



# Ready to Ride

THE IMPORTANCE OF UNIVERSAL IN-SCHOOL,  
ON-BIKE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN



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## READY TO RIDE

The League of American Bicyclists believes that life is better for everyone when more people can enjoy the benefits of bicycling. In pursuit of realizing that vision and of building a Bicycle Friendly America for everyone, we are rolling out our Ready to Ride campaign, a transformative national initiative designed to bring the joy, freedom, and health benefits of biking to every child in America.

Ready to Ride means ensuring every kid has the opportunity to learn how to bike in school, with a gold-standard curriculum and feet-on-the-pedals on-bike experience. We'll do this by advocating for the policies and resources that will enable every school to offer comprehensive on-bike education for every child. Our goal is clear: ensuring that all children, regardless of background, gain the knowledge, skills, and confidence to ride safely.

In some places, this is already happening and kids are receiving high-quality on-bike, in-school education. This is thanks in large part to the decades-long work of groups like the Safe Routes to School National Partnership. Additionally, the League itself has been a leader in cycling education since the **1970s, setting national standards and creating materials and courses to reach more people.** We have worked both at the national level with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to develop educational activities and at the state level to develop age-appropriate curriculum for Safe Routes to School programming. And we have seen the transformative power of bike education where it happens. In our Bicycle Friendly Community (BFC) program, the best-performing communities are ones that offer access to high-quality on-bike education.

To help more communities take their youth education efforts to the next level, we have launched the Ready to Ride initiative.



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## DID YOU KNOW?

In support of our educational goals, we train hundreds of League Cycling Instructors (LCIs) every year and there are over 3,000 certified LCIs across the country empowering both adults and the next generation of riders.

## IN-SCHOOL, ON-BIKE

Ready to Ride has two main aspects that ensure every child gains the confidence, joy, and skills that bike education promotes. By promoting **in-school** education, we guarantee that every child will receive cycling education during their normal school hours. While we value after-school cycling education programs through clubs, local organizations, and other entities, if programs aren't happening in school, during school hours, not all children will receive the lessons. Only when we institutionalize the teaching of cycling education will be able to reach all kids. **On-bike** education is the second critical component of Ready to Ride. Hands-on, practical learning is essential so that children truly build the knowledge and skills necessary to safely navigate the real-life scenarios of riding.

Bicycling is a pathway to empowerment and freedom. People are happier and healthier, our communities are stronger and better connected, and our environment is cleaner and greener when more people bike. For the individual, cycling can be a pathway to better physical and mental health, a transportation option, a way to socialize with others, a form of personal empowerment, and so much more.

This is why we believe in the paramount importance of ensuring children have

the necessary education, equipment, and infrastructure to ride a bike safely, particularly children of color and those in under-resourced communities. The disparities in access to safe cycling education and environments are stark and troubling, and addressing these inequities is at the heart of Ready to Ride.

This first white paper provides an overview of the challenges we aim to address and our strategy to accomplish our goal of ensuring all children receive high-quality in-school on-bike education.



## National Leaders in Youth Bicycle Education

Across the United States, there are a multitude of organizations playing pivotal roles in expanding access to cycling education for youth. These groups have developed and implemented programs that bring cycling into schools and communities, aiming to empower young people through the physical, emotional, and cognitive benefits of biking.

### **Safe Routes Partnership**

Thanks to the leadership of Congressman James Oberstar in the late 1990s, the first Safe Routes to School program was piloted in Marin County, California, during the 2000-2001 school year, leading to the creation of the Safe Routes to School Program (2005-2012) at the federal level. Today the Safe Routes Partnership carries that legacy forward by operating the Safe Routes to School initiative, which aims to make it safe and easy for students to walk and bike to school. In addition to promoting infrastructure improvements around schools, the Safe Routes Partnership offers educational programs that encourage safe biking and walking skills and practices. Safe Routes educational efforts include bike safety lessons, bike rodeos, and workshops for parents and school staff, helping to build a strong foundation of cycling safety in communities across the country. With an abundance of gratitude, the League thanks the network of Safe Routes coordinators, educators, and program staff for their leadership and dedication that inspires so much of the success seen to date in youth cycling education. Thanks to Congressman Oberstar, the Safe Routes Partnership, and the National Center for Safe Routes to School, there is more funding, more dedicated staff, and more school programming working to provide students with safe environments to and from school and the skills and knowledge to bike and walk safely.

### **All Kids Bike (Strider Education Foundation)**

The All Kids Bike program, launched by the Strider Education Foundation, focuses on teaching elementary school students the basics of riding a bike. Their program, designed specifically for kindergarteners, aims to ensure every child in America learns to ride a bike before finishing elementary school. By providing schools with everything they need—bikes, helmets, teacher training, and curriculum—All Kids Bike makes cycling accessible for young students and helps schools integrate biking into their physical education classes. With over 1,600 schools participating nationwide, the program is working to create a culture of early biking proficiency, setting the foundation for future generations of confident and active riders.

### **Outride**

Outride is a national leader in promoting the mental, emotional, and cognitive benefits of cycling through its Riding for Focus program. Focused on middle schools, Riding for Focus integrates cycling into physical education classes, providing students with bikes, helmets, and a curriculum that supports their well-being and academic performance. With a presence in over 350 schools across the United States and Canada, Outride reaches more than 50,000 students annually. In 2023, the organization awarded over \$350,000 in community grants to further promote cycling access. Outride's research-based approach not only gets kids on bikes but also helps improve their focus, emotional regulation, and social connections.

### **Discover Traffic Gardens**



Discover Traffic Gardens, led by Fionnuala Quinn, focuses on creating safe and interactive environments where children can learn about road safety and traffic rules through play. Traffic gardens are miniature, scaled-down street networks where kids can practice biking and walking in a controlled setting. These spaces are designed to mimic real-life traffic conditions, providing children with a hands-on opportunity to understand how roads work and how to navigate them safely. Quinn's work has expanded traffic gardens in communities and schools, offering a creative approach to road safety education that complements traditional classroom-based lessons. For example, the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) has integrated traffic gardens into their facilities plan, so that any elementary school being updated will have a traffic garden added. Discover Traffic Gardens is empowering the next generation of safe cyclists and pedestrians by fostering practical, experiential learning.

### **Trips For Kids**

Trips For Kids is a national network of organizations committed to the universal power of the bike to improve well-being, create healthy communities, and a healthy planet. Since 1988, Trips for Kids has recognized the importance of ensuring all children have the opportunity and access to bikes, trails, and cycling education regardless of background. Trips for Kids has served more than 230,000 children and has 300+ volunteers in communities across the country.

### **Bike Bus World**

Bike buses have been around for the last 15 or so years, but Sam Balto, an elementary school physical education teacher in Portland, Oregon, popularized them as a fun and social way to get more kids biking to school. A Bike Bus is essentially a group of students who ride to school together along a pre-planned route, picking up more kids along the way—just like a regular bus, but on bikes. Balto's bike buses drew national attention for their ability to get kids excited about biking while also addressing issues like traffic safety and active transportation. In addition to teaching, Sam founded Bike Bus World to help other communities launch their own bike buses. The Bike Bus model encourages physical activity, builds community, and provides a safe way for students to travel to school, all while reducing car dependency and contributing to healthier school environments.

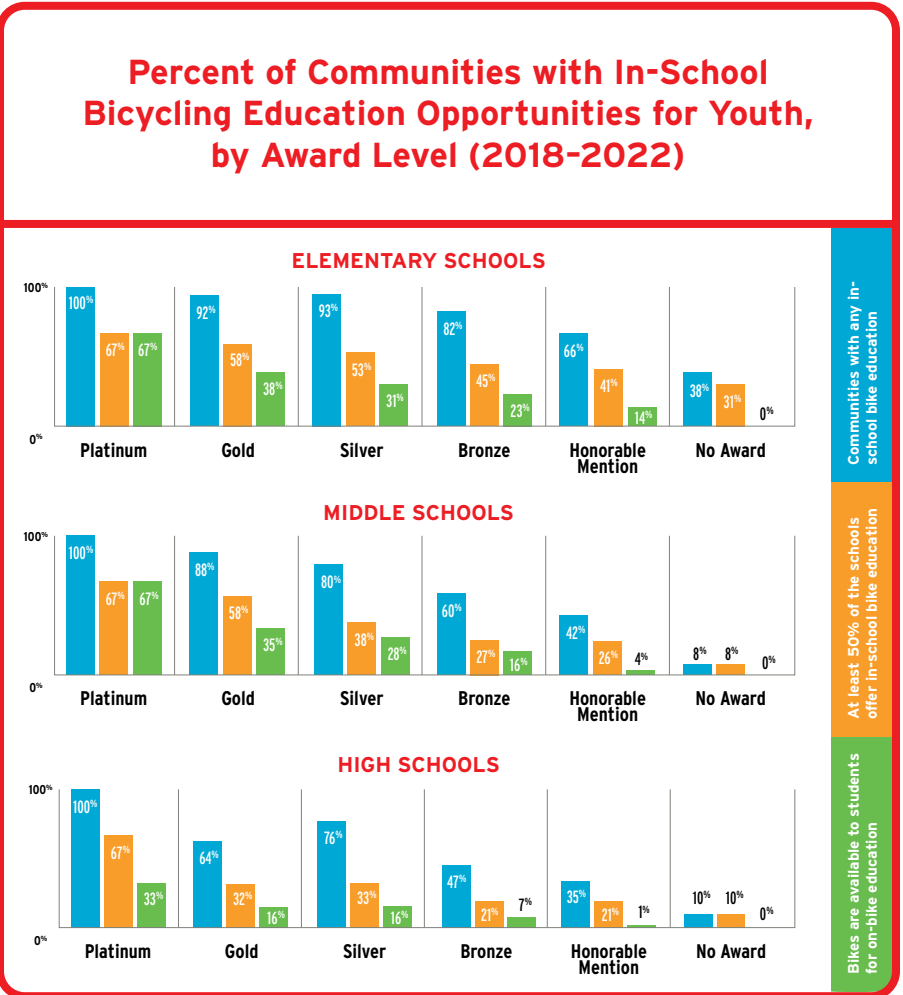


# THE CURRENT STATE OF IN-SCHOOL, ON-BIKE EDUCATION

Historically, children have represented a disproportionately high percentage of all bicycling trips made in the United States. But recent data shows that youth cycling is decreasing. Further, [research](#) suggests that the rate of children biking or walking to school has declined dramatically since the 1960s, from nearly half of all students to somewhere around 14 percent. The reasons for this decline are numerous and complex and must be addressed through varied means. One way we can get more kids pedaling is by increasing access to bicycling education for children.

At the national level, and in most states, there is little policy that directly promotes in-school on-bike education. Where it does exist, in-school bicycling education is often driven by one motivated individual or dependent upon herculean grassroots and grant funding efforts. Without the foundational support of a specific policy and the resources to implement that policy, a promising program can end as soon as a person moves, or a grant doesn't come through. In 2024, the League of American Bicyclists supported the introduction of the [Biking Instruction, Knowledge, and Education \(BIKE\) Act](#), by Representative Seth Magaziner (D-R.I.) which would ensure that in-school, on-bike education is eligible for federal Highway Safety Grants, administered by the state Governor Highway Safety Offices. The bill would also require the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to update its bicycle education curriculum, which is currently designed for middle to high school-age students, and to disseminate that curriculum to Governor Highway Safety Offices. Our hope is that by updating the curriculum, and bringing it to the attention of Governors' Highway Safety Offices, it will spur interest in funding bicycling education.

While there is a dearth of national data on the provision of in-school, on-bike education, we know from our Bicycle Friendly Communities (BFC) that **85** percent of BFCs earning bronze or higher awards from 2018 to 2022 offered some form of school-based cycling education in at least one school within the community. What that education looks like can vary from



comprehensive on-bike education to watching a video on correct helmet use. The disparities in local school-based cycling programs, even in states and school districts where in-school on-bike education is more common, highlight the need for states to adopt policies that ensure all students have access to on-bike education as part of their regular educational offerings.

We are encouraged by states like Washington and Rhode Island who are building upon years of work at the local level to turn on-bike education into a standard part of statewide education. Through policy and advocacy, Ready to Ride will support state and local efforts to expand these programs nationally.



## EXPANDING BICYCLING EDUCATION NATIONALLY AND EQUITABLY

As we seek to ensure all youth receive an on-bike education in school, we recognize that the issue of inequitable educational opportunities for students of color and those in schools with fewer resources is long-standing. American schools have significant disparities in funding and resources based on socioeconomic status and race. Schools in affluent, predominantly white communities often have better facilities and more extracurricular programs, while many schools in communities with fewer resources, often located in majority BIPOC communities, struggle to provide basic educational services and opportunities. [The Education Trust](#) found that districts serving mostly BIPOC students receive up to \$2,700 less in state and local funding per student, and [ED Build reported](#) that majority-white districts receive \$23 billion more overall.

This systemic inequality extends to cycling education, where students in under-resourced schools face significant barriers to accessing safe and comprehensive school-based on-bike programs. These disparities prevent many students from experiencing the benefits of cycling, such as improved health, environmental awareness, and personal empowerment. Addressing these inequities is crucial for ensuring that all students have the opportunity to engage in safe, equitable cycling education.

Equity is the heart of our initiative to ensure every child receives in-school, on-bike education. We are dedicated to promoting that all programs should be accessible to students of all abilities and backgrounds, focusing on equity and inclusion. By promoting inclusive programming, we can help ensure that all students have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from in-school, on-bike cycling education. The focus on equity and inclusion is essential for addressing the systemic barriers to cycling education and promoting a more inclusive and diverse cycling community.

### The Importance of Infrastructure

Safety concerns also play a crucial role in limiting access to cycling education. Parents and educators often worry about the safety of cycling. Multiple studies have shown that Safe Routes to School infrastructure improvements have led to a decrease in student cycling injuries and an increase in ridership ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)). One study from 2016 found that bike and pedestrian infrastructure improvements were associated with walking or biking rates increasing by 3.3 percentage points per year, a relative change of 18 percent over five years ([4](#)). This fear is compounded when there is a lack of safe infrastructure such as bike lanes and traffic-calming measures. Without safe routes to ride, the risks associated with cycling in high-volume, higher-speed traffic environments discourage both parents and educators from promoting cycling as a viable activity for children. The way we design our communities matters. To maximize the safety of youth cyclists and to improve the number of students biking to school, infrastructure and community design must prioritize the safety of the most vulnerable road users.

# READY TO RIDE: A PATHWAY TO SAFER, MORE CONFIDENT CYCLISTS

To bring bike joy back into childhood, the League of American Bicyclists is committed to a multi-faceted approach to implementing and sustaining school-based cycling education programs nationwide. We will be leading at the federal level to ensure funding and resources are available and supporting state and local efforts to utilize those resources. We will be highlighting the state and local groups who are leading implementers of in-school, on-bike education and fostering collaboration among peers. And we'll be creating curriculum and training modules for teachers to take to their classrooms.

Advocacy is a cornerstone of our strategy. We are dedicated to advocating for legislation and policies at all levels that support cycling education as part of in-school instruction.

At the federal level, NHTSA Section 402 and Section 405 grant programs are designed to support state efforts in promoting transportation safety, including public education on traffic laws. However, current federal regulations are unclear about the eligibility of Section 405 grant funds for school-based cycling education. The BIKE Act seeks to clarify this by making bicycling education programs eligible for NHTSA 405 grant funding and requiring NHTSA to update its bicycle education curriculum to encourage states to use these funds for in-school on-bike education programs. The BIKE Act aims to instill road safety values in young people by boosting their confidence and understanding of the importance of protecting vulnerable road users.

In addition to our policy and advocacy work, we will support the establishment and expansion of school-based cycling education efforts by creating new educational materials and training for educators.

The League will configure our current Youth Skills Instructor's Manual and our Youth Learn to Ride Manual into ten lessons aimed to be used as a health or physical education module. Each lesson will have clear learning objectives, general scripts to deliver, and identify the standards which they address. The Manual will provide a

clear, concise, easy-to-follow, age appropriate curriculum that teaches basic bike education, key safety tips, and traffic awareness in short lessons to second through fifth graders.

For elementary school teachers, the League will develop an online bike safety training program in English and Spanish specifically designed to develop the bike safety knowledge of teachers of elementary aged children. The League will build the training on our existing online learning platform, which is accessible, free, capable of providing feedback to the learner and a certificate of completion. Resources to find a local cycling instructor will also be available to encourage teachers to gain hands-on skills of teaching on-bike education in class.

Teachers who successfully complete the training will be sent a free Teacher's Cycling Education Guidance manual. Teachers who indicate they are part of a Title 1 school will be sent a Teacher's Manual and fun bike stickers, progress check cards, Quick Guides and bookmarks to distribute to up to 50 students. Resources will be sent directly to the school address provided by the teacher.





## CONCLUSION

Ready to Ride is a pivotal step towards creating a future where every student can safely and confidently experience the joys of biking. The success of so many regional programs should inspire us all that this goal is achievable. Now, we aim to build a national movement that prioritizes in-school, on-bike cycling education for all. Through our Ready to Ride campaign, we hope to create a more inclusive and equitable future for cycling education, where every student has the skills and confidence to ride safely.

Empowering youth with a bicycling education has the potential to transform the lives of and for the next generation. We believe in the power of learning to bike to encourage healthier lifestyles, establish lifelong climate-friendly transportation habits, and build understanding across the various modes of transportation we use at different times in our lives - resulting in safer roadways for everyone.

We know the task is big. We know the task is worth it. And we know that now is the time to get everyone Ready to Ride.

## YOUR SUPPORT IS CRUCIAL

Together, we can ensure that every child is ready to ride, promoting healthier, safer, and more active communities. By supporting the Ready to Ride campaign, you are investing in the future of our children and helping to create a more equitable and inclusive society. For more information and support, please visit the [Ready to Ride webpage](#).