



The Active Communities Tool Assessment Modules

The Active Communities Tool (ACT): An Action Planning Guide and Assessment Modules to Improve Community Built Environments to Promote Physical Activity



<https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/community-strategies/active-communities-tool>



A woman wearing a high-visibility orange and yellow safety vest is smiling and talking to a young girl. They are walking past a red octagonal stop sign with a white 'P' on it. The background is slightly blurred, showing a building and a clear sky.

MODULE 6:

SCHOOLS

- » This module assesses the plans, policies, environments, and resources specific to school siting, the built environment outside of the school, and connecting the school with other places.
- » Special notes on this module:
 - Due to the focus of the Active Communities Tool Assessment Modules, the School Module covers plans, policies, environment and resources specific to school siting, and connecting the school with other places. Physical activity or physical education policies, or the quality of the programming within the school are not addressed. These are important factors to consider, but are beyond the scope of this tool.
 - For engineering-related plans, policies, and resources for improving the built environment around schools to promote walking and bicycling, consult Module 2: Infrastructure to Accommodate Pedestrians and Bicyclists.
 - Responses should be based on one school district. If more than one school district is of interest, consider completing the module separately for each district.
- » Who should be involved – technical experts with knowledge of the school district’s plans and policies; specifically experts in the school district, planning, facilities management, and transportation.
- » Approximate time to complete – 30 minutes.

Community/ Municipality: _____

School District: _____

Term	Definition
Comprehensive plan	The adopted official statement of a governing body of a local government that sets forth (in words, maps, illustrations, and/or tables) goals, policies, and guidelines intended to direct the present and future physical, social, and economic development that occurs within its planning jurisdiction and that includes a unified physical design for the public and private development of land.
Full life cycle cost	An economic method of assessing the total cost of facility ownership. This includes costs related to owning, constructing, operating, maintaining, and disposing of the facility.
Safe Routes to School	Also referred to as active travel to school. The intervention to encourage children and their parents to walk and bicycle safely to/from school must include one or more of the following: engineering, education, encouragement, and enforcement. The intervention may also include one or more of the following: evaluation and equity.
School siting	The process of selecting locations in the community for new schools that takes into account community land use patterns, infrastructure needs, environmental hazards, and other issues.

Please answer these questions based on the community/municipality selected. The responses to the module should be based on one school district.

6.1 Does your state have planning or policy guidance/requirements related school design or siting that affect local or regional products or processes related to schools?

Yes → describe: _____

No

Not applicable

Don't know

6.2 What school district will these questions address?

Name of School District: _____

City: _____

State: _____

6.3 How many schools are in the school district?

elementary schools: _____

middle schools: _____

high schools: _____

other: _____

Not applicable

Don't know

6.4 How many students are estimated to be enrolled by the school district in a school year?

_____ number of students

_____ school year that the numbers reflect

Not applicable

Don't know

6.5 Are counts of walkers and bicyclists to/from each school assessed at least once a year when weather is conducive to walking?

Yes, for all schools in the district

Yes, for some schools in the district

No

Not applicable

Don't know

6.6 What percentage of students walk or bike to school?

_____ %

Don't know

PLANS

Plans, when referred to and capitalized in this module, are those that are written and adopted by a local authority (e.g., school district). Plans can stand alone (e.g., Safe Routes to School Plan, Pedestrian Plan, Bicycle Plan) or be part of a Comprehensive Plan (e.g., Master Plan, General Plan). “Plan” is capitalized to indicate that it is a document adopted by a local authority.

6.7 Does the community have a Plan that contains specific provisions to increase opportunities for children to walk and bicycle to/from school?

Yes, and the Plan was adopted 0–<5 years ago

Yes, and the Plan was adopted 5–<10 years ago

Yes, and the Plan was adopted 10 or more years ago

No → skip to #6.10

Not applicable → skip to #6.10

Don't know → skip to #6.10

6.8 In the past year, about how often was this Plan consulted when making relevant decisions?

Always

Usually

Sometimes

Rarely

Never

Not applicable

Don't know

6.9 In the past year, were any of the goals or priorities to increase opportunities for children to walk and bicycle to/from school specified in this Plan accomplished?

Yes → describe: _____

No

Not applicable

Don't know

The next question refers to health equity and health disparities. Health equity is when everyone has the opportunity to be as healthy as possible. Health disparities are particular types of health differences closely linked with social, economic, and/or environmental disadvantage. Health disparities adversely affect groups of people who have systematically experienced greater obstacles to health and/or a clean environment based on their racial or ethnic group; religion; socioeconomic status; gender; age; mental health; cognitive, sensory, or physical disability; sexual orientation or gender identity; geographic location; or other characteristics historically linked to discrimination or exclusion.

6.10 During the planning process to increase opportunities for children to walk and bicycle to/from school, does local government or its consultants try to engage individuals experiencing greater obstacles to health or who may be hard to contact?

Yes → describe: _____

No

Not applicable

Don't know

6.11 Is there routine collaborative school planning to determine appropriate site design for new schools?

Yes, and it is called for in a plan

Yes, but it is not described in a plan

No → Skip to #6.13

Not applicable → Skip to #6.13

Don't know → Skip to #6.13

6.12 What sectors engage in determining the appropriate site and design for new schools? Check all that apply.

School district

Local government

Department of transportation

Planning agency

Other

None

6.13 Is there a process to evaluate transportation and land use needs for existing schools?

Yes

No

Not applicable

Don't know

POLICIES

The **Policies** referred to in the following questions are those written and adopted by a local authority, including the school district. Policies include local ordinances (including zoning regulations, subdivision ordinances, street design guidelines, etc.) which are passed by local governing authorities, such as a city council or board of commissioners.

6.14 Does the school district's Wellness Policy promote active travel (e.g., walking or bicycling) to/from school for students?

Yes → describe: _____

No

Not applicable

Don't know

6.15 Do any schools in the school district prohibit walking or bicycling to/from school?

Yes → describe: _____

No

Not applicable

Don't know

6.16 Does the community have funding dedicated to improving pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure within a specified radius of the community's schools?

Yes, one time funding → describe: _____

Yes, ongoing source of funding → describe: _____

No

Not applicable

Don't know

6.17 School siting criteria

Does the school siting criteria consider:	Requires	Suggests	No	Not applicable	Don't know
a. The value of renovating or expanding existing school buildings that serve as public assets (e.g., landmark buildings)?					
b. Total capital and operation costs associated with renovating, closing, or building a new school?					
c. Reviewing and comparing the full life cycle costs of different school sites?					

Does the school siting criteria consider:	Requires	Suggests	No	Not applicable	Don't know
d. Total transportation costs across the projected lifecycle of the school for the school district, students and families?					
e. Proximity to students attending the school (e.g., portion of the student body living within .5 miles (elementary) to 1.5 miles (high school) of the school)?					
f. Access by walking, biking, and transit (e.g., safe routes to and from school available for students)?					

6.18 Joint or shared use agreement or a memorandum of understanding

Has the local government adopted a joint or shared use agreement or a memorandum of understanding with any school that allows the public to use school recreational facilities (e.g., gymnasiums, athletic fields, playgrounds) during non-school hours:	Yes	No	Not applicable	Don't know
a. For the school district level?				
b. For high schools?				
c. For middle schools?				
d. For elementary schools?				

ENVIRONMENT

The next set of questions ask about the built environment infrastructure in the community.

6.19 In the last year, does the community have projects in progress or completed projects that improve pedestrian and bicycle access to schools?

Yes, completed → describe: _____

Yes, in progress → describe: _____

No

Not applicable

Don't know

6.20 Have any schools used Safe Routes to School or a similar program to assess the safety and security of routes used to walk to school?

Yes → describe: _____

No

Not applicable

Don't know

RESOURCES

The following questions ask about resources to support plans, policies, and built environments that impact walking and bicycling to/from school.

6.21 Does the community have funding to support safe walking and bicycling to and from schools?

Yes, one-time funding → describe: _____

Yes, ongoing source of funding → describe: _____

No

Not applicable

Don't know

6.22 Does the community provide support for school crossing guards?

Yes, the community provides funding for paid crossing guards and also supports volunteer crossing guards

Yes, the community provides funding for paid crossing guards only

Yes, the community supports volunteer crossing guards only

No

Not applicable

Don't know

6.23 Does the school district or other community organizations provide encouragements for walking/bicycling to/from school (e.g., fund or support walking school buses, early release for walkers/bicyclists, remote drop-off for car riders)?

Yes → describe: _____

No

Not applicable

Don't know

6.24 Does the school district have a Safe Routes to School coordinator or someone similar to focus on safe walking and bicycling to schools?

Yes, there is a full-time paid coordinator

Yes, there is a part-time paid coordinator

Yes, there is a volunteer coordinator

No

Not applicable

Don't know

6.25 Does the community have a partnership, coalition, or advisory board (e.g., Local School Health Advisory Council, Wellness Committee, Safe Routes to School group) tasked with advising decision-makers (e.g., district school boards) on physical activity around schools, including walking and bicycling to and from school? These groups can be of various types and organizational levels.

Yes → describe: _____

No → End of Module 6

Not applicable → End of Module 6

Don't know → End of Module 6

6.26 Partnership, coalition, or advisory board tasked with advising on physical activity around schools

Does the group:	Yes	No	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Meet at least quarterly?				
b. Have a public health representative?				
c. Have a planning and/or transportation representative?				
d. Have a school district representative?				
e. Have paid staff support to coordinate the meetings?				
f. Have a budget?				
g. Conduct assessments of routes to walk or bicycle to/from school (e.g., quality assessment, mapping of facilities)?				
h. Intentionally address equity?				
i. Have representation by residents most impacted by poor health outcomes in the community?				
j. Have a long-term strategic or sustainability plan?				
k. Include elected officials?				
l. Conduct an evaluation to assess if progress toward meeting goals/objectives?				
m. Include other impacted stakeholders?				

Reset MODULE 6 CAUTION: This will clear and reset MODULE 6.

Reset Form CAUTION: This will clear and reset the entire form.



US Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, & Obesity