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Stanley School students get 'crash course' in pedestrian safety

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SWAMPSCOTT - Last Tuesday, despite the frigid temperatures and first snowfall of the season, Stanley School second-graders bundled up and headed out of school. But rather than skipping out of school early Nov. 20, these students were spending some time learning about and practicing safe walking skills.

Donned with bright green safety vests and accompanied by adult volunteers, the second-graders got a head start in safety skills with a Pedestrian Safety Training course which taught them some skills needed to safely navigate the streets and sidewalks of Swampscott.

Thanks to a new partnership with the MassRides Safe Routes to School program and WalkBoston, the classes were organized as part of the school-wide campaign to increase and encourage walking to school as a great opportunity for physical exercise, community building and fun.

During the half-hour walks, volunteers talked the children about many pedestrian safety rules such as safe places to walk and cross the street, where to stop before crossing a street, how to identify all of the places where cars could come from, stranger danger, what to do when you drop something while crossing the street, and the dangers that exist in a parking lot.

During the afternoon, the adult volunteers were offered many "teachable moments" to further illustrate their points. One volunteer dropped her umbrella in the crosswalk and she and the children watched as an oncoming car ran directly over it and crushed it.

Volunteers also pointed out many areas where tall hedges interfered with students' ability to safely see a car backing out of a driveway. Students were encouraged to "peek and sneak" rather than run past driveways.

And despite the brightly dressed pedestrians clearly waiting to cross at a crosswalk, the students learned that drivers don't always obey the rules. One group had to wait while five cars passed right by, not allowing them a safe time to cross the street.

This year Stanley School students are learning that walking to school is a way to promote health, identify safer routes for walking, and improve air quality, says Principal Pamela R. Angelakis.

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Photo by None

Jill Lofchle and James Kraus from MassRides 'train the trainers' who included parent volunteers and Stanley School Principal Pamela Angelakis and physical education teacher Kathy Pacitto.

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