MASSACHUSETTS
Safe Routes to School
Mass.gov/MassDOT/SafeRoutes

Social Studies Lesson Plan

History of Safe Routes to School

Classroom:	Teachers:	Subject: Social Studies	Dates:
Grade: 6	Unit:		
State Standard(s):	Demonstrate civic knowledge, skills, and disposition. Argue and explain conclusions using valid evidence and reasoning. Determine next steps and take informed action.		
Objective:	Students will gain understanding of civic advocacy, student transportation modality, as well as the political, economic, and social impact of transportation on society.		
Key Vocabulary:	Safe Routes to School the Netherlands Denmark government grassroots resources location citizen	place laws society norms region advocate mode global	transportation planning human environmental interactions socio-economic equity physical geography movement social, cultural, & natural conditions regional climate public safety
Lesson Outline: Students are asked 1) to discuss what it means to be an advocate, 2) to describe the challenges involved in school transportation, and 3) to compare videos of school transportation in Europe and the US.			Student groupings:
Accommodations and Modifications:	Use of a video requires electronics (tablet, computer, and projector).		

Teacher Classroom Introduction

Key Concepts

- All **societies** operate under a system of enforceable rules or **laws** designed to ensure that all **citizens** are free from harm or danger.
- **Public safety** is the act of keeping one's community safe.
- Each society has its own set of **norms** or cultural standards of how this is accomplished. Most societies share the same or similar priorities for public safety.
- Almost all societies demonstrate specific safety measures for their youngest.
- For students, a **global** common denominator for safety centers on **movement**, specifically student arrival and dismissal from school.

Verbal Introduction *(2-3 minutes, feel free to define and explore vocabulary words)*

"How did the concept of safe student transportation come about? Today we will discuss the history of the Safe Routes to School program and how communities, such as ours, can continuously work toward addressing the changing needs of student transportation."

"Student movement, or **transportation**, can utilize many different **modes**. The available modes are often determined by a community's **location**, regional climate and physical geography, as well as social, cultural, economic, and natural conditions. The task of transportation safety is typically assigned to local governments by its citizens and it is especially important for student citizens to make their voices heard on transportation issues. Often times, students' parents need to act as students' advocates for transportation safety."

Video Introduction *(show approximately 90 seconds of each video)*

School arrival in the US: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KLpCMdVcqTI
School dismissal in the Netherlands: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hX8krFiGaFo

Questions to consider while reading:

"Think about how challenging the task of getting to and from school might be for a student who does not have a robust transportation environment"

- What if there are no sidewalks?
- What if there are no school or municipal buses?
- What if there is no access to a bike or a car?
- What if the school is located on the opposite side of town?
- What if there are no adults to help make the journey every day?

History of Safe Routes to School

Anyone who has been to Europe can tell you that most cities and towns have a very different look and feel compared to those in the United States. Standard European road design has been primarily based on narrow, winding walking paths that were largely built before the invention of the automobile. Streets had to be built around objects like buildings, trees, and stone walls. Streets built in this way are often more suitable for walking and biking and less suitable for driving because they were built before the invention of the car. Even in the U.S., communities in older regions such as New England have these same characteristics when compared to the grid-designed roadways in newer cities such as Los Angeles or Chicago.

After the invention of the automobile, European cities and towns often struggled to accommodate this new technology, and car crashes were very frequent. European citizens were at the forefront of advocating for streets that were safe for walking, biking, and motor vehicles. In the passage below, we will examine some of the first public safety transportation campaigns undertaken in the Netherlands and Denmark and their lasting impact on students. Both examples demonstrate how advocates can cause a *political* change that eventually becomes a larger *cultural* change.

The Netherlands translates to "lower countries" since only 50% of its land is above sea level. Because of this topography, many of its cities have an expansive network of canals and bridges that have been developed over many centuries. As a result, boating and bicycling have historically been the primary modes of Dutch transportation. Since the Netherlands has a very dense population, the advent of the automobile created new safety problems in Dutch cities due to increased competition for limited space on small city streets.

Children advocating for safe streets in the Netherlands

In the 1970s, when cars were becoming increasingly popular across the world, it was Dutch families who advocated for safer streets by calling attention to the high number of children injured or even killed by motor vehicles in their cities. These arguments for building safer community streets were hard for politicians to ignore. Through the education of planners, engineers, elected officials, school administration, parents, students, and citizens, a cultural shift away from reliance on cars and back towards walking and biking was born. As a result, local walking and biking infrastructure was improved. Today, the Netherlands enjoys some of the safest streets in Europe. Government officials now urge

A typical narrow street in Odense

Dutch citizens to ride their bicycles for reasons such as: improved safety, cleaner air, and for promoting a greener environment.

At the same time in Denmark, an idea known as Safe Routes to School (SRTS) began to take shape. SRTS is best defined by the name itself: safely walking and bicycling to and from school. The Danish city of Odense was the first to implement this innovative concept. Odense is Denmark's third largest city, and was built at a walking scale with green areas and a river-like canal that winds through the city. As one of Denmark's oldest cities with a history that dates back more than 1,000 years, Odense also had a hard time accommodating automobiles. During the 1970s, Odense experienced the highest rate of traffic fatalities among children in Western Europe. Successful SRTS initiatives which benefitted the entire community included lowered speed limits, separating bike paths from car and pedestrian traffic, improving mass transit, and other infrastructure improvements. Today, thanks to the grassroots SRTS initiatives, approximately 4 out of 5 Odense schoolchildren walk, bike, or scooter safely to school.

A Canal in Odense, Denmark

The SRTS concept spread internationally, with programs developing in other parts of Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States. In 1997, the Bronx, a borough of New York City, started the first SRTS program in the United States and the state of Florida implemented a pilot program. In 2000, Congress funded two SRTS pilot projects: in Arlington, Massachusetts and Marin County, California. Within a year of the launch of the pilot projects, many other grassroots SRTS efforts began throughout the United States. These unique successes generated interest in a federally funded national program. In 2003, advocates convened meetings with experts in transportation to talk about SRTS issues and form a national program.

Momentum for a national SRTS program in the United States continued to build within individual states and eventually Congress created the National Safe Routes to School Program in 2005. This ultimately resulted in nearly $1 billion in federal funding. In 2018, Massachusetts alone has over 800 registered SRTS school programs.

Discussion and Review

How do YOU arrive and depart from school?

Each school, liked the cities mentioned in the passage, has its own unique set of geographical challenges.

- Some schools in a town are grouped together and some are located in neighborhoods.
- Some schools are located on very busy roads or in mixed-use city buildings, while others are setback far from the main street.
- Some have limited school bus service and others are easily accessible by walking or biking.
- Some are too dangerous to access by bike.
- Some have no parking, even for school buses and teachers' vehicles.

Ideally, these types of physical challenges inspire a conscious effort to make infrastructure changes that increase safety by separating pedestrian and bike traffic from cars and buses thereby improving walkability and bikability (sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting, line-of-sight, bike racks).

Citizens fought to reverse the lack of safe pedestrian and biking space which had been taken over by car use. This cultural shift was brought about through the grassroots advocacy of parents and citizens who rallied their government to improve the state of their community.

What if your community has no public transportation and you have no car:

- How would you get to school? How would your parents get to work? How would you get to your friends' house? To visit your relatives?
- Do some communities have better, more efficient mass transit options than others? Is this equitable?
- How can communities such as ours continuously work toward meeting the changing needs of our students' transportation needs?
- What responsibility does the government have to provide transportation to the community?

Sources: http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/StandardsReview/hss.html
http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/

Questions and Analysis

Multiple Choice (choose all correct answers):

1. Who is responsible for the implementation of Safe Routes to School in the United States?

   a. Odense, Denmark
   b. Parent Advocates
   c. Congress
   d. Hans Christian Andersen

2. From the context of the passage, what is the best definition of "Pilot"?

   a. A person who bikes to school
   b. A first attempt at a program
   c. A small light on a stove
   d. A Congressperson

3. From the context of this passage, what is the best definition of "grassroots"?

   a. Containing lots of green spaces
   b. Funded by the federal government
   c. Primarily driven by members of the community
   d. Organically farmed

4. Who was responsible for safer streets being implemented in Amsterdam?

   a. Drivers
   b. Children
   c. Advocates
   d. Government Officials

5. Which of the following are safe transportation options for students?

   a. Mass transit - school, town or town bus or carpooling
   b. Ferry
   c. Bicycle or scooter
   d. Walking

6. What is transportation infrastructure?

   a. Sidewalks, crosswalks, and accessible ramps
   b. Bike lanes, road sharrows, and bike racks
   c. People mover
   d. Elevators

Please provide a short answer to each of the following questions:

1. What does it mean to be an "advocate"? What sort of things do advocates do and why do they need to do them?

2. What are some physical geography attributes of a region or location that would make it difficult to ensure safe student transportation? How does a community avoid these challenges in having students arrive and depart school?

Video Discussion Activity

The two videos you watched show student arrival in the United States and student dismissal in The Netherlands. Compare and contrast these two situations. How did these two situations arise? What are some of the challenges each school faces? How can these challenges be addressed?

Answer Key

(Many questions have multiple correct answers, which are bold; the purpose of these questions is discussion)

1. Who is responsible for Safe Routes to School being implemented in the United States?

   a. Odense, Denmark
   b. Parent Advocates
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5. Which of the following are safe transportation options for students?

   e. Mass transit - bus or train
   f. Ferry
   g. Bicycle or scooter
   a. **Walking**

6. What is transportation infrastructure?

   a. Sidewalks, crosswalks, and accessible ramps
   b. Bike lanes, sharrows, and bike racks
   c. **People mover**
   d. **Elevators**

Please provide a short answer to each of the following questions:

1. What does it mean to be an "advocate"? What sort of things do advocates do and why do they need to do them?

Grading can be scaled based on student responses.

2. What are some physical geography attributes of a region or location that would make it difficult to ensure safe student transportation? How does a community avoid these challenges in having students arrive and depart school?

Grading can be scaled based on student responses.

Video Discussion Activity

Examine the two videos below. One shows student arrival in the United States, and one shows student dismissal in the Netherlands. Compare and contrast these two situations. How did these two situations arise? What are some of the challenges each school faces? How can these challenges be addressed?

School arrival in the US: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KLpCMdVcqTI
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Vocabulary Definitions

Advocate	A person who argues for, recommends, or supports a cause or policy.
Citizen	A person who lives in a city or town.
Denmark	A Scandinavian country comprising the Jutland Peninsula and numerous islands. Its capital city is Copenhagen.
Global	Worldwide; of, relating to, or applying to the whole of something.
Government	The making of policy as distinguished from the administration of policy decisions; the agency through which a political unit exercises authority.
Grassroots	Basic; fundamental; being, originating, or operating in or at the grass roots.
Human environmental interactions	Interactions between the human social system and (the "rest" of) the ecosystem.
Laws	The principles and regulations established in a community by some authority and applicable to its people, whether in the form of legislation or of custom and policies recognized and enforced by judicial decision.
Location	A place fit for or having some particular use.
Mode	A particular form or variety of something, mode of transportation.
Movement	A program or series of acts working toward a desired end.
Norms	A common or typical practice or custom.
Physical geography	Geography that deals with the exterior physical features and changes of the earth.
Place	Physical environment or physical surroundings.
Public safety	Refers to the welfare and protection of the general public; prevention and protection of the public from dangers such as crime or disasters
Region	A broad geographic area.
Regional climate	Patterns of weather that affect a significant geographical area, much greater than that influenced by local climatic effects such as sea breezes, but much smaller than the global climate of the whole Earth.
Safe Routes to School	A program aimed to encourage safe walking and biking to school.
Society	A community, nation, or broad grouping of people having common traditions, institutions, and collective activities and interests.
Socio-economic policy	Principals or strategies that involve both social and economic variables.
Transportation planning	Is the process of defining future policies, goals, investments, and designs to prepare for future needs to move people and goods to destinations.