

Workshop: Education Campaigns

We2/E2: How Kids discover the World by Bike – Projects at German Schools

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Open spaces for kids are disappearing more and more from our cities. At the same time it is obvious that kids get less and less exercise. Biking can be a very effective way to face the increasing lack of exercise of the young generation.

We would like to present our experiences of mobility-education in practice of school projects from the network of “roadsafe cities in the transport association Rhein-Sieg (VRS)” and the German Cycling Federation (ADFC) in the city of Bremen.

1. Network of “roadsafe cities in the transport association Rhein-Sieg (VRS)”

The network of “roadsafe cities in the transport association Rhein-Sieg” is a federation of cities and other institutions of road safety. They design the local road safety in cooperation with the aims to decrease of the number of accidents combined with promotion of independent mobility. Target groups are especially children, teenagers and seniors.

Central feature of the project is to net all local persons who are responsible for road safety in the city (administration, police, non-profit organizations, etc.). At local level projects to promote safe and independent mobility have to be developed and realized.

The aims of the project are:

- to support as many cities as possible to decrease the number of accidents combined with promotion of independent mobility
- to centralize know-how and make it accessible to all members of the network
- to exchange experiences between members

On June 9, 2005 the network of “roadsafe cities in the Rhine-Sieg transport association” was founded with 22 cities. In June 2007 the network has 34 network-members (30 cities and four districts).

The conditions for members are

- to net all local persons responsible for road safety in the city (administration, police, non-profit organizations, etc.)
- to organize projects to decrease the number of accidents combined with promotion of independent mobility
- to join in the network-wide exchange of experiences

An office was installed in July 2004 in order to initiate and promote the network. The office is based in Cologne, at the transport association Rhein-Sieg (VRS) and financed by the transport association Rhein-Sieg, the ministry of transport of North Rhine-Westphalia, an insurance (RGUVV) and the EOB-foundation. Its functions are to advise network members on how to organize networks at local level, to organize exchange of information between all network members and to create project ideas.

Members of the local network (for bicycle projects at schools):

- city administration
- police
- non-profit-organization, e.g. ADFC
- school
- bicycle dealer

Two examples for bicycle projects at schools in participating network communities:

1. **Monte & Zack:**

Monte & Zack is a puppet play to promote physical activity. The main aim is to make children realize that physical activity is great fun- and cycling in particular.

The play was initiated by the local network of road safety of Brühl (administration, police and non-profit organization) supported by a German health insurance company - AOK and developed by a theatre group from Brühl (Drei-T-Theater) in 2006. The development of the play was based on the fact that physically active children are more alert in traffic.

The play supports elementary schools as part of cyclist training. Teachers get additional material to discuss the issue in class and further students' interest.

2. **Bicyclepooling**

Bicyclepooling is comparable to the walking bus. It is a kind of car pool of students with bicycles. Students of a district get together in small groups (4-6 persons) at a meeting point and cycle to school together in the morning and back home in the afternoon. The project runs for the first two weeks after school starts. The target group are the freshmen at secondary school. The groups are accompanied by parents or older students.

During the first day it is possible to organize the project in co-operation with the police. Also, local bicycle dealers can be integrated to offer small repairs on the first day as an additional incentive for students to participate.

The change from elementary school to high school creates problems for the freshmen at high school: a new way to school (often located at a greater distance), no information about the area around the new school, a lack of cycling practice.

Cycling in a group accompanied by an adult is an excellent way to familiarize the students with the most suitable bike routes. At the same time they can be sensitized for the risks involved.

Actors of the project are the city administration, the police, the school and the parents.

The aims of the project are:

- to train the new way to school
- to improve cyclist training
- to promote physical activity
- to make students responsive for risks in traffic
- to promote cycling at an early stage

2. School Travel Map – Bicycle Project in Bremen

The German Cycling Federation (ADFC) is a non-profit organization which promotes cycling in Bremen since more than 25 years. Besides the extensive information and tourism service the ADFC is very engaged in traffic politics and since a couple of years also in mobility education. Bremen is a city with about 600 000 inhabitants in the north of Germany. There are good conditions for cycling but there is still a lot to be improved.

I would like to present the project “school travel map”, which combines traffic politics and mobility education in schools. We mainly work together with 4th to 6th grade children.

The aims of the project are:

- to decrease the number of accidents on the way to school
- to promote cycling and walking as attractive and independent ways of mobility
- to reduce dangerous situations
- to work together with the local administration, the police and the school
- to explore the routes to school together with kids, parents and teachers
- to visualize attractive and safe routes to schools

The first project was realized in 2003, now it is expanding to more and more districts of the city. The development of school travel maps for all districts of Bremen depends on the financial background. The actual project is supported by the local administration, the senate for constructions, environment and transport of Bremen and sponsored by a bank (Sparkasse Bremen) and an insurance company (Unfallkasse Bremen).

3. The structure of the project:

- examination of the school surroundings by an ADFC-expert (city-planner)
- meeting with teachers, parents and the police to get information about the routes to school – and the problems they see
- children explore their routes to school with experiential teaching methods
- evaluation and interpretation of all collected information
- final workshop with all participants to discuss the results
- production of the final map with professional design
- letter of recommendation to the representatives in politics and administration

It seems very important to really get a feeling how the children see their routes to school, how they realize the traffic situation, which places they like and when they feel safe or unsafe. The ADFC-educators explore the school surroundings in many different routes with the children, some of the activities are:

- to measure the size of roads, cycle lanes and footpaths
- to observe people’s behaviour on the road
- to time the red and green phases of traffic lights
- to interview adults about their behaviour in traffic
- to develop ideas for the improvement of special routes and areas

- to make a photo story
- classroom discussions

All results of these activities are evaluated by an ADFC-traffic-expert. Finally we can say that children and teachers spend very much time in school, it is something very special for them to get out of the school area. Our impression is that many kids do not know the school surroundings very well, they do not walk and cycle independently in the area very often. And they pay attention for many interesting things along the way - less for the traffic.

Some results of the examinations and observations are:

- undersized areas to stay at traffic lights for pedestrians and cyclist
- short green phases at traffic lights (close to school)
- kids have difficulties to overview and cross big roads
- cars are too fast even in speed limit areas (30 km/h)
- there is often too much traffic in front of schools because many kids are brought to school by car
- missing signs at school entrances
- kids cannot overview the traffic on roads because of the parking cars
- rough and bumpy cycle lanes
- improper bicycle racks at schools

At the end of the project a list of dangerous points in school surroundings is sent to the representatives in politics and administration with recommendation for improvement.

Furthermore all pupils get the final school travel map, it includes attractive and safe places and routes to school and offers recommendations for behaviour in dangerous situations.



4. Conclusion

Mobility education has to include more than bicycle training in schoolyards. To be able to cycle safely and independently in traffic, kids have to learn cycling in real situations. The shown projects from the network of “roadsafe cities in the transport association Rhein-Sieg (VRS)” and the German Cycling Federation (ADFC) can give you some ideas for realization.

It is obvious that the transport planning is still based on the needs of the cars and car drivers. If we want children to cycle on their routes to school, the transport planning has to include their needs.

To make cycling safer and more attractive for children and parents, experts with different professional background (education, city-planning, politics, administration, health, security) have to work together. We need local networks like “roadsafe cities in the transport association Rhein-Sieg” to decrease the number of accidents and promote the independent mobility of children.