tackle the transport topic of the Eco-Schools programme with lots of ideas on activities for your pupils to get involved with.
- Links to websites and further reading on the subject.

PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED READING THIS NEWSLETTER YOU PASS IT ON TO WORK COLLEAGUES, FRIENDS OR INTERESTED GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS WHO MAY ENJOY READING IT.

REDUCE, RE-USE, RECYCLE!

TACKLING TRANSPORT ISSUES!

Why we need alternatives to the school run

Allowing children to walk, cycle or take public transport to school can:



- Reduce the number of vehicles on the road
- Increase children's independence
- Enable parents to be less restrictive, helping children gain self-confidence and learn skills
- Help with personal and social development of children
- Educate children on road safety and traffic awareness as a pedestrian/cyclist/public transport user
- Avoid the development of travel habits that are bad for their health and the environment
- Reduce the risk of heart disease and strokes in later life
- Helps children control their weight
- Prevent diabetes
- Help social development
- Encourage active lifestyles at an early age and develop the exercise habit
- Improve concentration in class - so say 90% of teachers surveyed across England & Wales



Safety First

The best way to teach children safe behaviour around roads is acknowledged to be a practical approach using the child's own local area. This is very labour intensive and needs a high ratio of adults to children. Adults are perfectly capable of teaching children how to be safe and sensible pedestrians but most will need special training in order to understand the specific road safety issues better.

Walking to School

It's convenient, it costs nothing and it's good for you, your children and the environment.

By walking to school, children have an opportunity to mix socially with their peers and will arrive at school alert and attentive. More children walking to school also means less traffic congestion around the school, making it safer for all children.

Walking Buses

A walking bus is a safe way for children to walk to school. It gives them the opportunity to learn about road safety, time to chat to their friends before lessons and gives them important exercise time on a daily basis.

- The walking bus mimics the behaviour of an ordinary bus but without the vehicle.
- A group of children walks to and from school along a set route, picking up or leaving children at agreed stops and times. In most cases a group of volunteer adults lead and tail the bus. The children's bags are placed in a trolley which is pushed by an adult
- Incentives for the children such as badges, stickers, fridge magnets, special events can be used.

Good for children

A walking bus is a safe way for children to walk to school. It also allows children to have regular daily exercise and reinforces the habit of walking for shorter journeys.

Good for the environment

Less congestion and traffic, which means less pollution.

Information reproduced with the kind permission of Roads Service Travelwise NI

Good for you

Opportunity for you to have social contact with other parents, physical exercise and the feeling of well-being knowing that you're doing something worthwhile.

Walk to School Week: 19–23 May 2008

The Walk to School Campaign asks parents, pupils and teachers to think about their journey to and from school and the many benefits of making it on foot. Each year, there are two nationally recognised events:

National Walk to School Week (19–23 May), and **International Walk to School Month** (October 2008).

We want people to see walking to school as an everyday activity, so we also run the WoW (Walk Once a Week) scheme which rewards pupils with a collectible enamel badge if they walk to school regularly.

Walk to School works!

The Walk to School Campaign has the support of many schools and authorities and regularly reaches more than two million pupils and their carers right across the UK. Promotion of the 'Walk to School' campaign does attract media attention not just locally, but nationally, and so brings the message to a much wider audience.

The Walk to School Campaign for May 2008 is focusing on children exploring their local environment through sound and noise. For more information, loads of resources and support material please visit the website at the following address: www.walktoschool.org.uk

Best Foot Forward for Schools

Best Foot Forward for Schools has been developed with the assistance of the Department of Education in Northern Ireland, DOE Road Safety division and the Health Promotion Agency. The programme is aimed at key stage two (children aged 7 to 11) and it will be delivered using a Teacher Information and Activity resource pack, which contains activity booklets, guidance notes, an interactive CD-ROM and posters.

All materials have been compiled by fully qualified practitioners in the education sector and pay close reference to Northern Ireland curricular guidelines in the following subjects: English, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Information and Communication Technology, History, Geography, Art and Design and Physical Education.

Key Messages

- Road traffic causes pollution and congestion
- Pollution damages our health and our environment
- Unnecessary journeys aggravate traffic congestion
- Individually and collectively we can reduce the impact of road traffic by changing the way we travel to and from school
- There are viable and easily accessible alternatives to travelling by car such as walking, cycling or public transport

Walking and cycling can improve our physical and mental health and fitness.

Best Foot Forward for Schools objectives

- To make people think about the use of their car when transporting children to and from school – highlighting the health benefits for children of walking and cycling as an alternative.
- To engage with decision makers in the education sector to encourage them to support the promotion of walking and cycling to schools and to encourage them to put in place the facilities and safety measures that will give you the confidence to allow your children to walk and cycle to school.
- To encourage your children to think about the benefits (health, economic, and environmental) of walking or cycling to school.

For more information on the Best Foot Forward programme visit the Travelwise website at:

www.travelwiseni.co.uk



SUSTRANS: Positive Steps

Sustrans, the sustainable transport charity, works on practical projects to encourage people to walk, cycle and use public transport for health, safety and environmental reasons. Sustrans works with schools on projects to get more children walking and cycling, our main aim is to create a Safe Route to School for every child in the UK.

The Sustrans education team has been working in schools in Northern Ireland and has found that most school children would like to walk and cycle to school. In a survey of 18 schools throughout NI we found the following:

- 95% of pupils own a bike
- 71% of pupils want to cycle or walk to school
- 43% don't cycle or walk to school due to "bad weather"
- 31% don't cycle or walk to school due to "busy roads"
- 20% of pupils are not allowed cycle or walk to school by parents
- 50% of parents would allow children to cycle or walk to school if supervised
- 22% of parents would allow children to cycle or walk to school unsupervised
- 23% of parents would help supervise cycling or walking to school once per week.



It is the experience of Sustrans' School Team that the above responses are motivated in many cases by a perception of bad weather or risk by parents or pupils which can be addressed by managed events and conversations with the schools and parents to address their very real concerns over these issues.

What Can You Do in School?

Here are just some strategies for schools, children and their parents that work:

- Make walking and cycling to school fun! It can be a great event for all the community where parents and children can talk to each other. Children arrive at the school awake and ready for the day.
- Set up a **School Travel Committee** of pupils, parents and teachers to plan how more people can be encouraged to walk or cycle.
- Devise a **School Travel Action Plan** and tie its work in with the curriculum.
- Deal with any concerns around road safety. Ask **DOE Road Safety, Roads Service** and the **police** in to discuss the issues with the School Travel Committee. Lobby for improvements.
- If children live too far from school identify a car park a little distance from the school where they can "**Park & Stride**" to the school.
- Make sure children are properly trained in public safety, road safety & cycling.
- Speak to a neighbour who walks their child and arrange for your child to go with them.
- Time the journey from doorstep to school gate using your car, then do the same using public transport and using a bicycle or your feet.
- If you can't walk and cycle to school every day then do it one day a week when the whole family or the street can get involved. **Fresh Air Friday? Walk on Wednesday? Winter Welly Club?**
- Buy good waterproofs and wellies for when it rains. Get a place in the school to dry them off.
- Incentivise pupils to walk and cycle through league tables, **charts, stickers**, select a **Walker/Cyclist of the Month**, organize a **Bikers Breakfast**.
- Parents or teachers could set up a regular **Walking Bus** or a **Cycling Train**.

Material is available from Travelwise NI in Belfast to promote walking and cycling to school. Tel: (0845 378 0908). Advice is also available on the Sustrans web site www.sustrans.org.uk, or visit www.saferoutestoschools.org.uk.

These are all actions that have been successfully run by schools in Northern Ireland working with Sustrans. It is possible to reduce our car use on the school run significantly and save the planet for our children. It just takes a little thought and effort. Surely it's worth it?

TRANSPORT SUCCESS STORIES

CASE STUDIES TO HELP YOU GET STARTED

St Joseph's College, Belfast

Summary

The school first became involved in the safe routes to school project when Sustrans visited the college and helped us look at some of the issues involved in developing safe and sustainable modes of transport. We started with a small group of pupils from years 11, 10 and 9 who expressed an interest.

Initiative

The group first looked at reasons why we should promote safe and sustainable transport, including making pupils healthier, cycling and walking is better for the environment- less traffic, less fumes, less global warming, cycling is quicker than the bus in the morning traffic. The group then looked at the problems that pupils encountered if they cycled or walked to school, such as bags being too heavy, nowhere to keep a bike safe and dry, traffic being very heavy and dangerous and pupils not wanting to cycle alone.

Costs and Funding

The group then researched possible solutions to these problems and presented their findings at a school conference. The school produced a travel plan which has been adopted by the board of governors. Since that time the college has continued to be involved in the safe routes projects resulting in many school led initiatives ranging from new bike sheds, lockers and cycle lanes inside the college to major road works carried out by Roads Service which include new cycle lanes, toucan crossing and a school safety zone. The safety zone which operates morning and afternoons, slowing traffic on the busy Ravenhill Road along a stretch which contains two secondary schools and a primary school.

Problems and Solutions

The major road works and other external work was funded by the Department for Regional Development. The Department of Education has funded the lockers, cycle sheds and the internal road markings and cycle lane. There has been a marked increase in the number of pupils who cycle to school on a regular basis. The college would like to see the number of pupils cycling and walking continue to grow.

St Brigid's College, Derry

Summary

The School Travel Plan has been used to encourage safer and sustainable modes of transport to school and is seen as best practise for pupils, parents and staff. The School Travel Plan is addressing problems of traffic outside the school, obesity and general health of the students, environmental issues, and most importantly safety of the students as they travel to and from school.

Initiative

Top Tips include:

- Initiatives including route planning in PSE lessons, designing road safety posters, and traffic surveys.
- Representatives from Sustrans have visited the school and worked with the students on a regular basis.
- Road Safety education officers have taught pedestrian skills & cycling proficiency
- Small incentive prizes and merit points have been given to encourage cyclists.

Costs and Funding

The PTA provided funding for the installation of a CCTV camera to overlook the cycle parking. DOE has provided cycle shelters and lockers, while funding for the School Safety Zone has been provided by the Roads Service.

Problems and Solutions

Previously there were fewer than five pupils cycling to school.

There are now 20 per day on average. Safe cycle parking was provided, overlooked by a security camera. Lockers were provided for students who cycle to school; this has encouraged girls to cycle.

Speed of traffic:

Roads Service has designed ground-breaking proposals for a "School Safety Zone" outside the school on Glengalliagh Road. These will include safe crossing facilities, a reduction in traffic speed, and prevention of parking outside the school.



TRANSPORT SUCCESS STORIES

MORE CASE STUDIES FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

Below are examples of what schools have been up to all over Northern Ireland as part of Sustrans Rural Safe Routes to School Project. Have a look and see what's happening on your doorstep and see how easy it is to do something to make a change and benefit the children and the environment.

Ballinderry PS erected signs telling people not to park in front of the school. The Eco-Committee drew up questions for a traffic survey and sent these out to parents. As part of their work in mathematics, the P7 analysed the results and produced graphs which were displayed on the Eco notice board to raise awareness of the number of cars bringing one or two pupils to school. The school has been included in the **Sustrans Safe Routes Scheme** and will have the route to the school marked out from the centre of the village with pavements and cycle paths. The pupils participated in **Walk to School Week** with many walking all the way or where not feasible, part of the way. Parents made a point of walking with their entire family. The week culminated with a walk to school non-uniform day which raised £300 for the project linking the school with disadvantaged children in South Africa.

Killyleagh PS enjoyed a Breakfast of Champions in their pyjamas when they arrived at school on **Walk to School day** and Killylea PS ventured into the great outdoors for a healthy picnic on the final day of **Walk to School Week 2007** and are now running a regular walking bus to school.

St Patrick's, Derrygonnelly and **Hezlett PS** successfully organised walking buses during **Walk to School Week 2007**, St Patrick's enjoyed a carnival atmosphere by bringing along banners, signs and posters they had made promoting the benefits of walking buses.

St Mary's, Derrytrasna had half the pupils walk to school for their **Walk to School event** whilst the other half cycled! There was a noticeable reduction in the speed of traffic passing the school as children were visible on pavements and there were no cars on the school run.

Gracehill Primary School organised a hugely successful **Bikers Breakfast** with 175 pupils and 110 parents taking part. As well as feasting on a healthy breakfast, pupils were able to give their bikes a health check courtesy of Halfords. They also organised a **walking bus** which has been extremely well supported by the school, parents and DOE Roads Safety Branch with up to 200 taking part.

Cloughmills Primary School has been taking part in the Around the World project and have been surprised at how many people are beginning to cycle as part of the scheme. The school plans to keep going once they have got round the world once!

St Colmcilles Primary School, Claudy held a huge **Bike to School Day** which was supported by Sustrans. Over 100 cyclists took part and we were supported by the local community and PSNI.

St Jarlath's Primary School, Blackwatertown organised cycling games with their P5. The DOE Road Safety Branch also trained many of the P5 children in cycle proficiency. The school has now set up an after school cycling club on Tuesdays and Thursdays!

St Johns Primary School, Swatragh has also been taking part in the walk and cycle Around the World. Martina Cassidy and one of the parents at the school attended the school champion training day.

St Mary's Cushendall – The school has established a travel plan and the children have all been encouraged to take part in the Around the World scheme! Sustrans are helping them to organise a Postcode Map for their travel plan.

Broadbridge Primary School, Eglinton ran a highly successful **walking bus** for four weeks as part of a **Healthy Walking Bus** promotion by the Western Health Trust. The walking bus was one of the biggest seen in Northern Ireland with over 200 pupils and parents taking part with support from the PSNI. The school plans to develop this activity further in the coming months.

ECO-SCHOOLS

Some Ideas for covering the Transport Topic

Below are some ideas and activities that can be used to help cover the Transport topic in the Eco Schools Award Programme. They can be used for schools taking part in the awards or not.

Activity: Improving school transport

1. How do we travel?

Map pupils' routes to and from school. Discuss the impact of the different modes of transport, including congestion, air pollution and hazards. Produce ideas for reducing hazards. Pupils work in groups to produce a list of suggestions. As a class, discuss these suggestions and list the most practical and achievable ideas.

2. How do others in the school get here?

Survey how pupils in other classes and teachers get to and from school. Pupils should devise the questionnaire. The results can then be collated and displayed on a school or Eco-Schools notice board.

3. How can we improve the local environment?

Propose actions that could improve the local environment by reducing hazards and congestion. What action could be taken by the school? - car sharing, a walking bus scheme? What action will need the cooperation of the local council and local community? —a safety zone around the school, traffic calming measures, cycle lanes?

4. Taking action

Devise ways of encouraging pupils and teachers in the school to take the actions proposed. This could be through assembly, an exhibition, posters, an incentive scheme. Pupils could write to the local council with their proposals.

Additional activities

- Local traffic flow survey: Pupils carry out a simple survey of the different kinds of traffic passing a number of points around the school at different times.
- Measuring carbon monoxide: Pupils investigate pollution by measuring carbon monoxide levels in the air.
- Air quality survey: Catching the amount of dirt in the air is a simple indication of air pollution.
- Noise survey: Pupils use a cassette recorder to measure noise pollution around the school.

Environmental review questions:

- Do you monitor how pupils travel to school?, if yes, how many pupils use the following transport to or from school? - Walk, bus, cycle, share a taxi, share a car, travel as a single passenger in a car
- Has this data been mapped?
- Does the school have dry and secure cycle storage?, if yes, is there sufficient space for all users?
- Does the school offer cycle instruction?, if yes, does it include on-road training?
- Does the school have a network of "safe routes" to walk or cycle?
- Does the school have a walking bus scheme, cycle train, park and stride?
- Does the school organise regular "Walk to school" or "Cycle to school" events?
- Do any of the school transport vehicles (buses, taxis etc) run on alternative fuels such as electricity, land-fill gas or vegetable-derived oils?
- Does the school have a School Travel Plan?
- Does the school have a pedestrian and cycle entrance that is separate from vehicle access?

Teaching objectives:

Through work on Transport, pupils could:

- Assess the impact of traffic on the local environment and the quality of people's lives
- Make proposals to improve the local environment and take part in local initiatives to implement the proposals
- Use, interpret and draw maps, defining and using keys
- Collect, interpret and present information, using ICT where appropriate
- Communicate to a variety of audiences using suitable language

Eco-Schools NI Delivery Partners for Transport

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Travelwise NI
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Email: info@travelwiseni.com
Web: www.travelwiseni.com

Sustrans
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Tel: 028 9043 4569
Email: william.methven@sustrans.org.uk
Web: www.saferoutestoschools.org.uk



FURTHER READING AND FUNDING INFORMATION

www.travelwiseni.com - is a Roads Service initiative to encourage the use of sustainable transport options such as walking, cycling, public transport or car sharing.

www.saferroutetoschools.com - an alternative incentive scheme to Walk to School Week, and highly recommended!

www.teachernet.gov.uk/sustainableschools/ - lots of resources for teacher, governors and parents

www.bikeforall.net - everything you wanted to know about cycling but were afraid to ask

www.healthyschools.gov.uk - The National Healthy Schools Programme is an exciting long term initiative that helps young people and their schools to be healthy

www.tidynorthernireland.org/eco-schools/ - Eco-Schools is a recognised award scheme, rewarding and accrediting schools who have made a commitment to improving their environmental performance. It is also a learning resource, raising awareness of environmental issues through activities that link to curriculum subjects.

www.brightkidz.co.uk - an excellent range of reflective clothing and much more!

GRANTS AND AWARDS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS

BIG LOTTERY FUNDING

For the period of 2006-2009 there is £90 million available through the **Big Lottery Fund** divided over several different grant programmes.

BIG Trust Fund

BIG Trust Fund is designed to support change in organisations in Northern Ireland's voluntary and community sector through a period of significant restructuring and rationalisation. It is a long-term investment, possibly up to ten years, to support all the changes that will need to happen to the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland. See www.biglotteryfund.org.uk

Awards For All

Awards for All is a joint Lottery grants scheme aimed at local communities. Bring people together and increase community activity. Awards range from £500 to £10,000 and are on going. See www.awardsforall.org.uk

Big Deal

Fund projects that help young people to make a difference in their own life and to the lives of others. The Big deal can only make awards directly to individual and informal groups of children and young people aged 0-25. An individual can apply for awards of £500 and a group can apply for an award between £500 and £2,500. Closing date for applications is 30 September 2009. See www.thebigdealni.com for further details.

ROYAL SOCIETY OF WILDLIFE TRUSTS—BIFFAWARDS

Biffaward funds projects which provide and improve public amenities for communities within 10 miles of a Biffa operation and projects that increase or maintain biodiversity. The small grants scheme provides grants between £250 and £5,000 for projects that enable communities to improve local amenities and to conserve wildlife and habitats. The Main Grants Scheme grants between £5,001 and £50,000 for amenity projects that provide and improve community facilities to act as mechanisms for recreation, sporting achievement, lifelong learning and community involvement.

There are no deadlines for submitting an application. For further information via www.biffaward.org email: grants@rswt.org or Tel: 0870 036 1000.

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