

SC Sustainable Schools and Communities Case Study

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Pine Street Elementary Safe Routes to School Spartanburg School District 7

Pine Street Elementary

Grade Level of School

Elementary

Community Type

Urban

Number of Students Served

762 students

Annual Cost

\$200,000 for 2-year federal SRTS grant

School Staff Contribution

Combined 40 Hours/ Week on SRTS

Funding Sources

Spartanburg District 7, General Obligation Bonds
Safe Routes to School Program (SRTS)

Partnerships

Safe Routes to School Program, SCDOT
Partners for Active Living
Safe Kids USA of Spartanburg
SC Dept. of Health & Environmental Control
Local businesses

Achievements as a Community School

Historic Preservation
Healthy Living



FRONT ENTRANCE TO HISTORIC PINE STREET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. THE SCHOOL ALSO HAS A COMPREHENSIVE SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM IN PLACE.

Compiled by Heather Stiltner, SC Dept. of Health & Environmental Control

History

Pine Street Elementary was restored and expanded during 2000-2001 instead of relocating to a new building. The purpose was to maintain the oldest school in Spartanburg (opened in 1929) as a neighborhood school. Restoration work was recognized with a South Carolina Historic Preservation Award in 2001. The project restored many original features, and new additions mimic details and materials of the original building. The additions include a two-story wing of classrooms, a new cafeteria, multi-purpose room, and an arts wing.

In 2008, following eight years of successful Walk to School Day events and minor engineering improvements, Pine Street Elementary began a comprehensive Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program. SRTS is a federally funded program, managed in South Carolina by the state Department

of Transportation (SCDOT). The school received a 2-year grant of \$200,000 to increase walking and bicycling and to improve supporting infrastructure. The school holds annual Walk/Bike to School Day events, weekly "Walking & Wheeling" Wednesdays, and walking club activities. Park-and-walk sites enable participation for families who cannot walk the entire distance to school. All students learn about pedestrian safety.

Partnerships

The SRTS program is also made possible by several other public and private partnerships, including Partners for Active Living, Safe Kids of Spartanburg, Spartanburg Area Transportation Study, SCDHEC, and local business who donate refreshments and prizes for events.

Pine Street Elementary also joined forces with SCDHEC on Breathe Better (B2), an anti-idling campaign. Parents

PROJECT PARTNERS



and bus drivers are asked to turn off their engines while waiting for afternoon dismissal. School SRTS coordinator Jane Abbott commented, "We believe that partnering 'no idling' with our reduction in traffic due to increases in students walking to or from school or the park-and-walk sites has really made a difference in the air quality of our area." The school reported zero idling in May 2009.

Target Setting / Groups Served

About 40% of students live within walking distance (<1.5 miles) of the school, although less than 10% walk or bike to school on a regular basis. Through SRTS, the school is working to increase the number of students walking and biking, and improve the safety of students already doing so.

Resources Required

While the non-infrastructure pieces are garnering the most attention, the majority of the school's federal funding was used to improve the pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure near the school. Of the \$200,000 SRTS funding, \$180,000 went to physical improvements of varying scale. The smaller projects include new bicycle racks and storage, and the addition of overhead warning flashers on the major thoroughfare near the school. The more substantial changes include the redesign of a five-point intersection (see image below) and a side-

walk connecting nearby neighborhoods to the front of the school. This new sidewalk will prevent children from walking on the vehicle driveway and will provide safe access for pedestrians. Staff, parent volunteers, and several crossing guards are also needed to supervise children walking and biking and help coordinate traffic flow and ensure everyone's safety.

How does this school meet the criteria for a community-centered school?

The school building is located in historic downtown Spartanburg and is itself part of the city's history. Many families live within walking distance of the school. The walking and biking programs promote the health of students and parents. These benefits would not be possible had the school relocated outside of downtown Spartanburg a decade ago.

Before the SRTS program, few parents con-

"Pine Street Elementary has established a model program. As more South Carolina schools are funded over the next few years, I expect that they will mimic the initiatives that have worked so well at Pine Street."

- Patti Sistrunk, SCDOT

sidered letting their child walk to school. A significant portion of Pine Street Elementary students and their families now enjoy walking and bicycling to school, a growing trend in Spartanburg. "While at a social gathering, I had an acquaintance tell me how she and her son walk to school regularly," said Laura Ringo (Partners for Active Living). "This is a signal that walking and bicycling are becoming more accepted and mainstream." The entire community benefits from reduced traffic congestion and improved air quality as more people choose to walk instead of drive. Pine Street Elementary is an award-winning school and rated as "Excellent" on their State Report Card. Students receive quality education, and the school is an asset to the community.

Measurable Results/Evaluation

Pine Street Elementary reports annually to the National Center for SRTS. One indicator of progress is the percentage of students who walk or bike to school. Using daily tallies in the classroom as students arrive at or depart from school, teachers keep track of students' modes of transportation. In 2007 prior to receiving SRTS funding, the school reported that 6.1% of students on average walked or biked to school. At the midpoint of the grant period in 2009, they reported that now an average of 9.0% of students walk or bike to school on a regular basis. Participation is even higher during special events such as annual Walk to School Day in October. Students and their parents enjoy walking and biking events. One especially enthusiastic student has logged over 400,000 steps in the school's pedometer club.



Families walking to school in Spartanburg as part of the Safe Routes to School Program.

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