

Safety Walk

*Robert Fulton Elementary School
Cleveland, Ohio*

When budget cuts stopped the school buses at Robert Fulton Elementary School, many students faced a one- or two-mile walk to and from school every day. Parents and teachers had safety concerns. The school responded by setting up “Safe Haven Points” in churches and businesses throughout the community to help protect the children. After establishing these Safe Haven Points, the school hosted the Safety Walk to acquaint students and their families with these locations throughout the community.

The Safety Walk culminated a campaign to increase students’ safety awareness. Teachers reviewed safety rules in class and posted them on the wall. Each classroom made a poster highlighting a safety rule. Students also attended two assemblies, one hosted by the principal and the other by “Peace in the Hood,” a trained security group.

The School Parent Organization (SPO) and the family liaison established the Safe Haven Points by mapping out walking routes and enlisting community support. Each community partner signed a contract stating that their business or church would place a student safety poster in its window and assist any student who requested help. The SPO provided the community partners with emergency procedures and a list of emergency phone numbers.

The Safety Walk took place one rainy Saturday in October. About 150 students and their families walked through the community to locate the Safe Haven Points on their routes. Several corporate partners supported the event.

Beechbrook/Kids Health 2020 sent a representative to counsel students and their parents on safety issues; Costco provided bottled water; The United Black Fund supplied bags and other giveaways; and Smythe Cramer fingerprinted and photographed all of the students in attendance. As an added bonus, the mayor of Cleveland gave a certificate to every participating student.

The SPO publicized the Safety Walk by word of mouth, letters and fliers to parents, and a bulletin in the newspaper. The principal and the family liaison attended community meetings to ask for support. Two television stations covered the event.

Parents appreciated the school’s efforts and discussed safety strategies with their children. One teacher called it a great example of “how much can be accomplished when teachers and parents work together.” The Safety Walk strengthened the relationship between the school, families, and the surrounding community. Robert Fulton Elementary School plans to hold a similar event to teach children how to stay safe during summer vacation.

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