



SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

# SCHOOL ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL GUIDE



THE CITY OF  
**COLUMBUS**  
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**COLUMBUS**  
PUBLIC HEALTH

*Developed by the Safe Routes to School program at Columbus Public Health.  
Learn more at [www.columbus.gov/SafeRoutesToSchool](http://www.columbus.gov/SafeRoutesToSchool).*

## SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

# SCHOOL ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL GUIDE

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Managing school arrival and dismissal can be chaotic and stressful for staff, students and families. This toolkit offers help to create and implement a smooth and functional daily procedure for all. The main focus of this toolkit is to guide schools to improving student safety. By prioritizing the most vulnerable travelers, students on foot—whether they walked all the way from home to school, or walked from the seat of a bike, bus or car—we hope to make the environment surrounding the school safer for everybody.

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## KEY PRINCIPLES FOR A SUCCESSFUL PROCEDURE

1. **When possible, always separate modes of travel.** Buses, cars, people walking and young bike riders need well-defined, separated approaches to the school building. For instance, pedestrian access should not require walking through a parking lot. Drop-off and pick-up by car should be situated toward a different school entrance than the school bus zone.
2. **Align inside and outside circulation.** Decisions about inside-school circulation (how students get to breakfast, where students are dismissed, which doors remain unlocked, etc.) ought to be considered together with outside circulation choices (flow of all modes of travel near the school).
3. **Prioritize pedestrians.** Every student is a pedestrian at some point during arrival and dismissal. Planning for the safety of students on foot first will facilitate an improved plan for all. Use education and encouragement activities to help families get to know the procedures, and to support them with consistent safe behaviors.
4. **Parents/family members can unintentionally threaten student safety.** Unsafe driver behaviors, like making U-turns and backing up, are even more dangerous during busy arrival and departure times. These behaviors are most frequently the cause of student injury in school zones. While families are hurrying around for their own child(ren), they may threaten the safety of other students. Communicate the arrival and dismissal process in ways that make it easy for parents to do the right thing. Remind them quarterly of the procedure and incentivize safe behaviors among students and families.
5. **Arrival and departure procedures require monitoring.** Make this an annual task for your school's safety committee, or review procedures when working on the school improvement plan. Involve families and community partners in the process, such as civic associations or local faith leaders. Also consider including District leadership or Safety & Security staff.

## STEP 1: EVALUATE CURRENT ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL PROCESS

You probably have a sense of the opportunities for improvement in the arrival and dismissal processes at your school. But involving at least one parent, one student and community partners in an evaluation can help amplify the success of safety improvements. Evaluate arrival and dismissal together to create a single plan that encourages consistent safe behavior.

- **Conduct your evaluation on a mid-week day** (Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday).
- **Use your school's Safe Routes to School Walking & Bicycling Map**, or a Google map of the area around the school, to evaluate where you believe changes are needed.
  - Email [srts@columbus.gov](mailto:srts@columbus.gov) if you don't already have a copy of your school's map.
- **Count the behaviors that concern you** to help to identify and *measure* the severity of an existing problem and prioritize potential solutions. Use the [lists of behaviors](#) provided to guide your evaluation (page 6).
- **Complete a checklist of School Zone infrastructure** to make note of any lights, signs, signals or pavement markings in the School Zone that need maintenance. Get this task done efficiently with the [School Zone checklist](#) (page 8).
  - Request bike racks and signs that promote wearing helmets by contacting Jackie Broderick-Patton, Wellness Initiative Coordinator at [jbroderickpatton2086@columbus.k12.oh.us](mailto:jbroderickpatton2086@columbus.k12.oh.us).
- **Involve a group of about six volunteers** that represent unique perspectives. Some suggestions evaluation team members are listed below. Each person should take notes on their own copy of the map during the evaluation.
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade student (AAA Safety Patrol Member, if applicable)
  - Staff member that typically assists with arrival and/or dismissal
  - Parent of kindergarten student
  - [Neighbor that is part of civic association or block watch](#)
  - [School Zone Coordinator from the City of Columbus Department of Public Service](#)

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## STEP 2: BRAINSTORM SOLUTIONS

Bring your team of volunteers together to review the evaluations. Use the data collected during the evaluation on the problem behaviors. Rank concerns from “most serious” to “least serious.” Then discuss solutions using four E’s from the [Safe Routes to School “6-E” framework](#):

- **Education:** Are there problems you can address by educating people who use your space to do so safely?
- **Encouragement:** Can you offer incentives to students or families to better follow the rules, and/or to walk or bike more often?
- **Enforcement:** How can the school positively reinforce safe behaviors? Are there ways for the community, including parents, the school and neighbors, to better enforce safe travel?
- **Engineering:** Are there physical improvements to the school grounds or surrounding streets that should be considered? Focus on both low-cost, immediate solutions that the school can implement, and longer-term improvements that might require engineering evaluation or fund-raising efforts?

Be efficient with the meeting and decide on a *comprehensive* solution that includes each of the four E's listed above. Education or enforcement alone will not change behavior. Make use of existing resources at the school and within the neighborhood when deciding on solutions, including [AAA School Safety Patrol](#).

In the meeting, clearly mark the following features on a clean copy of the map:

- Family driver pick-up/drop-off area
- Bus load zone
- Day care and special education bus load zone
- Walking routes to open doors and meeting spaces
- Bike parking with safe routes to and from
- Legal parking on side streets (a.k.a. “park and walk” locations)

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### STEP 3: CREATE A CIRCULATION PLAN

The success of your school's arrival and dismissal procedure depends on staff, students and families all being familiar with the procedure. Communicate the rules to everyone in a way that they will understand. A good rule of thumb is to use *at least five different ways* to send out the message. Remind families of the procedure a few times each school year, especially after time away from school like winter and spring breaks.

#### **Methods to communicate your arrival and dismissal plan include:**

- Auto-dialer calls to families in multiple languages
- Information table at school events or in front of the school during arrival time
- Present at PTA and staff meetings
- Post the procedure and map on the school website
- Social media
- Listserv emails
- Flyers sent home or posted to Peachjar
- School newsletter
- Talk about it with families every chance you get
- Postcard or other mailing to neighbors living within one mile of the school

**Make the improvements long-lasting** by formalizing the procedure in your school handbook and PBIS. Send it home when you welcome new students and be aware of the language needs in your school community. Consider making the procedures and map come to life with the help of students. Use multi-colored sidewalk or spray chalk to mark your sidewalks, parking lots and school yard to help direct people, especially when you first implement and as a reminder in the second half of the school year.

## STEP 4: IMPLEMENT CHANGES

Implement the changes at the times of year people will be most open to adapting their habits. Announce the procedure at the start of a new school year or the start of a new calendar year. Establish the culture of safety with new families.

- **Communication is critical!** Share information about the procedures with students, parents, faculty, police, neighbors, etc.
- **Empower students** to educate their families and other students on safe behaviors and to enforce those safe behaviors with others. Utilize AAA School Safety Patrol both inside and outside of the school building, which can support a spirit of excellence all day.
- **Involve everyone** in the changes. FREE pedestrian and bicycle safety lesson plans with activities for a variety of subjects are available for faculty to teach in their classrooms. Or borrow the Walking Classroom from the Safe Routes to School program for access to 100 curriculum standards-aligned lessons. Email [SRTS@columbus.gov](mailto:SRTS@columbus.gov) to make your reservation.
- **Take a walking field trip.** Walk students through the procedures at the start of the school year. Pair it with other safety presentations, such as bus safety or mass evacuation practice. These are easy opportunities to review safe walking routes and crossing behavior with the whole school.

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## STEP 5: REVISIT & REVISE

Organize a follow-up observation to measure the changes. Going through the steps a second time will be faster and easier. Depending on how detailed your original observation was you might choose to simplify by targeting just the issues addressed by your intervention. However, continue to look 360 degrees around the school and stay mindful of the possibility that new issues might emerge.



## A KEY NOTE ABOUT DECISION-MAKING:

Use and involve the volunteers from the evaluation throughout the entire process. Consider how you can incorporate the team into an existing school safety committee. The volunteers should play an advisory role to the principal. The school personnel, families and community members should be involved, to the extent possible, in the decision-making process. Make the commitment to safety formal and share your success publicly.

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## A KEY NOTE ABOUT EVALUATION:

Improving arrival and departure procedures is incremental. People do not change behavior in a single day. Practice makes perfect! Encourage safe behaviors any time you see them, and make the praise as public as possible. The plan should be revisited at least on an annual basis. Be patient with progress. Improvements will become more noticeable with time as the rules are consistently reinforced and modeled for incoming families.

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## APPENDICES

Lists of Pedestrian and Driver School Zone Behaviors

School Zone Checklist

Example of an Effective Procedure

Example of a Flyer

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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

AAA School Safety Patrol

City of Columbus 311 Customer Service Center

District-Wide Crossing Guard Trainings

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*\*This toolkit is adapted from "Improve Your School Arrival and Departure Procedures: A Toolkit for School Safety Committees" created and distributed by Feet First, a Seattle-based non-profit.*

## APPENDIX:

# LISTS OF PEDESTRIAN AND DRIVER BEHAVIORS

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## PEDESTRIAN BEHAVIOR IN SCHOOL ZONE

### Desired Behavior

1. Crosses at crosswalk/corner: Every intersection is a legal crosswalk unless otherwise noted, whether or not it is marked with paint. School walking maps identify the best places for students to cross. Contact [srts@columbus.gov](mailto:srts@columbus.gov) for a copy of your school's map.
2. Exits/enters curbside: When passengers exit from a car directly to the curb, they do not interact with moving traffic.

### Problem Behavior

1. Exits/enters street side: Exiting a vehicle on the street-side puts children in the way of moving traffic. The level of danger increases with the speed of traffic on that street.
2. Crosses the street distracted: Are students walking wearing headphones or texting when crossing? The level of danger increases with the speed of traffic at the crossing.
3. Walks through moving traffic: This is common in parking lots and in situations where more than two travel lanes are used for pick-up and drop-off. In parking lots, visibility is compromised and danger increases if drivers are backing up.
4. Crosses with adult at a midblock location that has no crosswalk: This often happens in cases when the main entrance of a school is in the middle of a block. Additionally, this behavior is a missed opportunity to teach children to cross correctly on their own.

### Highest-Risk Behavior

1. Crosses against the signal: When schools are situated near busy roads, the school walk zone may include signalized intersections. Crossing during a "DON'T WALK" is especially risky when traffic is traveling at higher speeds.
2. Crosses midblock without adult: An example of this behavior is when a driver stops on the far side of the street (from school property) and waves children across the street on their own. The risk of serious injury rises sharply with increased driving speeds.

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## DRIVER BEHAVIOR IN SCHOOL ZONE

### Desired Behavior

1. Park and walk: When a driver finds a legal place to park outside the school load zone and walks to/from there. Other programs have made this a fun school-wide activity called the "3 Block Challenge". [Check it out!](#)
2. Drop-off/pick-up and go: This is usually the desired behavior in an active drop-off and pick-up zone. Drivers are asked to stay with their vehicles and pull forward as far as possible.

## **Problem Behavior**

1. Does not pull to curb: This can indicate a speedy or careless exchange on the part of the driver.
2. Uses bus zone: School bus zones are restricted to prevent people from walking between buses, and to minimize exposure to traffic for the large numbers of student passengers.
3. Wrong direction: Drivers do this when they approach the school on the far side of a two-way street and angle across oncoming traffic to get to the school curb. This behavior is dangerous both on the approach to the curb and the departure.
4. Parks within 20' of crosswalk: Parking too close to a corner or crosswalk blocks the line of sight between drivers and pedestrians, increasing the risk of collision.
5. Parks in load zone: This will stop the flow of a drop-off and pick-up zone, defeating its purpose and causing a domino effect of other bad behaviors.
6. Loads in travel lane: This is when a driver leaves a full travel lane between the curb and the car, or lets a student off next to another car.
7. Stops in crosswalk: This can force people walking into moving traffic, and makes walking the final stretch to school difficult and less safe.
8. Blocks sidewalk/walkway: When drivers block a sidewalk or walkway by idling in driveways or pulling onto sidewalks where a curb isn't present, they might force others to walk in the roadway

## **Highest-Risk Behavior**

1. Backs up: In school parking lots, load zones and adjacent streets, backing up is one of the riskiest driving behaviors. The combination of large cars and children make it more likely that a driver will have difficulty seeing pedestrians.
2. U-turn: U-turns are only legal when they can be done without impeding the travel of another vehicle or person. In busy school zones, this is rarely the case. When combined with midblock crossings, large cars and short students, this is among the riskiest behaviors in a school zone.



# APPENDIX: SCHOOL ZONE CHECKLIST

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## SIGNALS

### School Zone Flashing Beacons

Working means that school zone flashing beacons turn on and flash twice daily. The timing should be scheduled according to the school's bell schedule. The beacons should be on at (1) ARRIVAL TIME - 25 minutes before the bell and five minutes afterward, and at (2) DISMISSAL TIME - five minutes before the bell rings and 25 minutes afterward.

- Working (on and flashing at the appropriate times)
  - Each year, contact City of Columbus to report arrival and dismissal times. You can call 614-645-3111, or click [here](#) to email Tami Peters, School Zone Coordinator.
- Need maintenance (not flashing at the appropriate times)
  - "Flashers" not working? Call Traffic Maintenance at 614-645-7393 immediately
- Not present or not installed



### ADA Accessible Push Buttons

- Working
- Need maintenance
- Not present or not installed

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## SIGNS AND PAVEMENT MARKINGS

### "SCHOOL" Legend

These should appear at all entrances to a designated school zone.

- Clearly marked
- Worn
- Not present or not installed

### Stop Bars

- Clearly marked
- Worn
- Not present or not installed



**Type II Crosswalks (Ladder Style)**

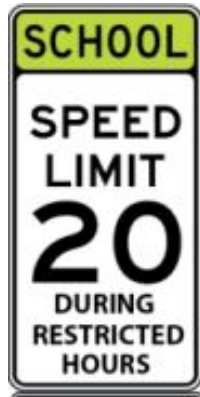
- Clearly marked
- Worn
- Not present or not installed

**Type I Crosswalks (Parallel Lines)**

- Clearly marked
- Worn
- Not present or not installed



**Other Sign Examples:**



*School Speed Limit Sign for use at locations with or without school flashing beacons.*



*End School Speed Limit designates the end of school zone speed limit; this could also be marked with a standard Speed Limit sign.*

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## SIDEWALKS

- Present (there are sidewalks on at least one side of the street adjacent to the school)
- Absent (no sidewalk on either side of the street adjacent to the school)

If there are sidewalks, please check ONE of the following to best describe their *continuity*.

- Complete: The sidewalk is continuous; there are no areas with missing sidewalk block
- Incomplete: The sidewalk is not continuous; there are areas with missing sidewalk block

Then, please check ONE of the following to best describe their *condition*:

- Accessible: A stroller or wheelchair can roll smoothly from the street to the sidewalk
- Inaccessible: Not possible for a stroller or wheelchair to roll from the street to the sidewalk

## APPENDIX:

# EXAMPLE OF AN EFFECTIVE PROCEDURE

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### Staggered Release, 3:20-3:30 p.m.

- **3:15 – Principal makes announcement** over the loudspeaker for all students to go to their dismissal classrooms (walkers, car-riders, bussers)
  
- **3:20 – Car riders are released**
  - 50-70 cars per day – this process takes less than 10 minutes w/ five staff members and sometimes principal
  - Children who ride are brought outside to a location separate from where parents pick them up
  - Cars line up out of eyesight
  - Cars have signs w/ student names so teachers can call children
  - Cars pull up five at a time; five staff members call children for these first five cars; after they get in their cars, the next group of five goes until all children have been picked up
  - Still some issues
    - Some parents think rules don't apply to them, try to pick up in the wrong place
    - Since the process creates a line, some parents arrive later than they are supposed to so they can get through the line more quickly
  
- **3:25 – Walkers and bike riders are released** from the front and back doors
  - Consider creating a designated meeting spot for Walking School Bus/students traveling together
  
- **3:25-3:30 – Bus riders are released** and escorted by teachers
  - Three busses with a moderate amount of students
  - Two busses full of students
  - At the end of the day, kids are sent to different classrooms based on which bus they ride (one classroom per bus route except for two larger routes that are split into two rooms by grade; seven total)
  - One teacher per classroom per bus – teacher becomes familiar with students on route and develops a relationship with the bus driver; can tell driver about which students are absent
  - Principal calls the bus to pull up, then the teacher brings out students who ride the bus
  - Avoids mayhem in hallways and keeps better track of kids so everyone gets on the correct bus
  
- **Other Notes:**
  - No visitors/parents are let into the building between 3-3:30 p.m.
  - School accepts no changes to student dismissal plans by phone – must have a signed note or pick up in person
  - All staff are engaged in the dismissal process; one floater to cover classroom in case of absent teacher with no sub (avoid moving kids, move teachers instead)

APPENDIX:  
**EXAMPLE OF A FLYER**

WEINLAND PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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# DISMISSAL PROCESS

**Legend**

.....	Crosswalk	orange	is 1 <sup>st</sup> grade
blue	is 2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	yellow	is 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup> grade
white	is Pre-K	pink	is Kindergarten

\*Suggested additional parking areas by grade level are marked above

Please demonstrate safe behavior by using the marked crosswalks when crossing the street

**ALL PARKING** is restricted to 7th Ave, Hamlet St, Summit St and 4th St

Have you almost been hit by a car trying to cross Summit St or 7th Ave?

**call: 311**  
 (614) 645-3111

to report *any* concerns with your student's trip to school

We appreciate your help keeping our students as safe as possible!

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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## AAA School Safety Patrol

Safety Patrol is a useful tool for leadership development among elementary school students. Evidence shows Safety Patrol programs have helped to reduce the number of injuries and fatalities among children ages 5-14 years, nationally.

Materials are provided free-of-charge by AAA to registered schools. Use of Safety Patrol can provide an easy, fun way to support school improvement and promote safety in and out of the building. There are other incentives, too.

- The supervisor role is a paid position available first to CCS teachers, then it opens up to staff if the teaching staff declines the position.
- Participation in the AAA School Safety Patrol program qualifies schools, students and advisors for several awards and grants.

To get started, [complete the online enrollment form](#). For more information on any of these programs, contact Kellie O’Riordan at 614-431-7882 or email [safetypatrol@aaaohio.com](mailto:safetypatrol@aaaohio.com).

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## The City of Columbus Service Center (“311”)

Report any safety issues discovered during the process of evaluating arrival and dismissal to 311. This is a way for residents to submit a request for City Services for FREE. This is the *single point of contact* for requesting all non-emergency City services. There are multiple ways to report issues.

- Call/Phone: 614-645-3111
- Go Online and complete a service request: [https://311.columbus.gov/311\\_main.aspx](https://311.columbus.gov/311_main.aspx)
- Send them an email: [311@columbus.gov](mailto:311@columbus.gov)

Location is the MOST IMPORTANT information in the service request. Be specific about the location of the issue. Include details and a photo, if possible, to help make sure the issue is addressed and resolved. Each service request will get a ticket number so that it can be tracked. The tracking number supports accountability; keep this number and check on the status of the request periodically.

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## District-wide Crossing Guard Trainings

[Check out the calendar](#) for information on *free* adult crossing guard training sessions taking place throughout the school year. The role of crossing guard at Columbus City Schools is a volunteer position that requires safety training.

This is one way to address the need for adults to assist with arrival and dismissal. Volunteers give only 30-45 minutes of their time while they are already at school during arrival and dismissal. Inviting parents and family members to a sign-up for a training is also a solution to engaging, involving and empowering parents.

Middle and high school students that pick up siblings can also participate in the training, along with Advanced Pedestrian Safety training from the Safe Routes to School program. Students that participate earn internship hours toward graduation. Principals and internship coordinators should [contact the program manager](#) to schedule this opportunity.