

---

---

# School Community Improves Street Safety

---

## Issue

Obesity is a risk factor for many chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes and some cancers. Forty three percent of NYC elementary school students are overweight, and about 20 percent are obese (NYC DOHMH).

Participating in adequate physical activity can help children reduce their risk of overweight and obesity. Walking to school and playing outside are great ways for children to be physically active. While the majority of Brooklyn's children walk to school, the walk is often dangerous due to traffic, crime, and bullying. Parents' concern about the safety of their children on the streets often keeps children from playing outside.

## Intervention

As part of the Safe Routes to School movement, the Greater Brooklyn Health Coalition (GBHC) has organized school communities to work together to address safety issues, with the goal of removing barriers to physical activity. In June 2007, GSBHC teamed with the Active Living Resource Center's (ALRC) City Safe Routes to School Pilot Program to work with P.S. 81, a Brooklyn elementary school and the only NYC school participating in this program. This is one of 10 schools GBHC has worked with since 2003.

GBHC and ALRC held a workshop that included many of the stakeholders involved in creating and maintaining safety in and around the school. The workshop reviewed local street safety conditions and then brainstormed possible interventions to address some of the safety concerns. Some of the possibilities include:

- using Youth Resource Officers at the police precinct for pedestrian safety education;

- parents calling 311 to report street hazards in the neighborhood to the NYCDOT;
  - the Residents' Association at Roosevelt Houses providing neighborhood level organizing;
- P.S. 81's Wellness Council will take the lead in implementing the recommendations of the report.



Sharon Roerty (ALRC) explaining pedestrian safety conditions around P.S. 81 to workshop participants

## Impact

In addition to identifying safety concerns and viable solutions, the workshop brought together 30 relevant stakeholders. An important connection was made between P.S. 81 and the local Residents' Association on this issue. The Wellness Council members were impressed with the sources of support that they can count on and refer to in the future. Since the workshop:

- a bike lane has been added on Lewis Avenue near the school;
  - staff members have observed more police traffic patrols, especially around ticketing drivers rolling through stop signs;
  - a parent at P.S. 81 has become actively involved in working toward safety measures, particularly, organizing parents to call 311 about the need for speed bumps on DeKalb Avenue; and
- pedestrian safety has been incorporated into the Wellness Council's activities.

## Importance of Impact

The safer neighborhood created by the stakeholders in P.S. 81 will encourage children and adults to spend more time outside. Research shows that by simply being outside children are more active. Once more people spend time outside, the safety continues to increase by more eyes on the street, which can encourage even more people to get out and active.

---

## Contact Information:

Marlyne Joseph, Project Coordinator  
Greater Brooklyn Health Coalition  
885 Flatbush Avenue, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Brooklyn, NY 11226  
718-940-3453, ext. 230; mjoseph@brooklynhealth.org



NYS Healthy Heart Program