

Safe Routes to School National Partnership: Using Coalition Building to Uplift Equity

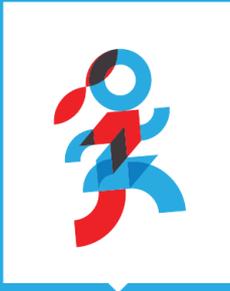
— BY KEITH BENJAMIN —



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The most beautiful characteristic of community is its complexity. Neither the possibilities, problems, or people are monolithic. In fact, it is the differences of opportunities and opinions that show the potential power when all are brought together. Bringing those differences into one space reveals the sides that fit perfectly into a mosaic of equity. Though people’s lifestyles, cultures, and competencies vary, everyone desires and deserves a safe, healthy, and accessible environment to call home.

Active Kids Do Better.



Studies show that active kids do better...



Better academic performance



Better school attendance



Better behavior and concentration in class

...but our kids are moving less and less:



Only **1 in 3** kids is active every day



Only **6 states** require physical education in every grade



Only **20%** of school districts require daily recess

LETSMOVEACTIVESCHOOLS.ORG



It's time to get our kids moving again.

Unfortunately, many communities do not experience that power. They are bound by expired leadership that has found odd comfort in the dysfunction of both municipalities and ground advocacy. They hold tight to the promises of positive change to their neighborhood only to find out that it includes their displacement. They are told day after day of their deficiencies in health, physical activity, education, mobility, and income—yet they sit at the bottom of the totem pole when finances are allocated. And when they are fed up and decide to choose survival by solving problems on their own, their work goes unrecognized even by the most “progressive” of allies.

Twice as many low income kids walk or bike to school than affluent kids, and 65 percent of families below the poverty line do not own a car. Despite the great need for access to safe streets and

physical activity, sidewalks in African American communities are 38 times more likely to be of low quality. This lack of access puts the health of our children at stake: children in neighborhoods that lack access to parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers have 20 to 45 percent greater risk of becoming overweight. Diversity of voice matters when it comes to having a say in how a community is built.

During the last three years, the Safe Routes to School National Partnership through the Voices for Healthy Kids Initiative has taken up the banner of equity to empower these communities. The Safe Routes to School National Partnership’s mission is to advance safe walking and bicycling to and from schools, and in daily life,

About the National Active Transportation Diversity Task Force

The National Active Transportation Diversity Task Force is composed of a broad array of experts and practitioners from around the country who engage in a national conversation and support outreach that elevates street scale from a local issue to a state and national issue. Organizations champion active transportation improvements to increase physical activity in underserved communities. Task Force members help identify and assist states and local communities with Safe Routes to School, promote Complete Streets, and secure new funding to support active transportation in the communities with the most need.

Members:

- AARP Livable Communities
- Active Living Research
- Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center
- Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
- Alliance for Biking and Walking
- Bike Easy - New Orleans
- Department of Urban Planning and Environmental Policy, Texas Southern University
- Gamaliel and Transportation Equity Network
- Hip Hop Public Health
- Institute of Transportation Engineers
- Jack and Jill of America, Inc.
- Kaboom
- Leadership Conference for Civil and Human Rights
- Living Cities
- Los Angeles County Bike Coalition
- NAACP
- National Disability Rights Network
- National League of Cities
- National Organization of Black Elected Legislative-Women
- National Urban League
- Prevention Institute
- Safe Routes to School National Partnership
- Salud America
- Trust for Public Lands
- TWU Local 100

For more information, visit:

<http://saferoutespartnership.org/healthy-communities/equity/equity-task-force>. Contact Keith Benjamin at keith@saferoutespartnership.org.



info

Do ALL Kids Have Safe Places to Be Active?

Communities of color and/or lower income have higher rates of obesity. They also lack attractive, convenient, and safe places to be physically active.

LACK OF RECREATIONAL FACILITIES
70% of African-American & **81%** of Hispanic neighborhoods lack recreational facilities.

POOR SIDEWALKS
Sidewalks in African-American neighborhoods are **38** times more likely to be of low quality.

LESS RECESS
Children living below the poverty line are **159%** more likely to be deprived of recess.

dangerous conditions
Each year, Hispanic communities experience **3.6** & **45.5** more total crashes per mile of street & more crimes per acre compared with White communities.

For more information, see our research synthesis at www.activelivingresearch.org/disparities

Active Living Research
www.activelivingresearch.org

Sources: LACK OF RECREATIONAL FACILITIES: Moore, L.V. et al. (2008). Availability of Recreational Resources in Minority and Low Socioeconomic Status Areas. American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 34(1): 16-22. LESS RECESS: Roth, J.L. et al. (2003). What Happens during the School Day? Time Diaries from a National Sample of Elementary School Teachers. Teachers College Record, 105 (3): 317-343. POOR SIDEWALKS: Kelly, C.M. et al. (2007). The Association of Sidewalk Walkability and Physical Disorder with Area-Level Race and Poverty. Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, 61:978-983. DANGEROUS CONDITIONS: Zhu, X. and Lee, C. (2008). Walkability and Safety around Elementary Schools: Economic and Ethnic Disparities. American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 34(4): 282-290.

ACTIVE LIVING RESEARCH

to improve the health and well-being of America's children and to foster the creation of livable, sustainable communities. We believe, if we prioritize our children, we are prioritizing community.

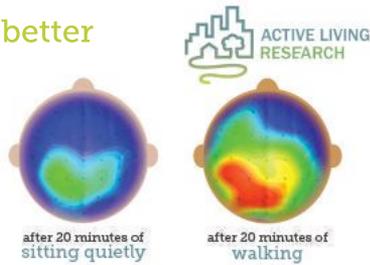
We also believe that that the National Partnership cannot attack these issues alone. We need experts in and out of the transportation space that can articulate the concerns of priority populations all over

the country. Thus we formed the National Active Transportation Diversity Task Force, a cohort of experts and practitioners from around the country who would engage in national conversations, and support outreach that elevate equitable built environments from a local issue to a state and national issue. The dynamic of having civil rights, faith, environmental, engineer, public health, disability, think

active kids learn better

BRAIN SCANS OF STUDENTS TAKING A TEST:

Red areas are very active; blue areas are least active.



Learn more about why active kids learn better and how schools can help at activelivingresearch.org/activeeducationbrief.

tank, and elected official organizations championing active transportation improvements to increase physical activity in underserved communities made our reach extremely comprehensive. Task Force members have helped identify and assist states and local communities with Safe Routes to School, support implementation of the federal transportation law, promote Complete Streets, secure new funding to support active transportation in the communities with the most need, and ultimately spoken up when certain citizens are left out of the work of building community.

From the creation of an equity asset map identifying collaborative projects all over the country; to passing a national resolution with the NAACP prioritizing equitable built environments in underserved communities; to establishing a coalition in Houston with Texas Southern University and AARP to bring livability dollars to the third ward; to creating numerous resources on affordable housing, violence and crime, and public health with Active Living Research and Prevention Institute; to partnering with Jack and Jill of America for their bike build with 450 teen leaders; to conducting twitter chats, webinars, and conferences throughout the country that uphold the banner of equity, intentional collaboration has yielded some powerful results.

The Safe Routes to School National Partnership, will never claim to have mastered the work of equity and inclusion. Every day is a challenge to recognize our privilege and those communities, cultures, and experiences that are being left out of the conversation. The goal is very simple—that every community has a safe, healthy, and easily accessible neighborhood, town, city, region, and state no matter the gender, color, disability, income, or experience of the citizens. When that is accomplished, that is when we know our work is done. **itej**



Keith Benjamin is community partnership manager of the *Voices for Healthy Kids Community Consortium* with the *Safe Routes to School National Partnership*. Working in eight states and 40 cities in creating equitable place making values, policies, and programs, Keith strives to break the silos between transportation, health, and safety. During the last decade, Keith has

worked to build bridges between federal, state, and local official policy priorities and primary constituency needs. From underserved American inner cities, to the rural south, to Native American reservations, to immigrant populations in European city suburbs, to indigenous sects in West Africa, Keith has identified how transportation plays a vital role in alleviating community stressors. By identifying and developing collaborative advocacy campaigns, providing innovative technical assistance, establishing new leadership pipelines, and expanding coalition collaborations, Keith is showing how equitable place is a primary caveat to better mobility, increased health, and intentional safety.

Keith currently serves on the National League of Cities Advisory Panel on Health Disparities, the Better Bike Share Partnership Equity Panel, and the National Working Group on Healthy Food access with the Food Trust and the National Urban League. He has appeared and written for the American Journal of Health Promotion, Prevention Institute, Institute of Transportation Engineers, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, The American Planning Association, The Washington Post, The Root, Urban Cusp, Huffington Post, Black Enterprise, and NewsOne Now With Roland Martin. Keith is a graduate and Deans awardee of Swarthmore College and now lives with his wife in Washington, DC, USA, where he is involved with his local church and serves on the Advisory Neighborhood Commission 7D Transportation and Infrastructure Committee as well as the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board, Citizens Advisory Committee.

Safe Routes to School National Partnership

<http://saferoutespartnership.org>

At the Intersection of Active Transportation and Equity Report

<http://routes.culturedriven.com/resources/report/intersection-active-transportation-equity>

Fire Up Your Feet

fireupyourfeet.org

Voices for Healthy Kids Initiative, a joint initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the American Heart Association

www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Advocate/Voices-for-Healthy-Kids_UCM_453195_SubHomePage.jsp

Active Schools Fundraising

www.activeschoolsfundraising.org

Safe Routes to School in the U.S. Fast Act

<http://saferoutespartnership.org/healthy-communities/policy-change/federal/FAST-act-background-resources>

resources

