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# Traffic Safety Unit of Study



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Chancellor Joel I. Klein  
New York City  
Department of Education



Michael R. Bloomberg  
Mayor  
City of New York



Iris Weinshall, Commissioner  
New York City  
Department of Transportation



Dear Principal:

In New York City, motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of unintentional death and injury to young children. However, we can reduce the risks to children if we teach them the skills they need to safely walk out of doors, drive a bicycle, skate or skateboard, and ride in a car.

This curriculum guide was developed in 2005 by the Department of Education Region 7 Local Instructional Superintendent's Office, and the Department of Transportation Safety Education Division. It will help children understand the importance and power of the many safety tools available to all of us. By reviewing the important safety tips covered in the guide, teachers can assist their students in discovering how their personal tools, as well as tools in the traffic environment, will help them stay safer. They can use the activities suggested, or create their own, to reinforce their students' safety knowledge and strengthen their vocabulary, reading, and math. The traffic safety street map developed for your school shows the designated school crossing locations, signals and all-way stops, and can be used to improve map skills such as locating neighborhood landmarks, deciphering map legend symbols, and identifying safe routes of travel to and from school.

We are pleased to have this opportunity to work with you to safeguard our children's health and well-being wherever and whenever they are out on the streets of our city.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "I. Weinshall". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "I".

Iris Weinshall  
Commissioner



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# Overview

This guide will enable students to investigate **Traffic Safety**. Students will engage in a unit of study relating to traffic, passenger, pedestrian and cyclist safety.

Some of the highlights of this curriculum guide include: 5 modules of study, and Department of Transportation street maps of the school community that will be used for a variety of activities that include the identification of school crosswalks, signals, and all-way stops around your school.

The modules outlined in this unit of study are designed for students in grades K - 3 and 4 - 5.

The activities and grade level designations outlined in the 5 modules are suggestions, and may be selected, changed, or adapted to meet the needs of all students.

# Module 1

## What are Traffic Safety Tools?

### Grades K-5

- Discuss the traffic safety tools that families use:
  - Personal safety tools: eyes, ears, hands, feet and brain
  - Traffic environment tools: traffic signals, signs, markings, crossing guards, police officers
- Elicit instances when it is necessary to use personal and traffic environment safety tools and why they are important. Use a KWL chart to record responses
- Using the KWL chart, elicit which traffic safety tools apply to bicycle, passenger and pedestrian safety
- Add relevant words to your word wall (update daily)

### Follow-Up Activities:

- Partner share:
  - Traffic safety tools my family and I use
  - When do we use these traffic safety tools?
  - Why are these traffic safety tools important?
- Have students create a traffic safety journal to record their thoughts about traffic safety issues
- Have students create a daily trip log that includes time, date, trip purpose, origin and destination, and mode of transportation



# Module 2

## Why is it important to use Traffic Safety Tools? (Suggested 3-4 days)

### A. Pedestrian Safety Grades K-5

Discuss what to do before crossing the street. Include the following:

- What are the steps we take before crossing the street, even if the pedestrian signal shows the white walking figure?
  - Stop, look left, then right, then left again for on-coming traffic
  - Listen for engine noises, back-up beepers, sirens and horns
  - Start to cross only when no cars, trucks, or buses are coming
  - If the pedestrian signal shows a flashing hand, wait for the white walking figure
  - While crossing the street, continue to look for vehicles
  - Hold up your hand while crossing so drivers will see you
  - Young children should only cross the street with an adult and hold the adult's hand

- Why is it important to cross at the corner and use the crosswalk?
  - Drivers expect to see people crossing in the crosswalk
- What is the role of the school crossing guard?
- What do we do when there is not a crossing guard?
- What are traffic signals and what do they mean? (Red-Stop, Green-Go, Yellow-Caution)
  - The traffic signal is a tool for drivers; the pedestrian signal is a tool for pedestrians
  - What do the colors on the traffic signal represent for drivers?
  - What do the white walking figure, the flashing red hand, and the solid red hand mean?
- What do you do, as a pedestrian, when you see a stop sign?

## Follow-Up Activities:

### Grades K-3

- Draw a traffic light, label and explain what each color stands for
- Set up a mock crosswalk/intersection in your classroom. Have students demonstrate the correct procedures you take when crossing a street
- Direct traffic in your classroom
- Draw safety pictures and label; have students write an explanation of their picture
- Add relevant words to your word wall
- Draw a STOP sign; have students learn the song "Stop Look and Listen"
  - *Stop look and listen before you cross the street. Use your eyes, use your ears and then use your feet*
- Interview your school crossing guard and/or bus driver
- Write notes and or draw pictures thanking the crossing guard and/or bus driver

## Follow-Up Activities:

### Grade 4-5

- Write a poem about pedestrian traffic tools
- Make a poster about pedestrian traffic tools
- Create a brochure that explains pedestrian traffic tools. Include helpful illustrations
- Create a word search and or crossword puzzle using traffic safety vocabulary (word wall vocabulary)
- Write a letter to the editor of the local newspaper expressing your thoughts about pedestrian traffic safety issues or concerns
- Write a persuasive letter to a friend explaining the importance of using pedestrian traffic safety tools
- Write a letter to a younger sibling or child advising him or her of the importance of using pedestrian traffic safety tools
- In groups, have students discuss the following questions:
  - What if there are double parked cars or big trucks at the corner and you can't see if cars are coming?
  - What if the wind blows your homework into the street or under the school bus?
  - What if there is no pedestrian signal at the corner and you must cross the street?
  - What if your ball rolls out into the street?

Follow-Up Activities, continued:  
Grade 4-5

- Have students create a pedestrian traffic safety survey. Distribute to various constituents (students, teachers, parents, etc). Have students tally and interpret responses using percentages, tables and or graphs to report findings
- Interview your school crossing guard and/or bus driver

## B. Safety on Wheels

### Grades K-5

Elicit and discuss tools for safety on wheels (bicycles, skates, skateboards, scooters). Include the following:

- Bicycles, skates, skateboards and scooters are not toys; we are drivers and control how and where we drive these vehicles
  - Only children ages 12 and under may drive a bicycle on the sidewalk
  - Children over 12 must drive in the street and follow the rules of the road, like all other drivers
- Discuss the following safety on wheels tools:
  - Wearing a properly fitting **helmet**
  - Wearing **proper clothing** (sneakers, florescent colors etc.)
  - Equipping all wheeled vehicles with **safety reflectors**
  - Equipping all bicycles and scooters with **headlights**
- Walking the bicycle across the street
- Assemble a gallery display of safety posters
- Add relevant words to your word wall

## Follow-Up Activities:

- Write a poem about safety on wheels
- Make a poster about safety on wheels
- Create a brochure that explains safety on wheels. Include helpful illustrations
- Create a word search and/or crossword puzzle using safety on wheels vocabulary (word wall vocabulary)
- Write a letter to a friend expressing your thoughts about the importance of safety on wheels
- Write a letter to a younger sibling or child advising him or her of the importance of safety on wheels
- Write an essay expressing the importance of using cyclist safety tools
- Have students make a checklist for their bicycle equipment (tires, brakes, handlebar)
- Have students create a safety on wheels survey. Distribute to various constituents (students, teachers, parents, etc). Have students tally and interpret responses using percentages, tables and or graphs to report findings
- Have students design a helmet that their friends would wear; include retro-reflective materials on the helmet

## C. Passenger Safety

### Grades K-5

- Discuss what a safety belt is and why it should be used
- Discuss how to wear a safety belt:  
low, right and tight
- Identify the age group of children needing to use safety belts and the age group needing to use car safety seats
  - All children under the age of 7 must ride in a car safety seat or booster seat (if they have outgrown their car seat)
  - Everyone over the age of 7 must use a safety belt
- Discuss why all vehicles should have safety harnesses and not lap belts
- Discuss proper car seating for children
  - Young children should ride in a booster seat; older children and adults should use a lap and shoulder belt whenever possible; children in car safety seats should be placed in positions where there are lap belts only (rear seats only)
- Discuss pet transportation safety (dog, cat, etc.)
- Discuss exiting and entering vehicle safety on the opposite side of the traffic
- Discuss rules/laws drivers must obey when a school bus is picking up or dropping off students



## Follow-Up Activities: Grades 3-5

- Write a poem about passenger traffic safety
- Make a poster about passenger traffic safety
- Create a brochure that explains passenger traffic safety. Include helpful illustrations
- Create a word search and/or crossword puzzle using traffic safety vocabulary (word wall vocabulary)
- Write a letter to a friend expressing your thoughts about the importance of passenger traffic safety
- Write a letter to a younger sibling or child advising him or her of the importance of passenger traffic safety
- Write an essay discussing the importance of everyone following passenger traffic safety rules
- Have students conduct a survey of safety belt and car seat use, and tally, interpret and graph the results; convert the information into percentages

# Module 3

What can we learn from a street map?

## Grades K-2

- Use the street map to locate:
  - The school
  - Streets that surround the school
  - Where the crossing guard is posted
  - Neighborhood landmarks (e.g. Public library, police station, firehouse, supermarket, etc.)
- Identify the location of your house on the street map (if applicable). Write your home address
- Identify all traffic lights and stop signs
- Identify intersections
- Add relevant words to your word wall

## Grades 3 - 5

- Use the street map to:
  - Locate your school
  - Identify scale
  - Interpret legend or key
- Add neighborhood landmarks to the legend and to the map (e.g. library, police station, firehouse, stores, etc.)
- Estimate the distance from one location to another
- Locate the houses of 3 of your friends and mark them on the map

# Module 4

## What routes can you take to school?

### Grades K- 2

- Discuss locations where we stop at traffic signals or stop signs around our school or on our way to school

### Grades 3 - 5

- Trace the route you would walk from your house to school or other neighborhood landmarks
- Trace a route that a car would take to travel from your house to school or other neighborhood landmarks
- Compare and contrast the route a car would take from your house to school with the route you would take if you were walking to school
- Count how many times the driver has to stop at stop signs
- Count how many intersections you cross
- Count how many traffic lights there are
- Count how many one-way streets you go down
- Count how many two-way streets you go down
- Determine the number of blocks from your house to school and or other neighborhood landmarks by foot, by car and bus

## Grades 3 - 5, continued

- Use the scale to compute the distance from one location to another (e.g. house to school, library to movie theater, etc.)
- Use the scale to help you estimate the perimeter of your school. Explain how you arrived at your answer
- Conduct a survey of your classmates
  - Record the number of blocks from their houses to school
  - Graph the results
  - Write a word problem that can be answered by using the graph
- Use the letters in your street name to make as many words as you can
- Write the route from a given landmark to the school (e.g. firehouse to school). Include the traffic safety tools you must follow throughout your route

## Follow-Up Activities:

### Grades K - 5

- Plan a walk around the inner perimeter of the block around your school. Predict what elements of the legend you will see on your walk (please obtain permission slips). Do the walk and check your predictions
  - Discuss the "walkability" of the streets around the school
  
- Discuss the individual students' routes to school (either by foot or school bus)
  - Is there heavy traffic on the streets they cross?
  - Do they cross wide streets to get to school or to the bus stop?
  - Do they have enough time to cross?
  - How can they get the most time to cross the street? (wait for a new walk signal)
  - Are there any locations on their route that they consider "scary" (big dogs, fast cars, busy side walks, older children, etc.). What can they do to feel safe?
  - Discuss what makes one route to school safer than another? (crossing guard, quiet streets, one way traffic, pedestrian signals)
  - Discuss how families can choose safer routes to school

# Module 5

## Culminating Activities/Websites

### Grades K - 5

- Invite your local school crossing guard and/or bus driver to address the students either in their class room or at an assembly program
- Write a thank you note to the school crossing guard and/or bus driver
- Add to your KWL Chart - "What have I learned?"
- Create a "big book" on traffic safety
- Culminating journal activity and celebration

## Helpful Websites

[www.nyc.gov/dot](http://www.nyc.gov/dot) (Click on "safety programs")

[www.safeny.com](http://www.safeny.com)

[www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org)

[www.crwflags.com/page0346.html](http://www.crwflags.com/page0346.html)

[www.srsc.org.uk/education/preschool/ctc.asp](http://www.srsc.org.uk/education/preschool/ctc.asp)

[www.asirt.org/kid.htm](http://www.asirt.org/kid.htm)

[www.nhtsa.dot.gov/kids/](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/kids/)

[www.bike.cornell.edu/EDU.htm](http://www.bike.cornell.edu/EDU.htm)

[www.nyc.gov/html/dot/htm/safe\\_form.html](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/htm/safe_form.html)

[www.cpsc.gov/kids/kids.html](http://www.cpsc.gov/kids/kids.html)

[www.nsc.org/library/facts/schlbus.htm](http://www.nsc.org/library/facts/schlbus.htm)



# Traffic Safety Unit of Study

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