School Districts & Policy

Sara Zimmerman, JD
Technical Assistance Director

Safe Routes to School National Partnership

Roadmap

Kinds of Policies

Safe Routes to School Policy Topics

District Policy Workbook

Working with School Boards

Why would a school district bother with a Safe Routes to School policy?

How do school districts benefit from Safe Routes to School?

- Physical activity supports academic achievement
- When children are healthier, they learn better
- Physically active kids have better attendance rates
- Safe Routes to School helps children arrive safely at school

Kinds of District Policies

School Policy Opportunities

Board policies (more official)

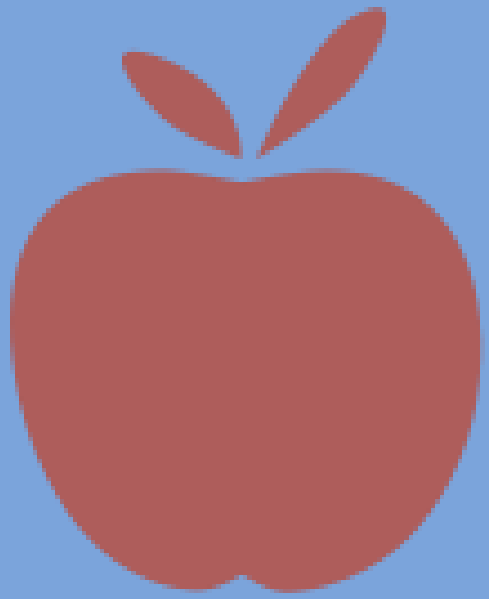
- Wellness policies
- Board policies
- Administrative regulations

Other types of policies

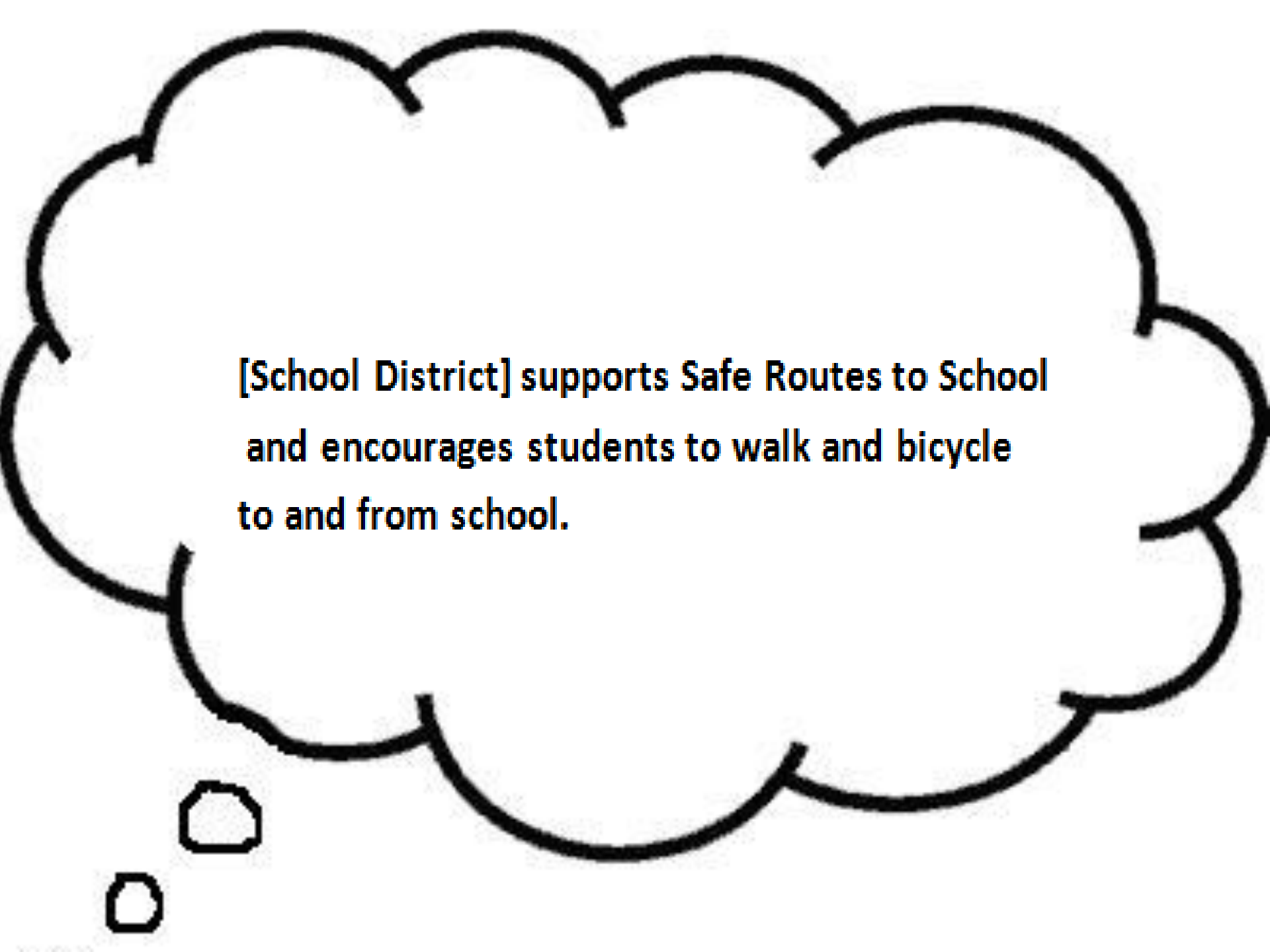
- Transportation department policies
- Curricula (e.g. health and PE)
- Other plans or policies required by state law (safety plans, etc.)
- Parent and student handbooks
- Webpages

District Wellness Policies

- Required by federal law for schools participating in federal student nutrition programs
- Widely present
- Weak on physical activity
- Good opportunity to incorporate language about kids walking and biking
- Wellness policies or traditional board policies both effective.



Topics for Safe Routes to School policies


[School District] supports Safe Routes to School and encourages students to walk and bicycle to and from school.

Supportive

Support for Safe Routes to School

Policies that limit school restrictions

Student/parent handbook

Guidance (and authorization) re Safe Routes to School components

- Walking school buses & bike trains
- Walk to School Day & events
- Recommended routes
- Traffic safety education
- Shared use

Logistical

District task force

School teams

Duties of school transportation departments

Wellness policy

Planning & design

School travel plans

Site design

Bike parking

School siting

The Policy Workbook

What is the policy workbook?

- Free online tool that lets you review different possible policy provisions
- Allows creation of very own policy tailored to your local needs
- Educational resource & national tool

Where can it be found?

- Joint project between Safe Routes to School National Partnership & ChangeLab Solutions
- Housed on ChangeLab Solutions' website

http://changelabsolutions.org/safe-routes/welcome

How did this come about?

- Need was seen by policy folks & lawyers at ChangeLab Solutions and by issue experts at Safe Routes to School National Partnership.
- Developed in 2012-2013 with funding from CDC.
- Reviewed every district Safe Routes to School policy we could find.
- Input from over 25 advocates, district administrators, school board members, and other experts.

Let’s Take a Look

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>> Learn more about the role of district policies in supporting **Safe Routes to School**

>> Build your **Safe Routes to School** Policy Now!

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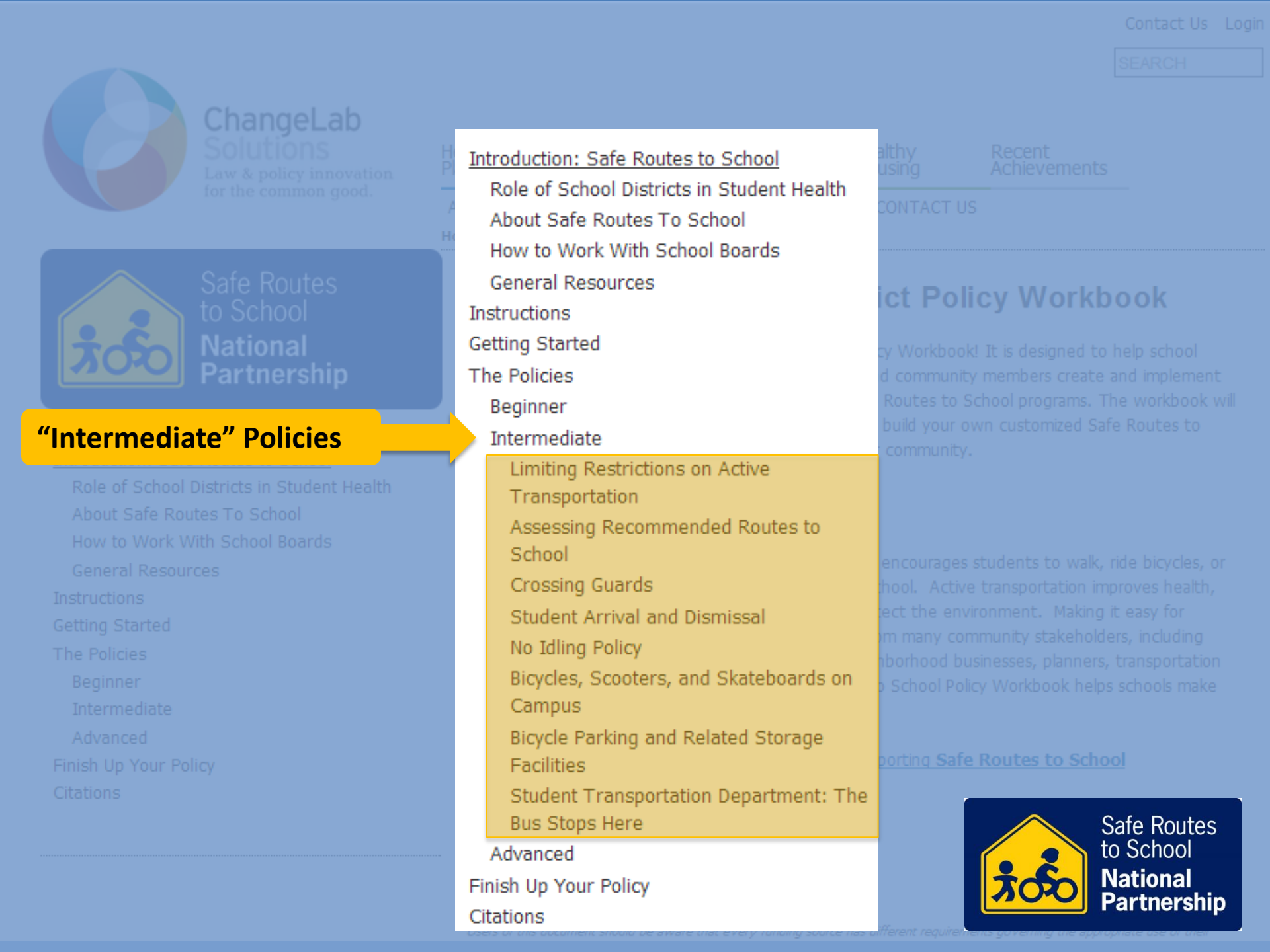
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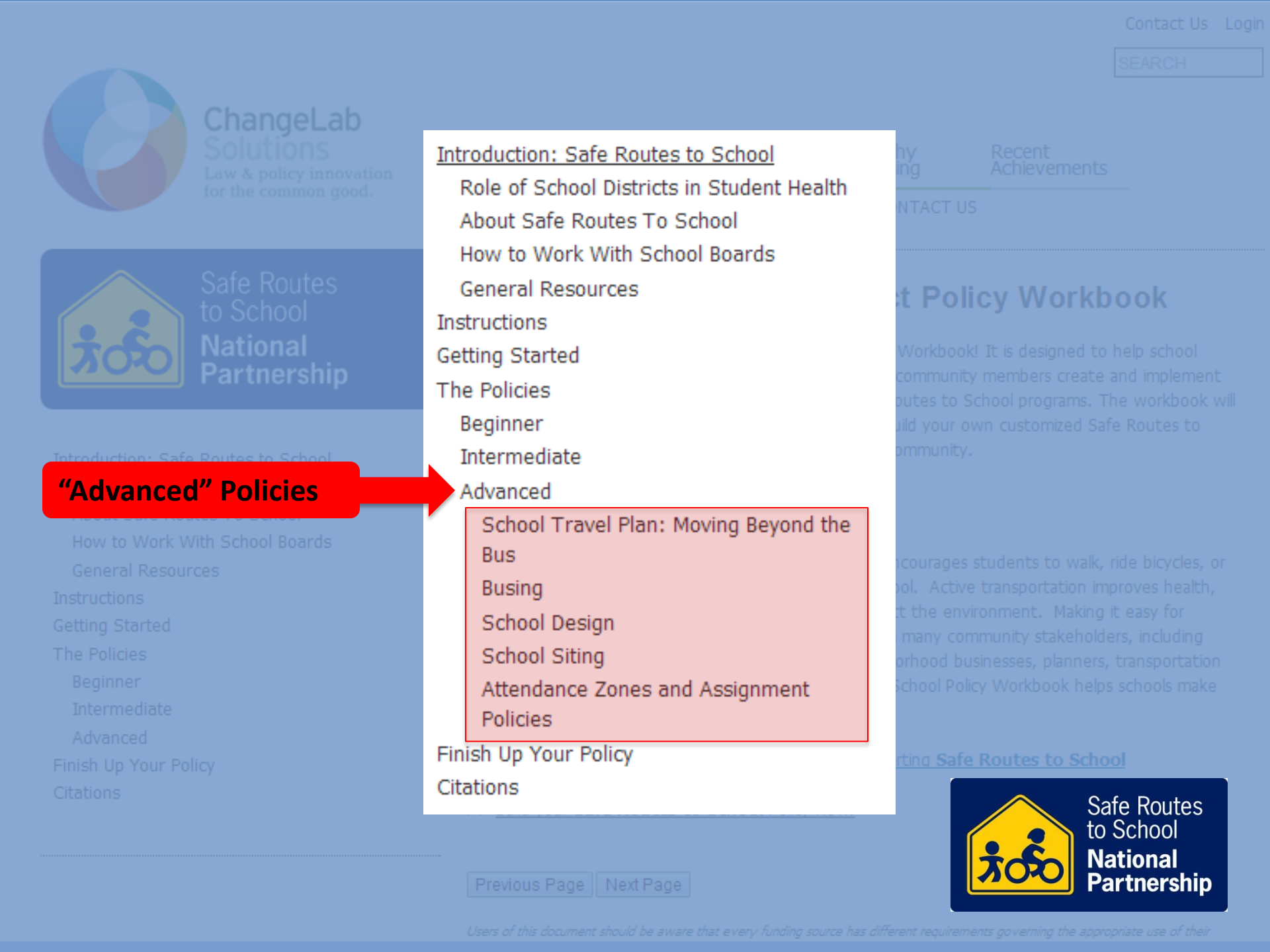
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When you're ready to see the final policy

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Getting Started

The Safe Routes to School Policy Workbook for School Districts was designed to help school boards, administrators, and stakeholders create policies that support active transportation to and from school.[25] In using this Workbook, you'll have the opportunity to select among policy provisions that support active transportation. Within some provisions, different options are available that can make your overall policy even stronger. Each policy is categorized as "beginner," "intermediate," or "advanced" depending on the policy's complexity and likely impact on levels of walking and bicycling. Note that the categories are not mutually exclusive; users should consider all elements to develop the most comprehensive policy possible.

For each provision, the Workbook provides explanatory text, the provision's language, and supporting resources to help you understand details and intricacies.

After completing this Workbook, you will receive a final document that includes your policy with your individual policy choices. You may find that the final policy language needs to be altered to accurately represent your district and the various stakeholders involved.

The final product is designed to be an official school board policy, but some districts may prefer to adopt this material as a resolution or as administrative regulations.

Please allow yourself one to two hours to complete the Workbook.

Please note that your work will be saved automatically for six hours after you click on the "Get Started" button below. You will not lose your work if you click on the "Back" button but you will lose your work if you close your browser. After six hours, your work will be deleted. Be sure you have allowed sufficient time to complete the workbook during this six-hour window.

Before you begin reviewing policy provisions, take a moment to check if the terminology in the policy matches the terminology you use locally.

Select the terms your district uses:

Children or students? -
Parents/guardians or family? -
What do you call your parents' association? -
What is the name of your local jurisdiction?
What is the name of your school district?
Get Started

More how to's

6 hours

Select terms

Go!

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The Policies

This Workbook contains 26 policy provisions. For convenience, we have categorized each policy provision as "beginner," "intermediate," or "advanced" to assist you in navigating the options and finding policy options that are appropriate for your district. The categorizations are based on each policy's complexity and likely impact on levels of walking and bicycling. Note that the categories are not mutually exclusive; users should consider all elements to develop the most comprehensive policy possible.

Beginner

Policies categorized as "beginner" are appropriate for districts that are just getting started with Safe Routes to School. At the same time, these policies form a critical foundation for all districts, including those that are ready to take on more.

Intermediate

Policies categorized as "intermediate" are somewhat more complex than "beginner" policies. They may be more appropriate for a district that has already engaged with Safe Routes to School or that has a higher level of commitment to Safe Routes to School. However, it is possible that a district that is just getting started may find particular intermediate policy options appropriate.

Advanced

Advanced policies are more complex, and are likely to have a more significant and long-term impact on the amount of walking and bicycling by students. Districts that are considering these policies should also review the policy options in the other categories in order to create a comprehensive policy.

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Enforcement

Open beginner options

Select Walking School Buses

Walking School Buses and Bicycle Trains

Explanation: By encouraging groups of students to walk or bicycle to school together, Walking School and Bicycle Trains effectively address a variety of parental concerns about safety. These programs can part of an organized school-wide effort, with trained safety leaders and multiple groups walking or bicy from different neighborhoods to the school. Or informal groups of children can meet up to walk, skateb scooter, or ride together. Younger students can be accompanied by an adult volunteer or older student. Walking School Buses and Bike Trains are effective tools for reducing traffic safety risk and improving personal safety.[44] They reduce the risk of bullying and other personal harm by bringing more eyes ar ears to the street, a known crime reduction technique. They also build social cohesion and can even re

ion box below that contains the element to include in your policy. In some cases, there will be only one option.

Option 1: District supports the creation of Walking School Bus and Bicycle Train programs at each school.

Ra ng: ★★☆ ⓘ

tion 2: District **encourages individual schools to promote and organize Walking School Bus and Bicycle Train programs. If requested by an individual school, District shall wor**

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Incorporation into Student and Parent Handbooks

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Click an option box below that contains the element to include in your policy. In some cases, there will be only one option.

Option 1: District supports the creation of Walking School Bus and Bicycle Train programs at each school.

Rating: ★★☆ ⓘ

Option 2: District **encourages individual schools to promote and organize Walking School Bus and Bicycle Train programs. If requested by an individual school, District shall work with such school to organize a Walking School Bus and Bicycle Train**

Explanation

Citations

Policy Options

Star Ratings

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Help

Rating: ★★☆

Option 3: District **requires that individual schools establish and promote regular Walking School Bus or Bicycle Train programs. Such programs shall occur on a regular basis, at least [one per week].**

Rating: ★★★

Option not to include

Do not include this element in my policy.

Legal Notes!

Legal Note on Liability and Walking School Buses: School districts are often concerned about their potential exposure to liability if a child were to be injured while participating in a Walking School Bus or Bicycle Train program. Although liability rules vary from state to state, districts are generally entirely immune from liability for decisions to simply sponsor or endorse a program such as a Walking School Bus or Bicycle Train program.[45] Sponsoring a program can involve allowing it to take place, informing families about it, or providing funding or other support.

In some states, districts are also protected from liability for running or implementing programs like a Walking School Bus or Bicycle Train program.[46] In other states they are not.[47] This means that running a program may involve more risk of liability. However, districts can still implement Walking School Buses and Bicycle Trains, and they can limit their liability risk by taking commonsense steps. For example, they should develop safety rules for the programs, anticipate possible hazards to participants, and, where possible, implement reasonable precautions to avoid such hazards.

Legal Note on Criminal Background Checks: As school districts increasingly require volunteers to undergo criminal background checks, adults supervising Walking School Bus and Bicycle Train programs may be subject to these same rules.

State laws regarding criminal background checks of school volunteers vary greatly in breadth and scope. Background checks are required in some states[48] and are optional in others;[49] in those

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School district volunteer policies will spell out the exact mechanisms of any criminal background check requirement (presumably in compliance in state law where applicable). Individual districts may have discretion as to whether to treat adult participants as school volunteers and subject them to any district policy requiring criminal background checks.

Educational resources related to policy

Resources:

Start a Walking School Bus: The Basics
The Walking School Bus: A Primer and First Steps
Organizing Successful Bike Trains
Safe Routes to School: Minimizing Your Liability Risk
Volunteers and Liability: The Federal Volunteer Protection Act
"Impact of a Pilot Walking School Bus Intervention on Children's Pedestrian Safety Behaviors: A Pilot Study" (2012)

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When you're ready to see the final policy

Your policy has some great language, and will put your district ahead of the game.

Your final policy is below. If you'd like to make it even more effective, you may want to consider adding one or more of the following provisions:

- Support for Active Transportation
- Support for Safe Routes to School
- Limiting Restrictions on Active Transportation
- Student Arrival and Dismissal
- School Travel Plan: Moving Beyond the Bus
- School Siting

If you'd like to revise your policy, you may click any section in the menu on the left and adjust your choices. Then click "Finish" at the bottom of the list to return here and see your updated score.

When you're satisfied with your choices you may download your entire policy in RTF format. This format will enable you to modify and further personalize your policy in Microsoft Word, Apple iWork, or any other word processor.

Now that you have your tailored Safe Routes to School policy, you'll want to double check a few things.

First, does it accurately reflect the distribution of authority between the state, school board, and local government in your state? Your school attorney or other district personnel should be able to easily assess this. Modify the language in the policy if need be.

Second, does the policy appear in the format that is used by your district? If you don't want to pass it as a board policy, tailor it to the format of a resolution or set of administrative regulations.

Please enter your district zipcode: *

Which of these best describes your role in school policy? *

- Select -

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- Finish Up Your Policy
- Citations

Your policy has some great language, and will put your district ahead of the game.

Your final policy is below. If you'd like to make it even more effective, you may want to consider adding one or more of the following provisions:

- Support for Active Transportation
- Support for Safe Routes to School
- Limiting Restrictions on Active Transportation
- Student Arrival and Dismissal
- School Travel Plan: Moving Beyond the Bus
- School Siting

Supportive words about your choices

If you'd like to revise your policy, you may click any section in the menu
Then click "Finish" at the bottom of the list to return here and see your updated score.

When you're satisfied with your choices you may download your entire policy in RTF format. This format will enable you to modify and further personalize your policy in Microsoft Word, Apple iWork, or any other word processor.

Now that you have your tailored Safe Routes to School policy, you'll want to double check a few things.

First, does it accurately reflect the distribution of authority between the state, school board, and local government in your state? Your school attorney or other district personnel should be able to easily assess this. Modify the language in the policy if need be.

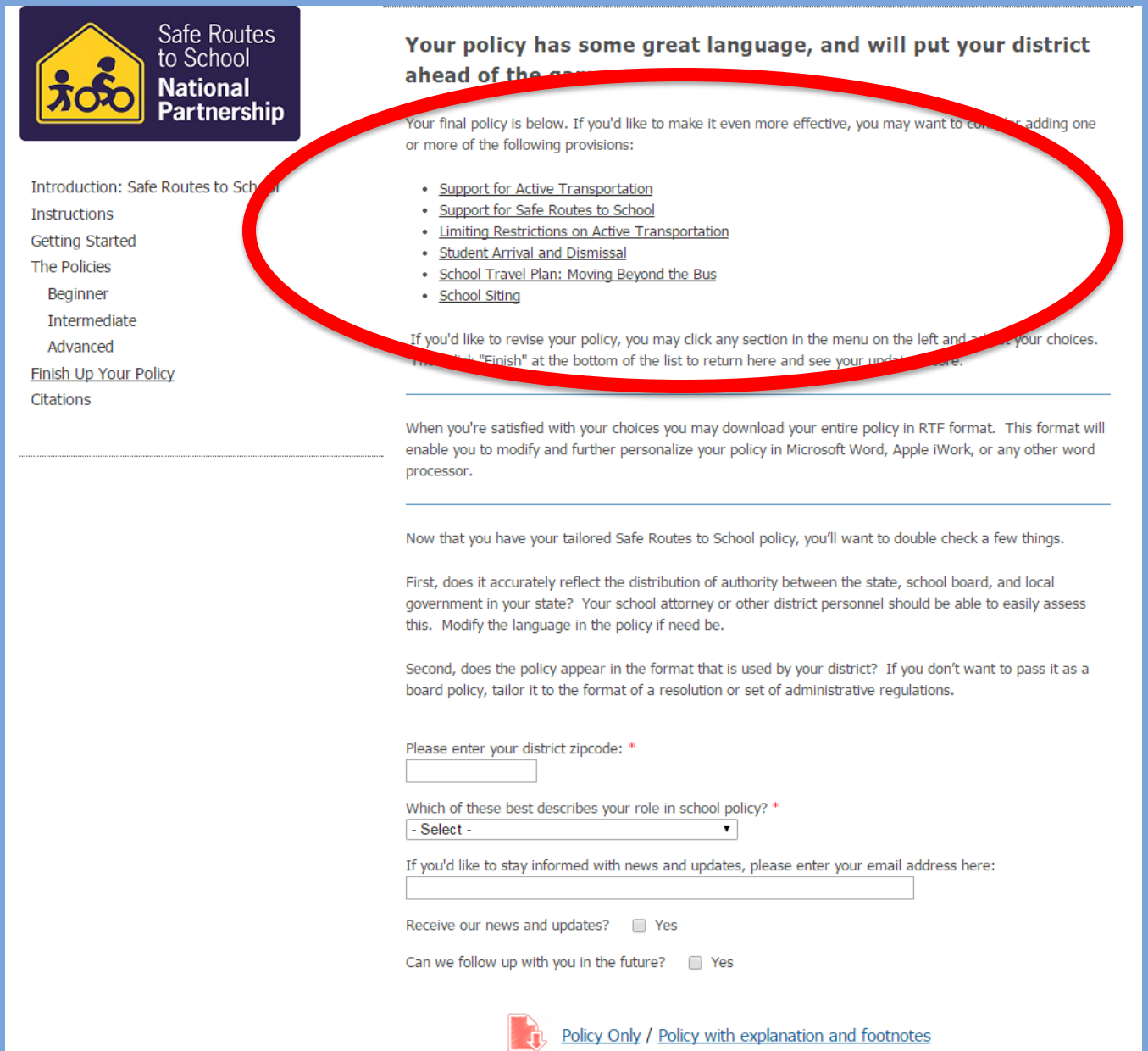
Second, does the policy appear in the format that is used by your district? If you don't want to pass it as a board policy, tailor it to the format of a resolution or set of administrative regulations.

Please enter your district zipcode: *

Which of these best describes your role in school policy? *

- Select -

Prompts


Safe Routes to School National Partnership
Introduction: Safe Routes to Sch
Instructions
Getting Started
The Policies
Beginner
Intermediate
Advanced
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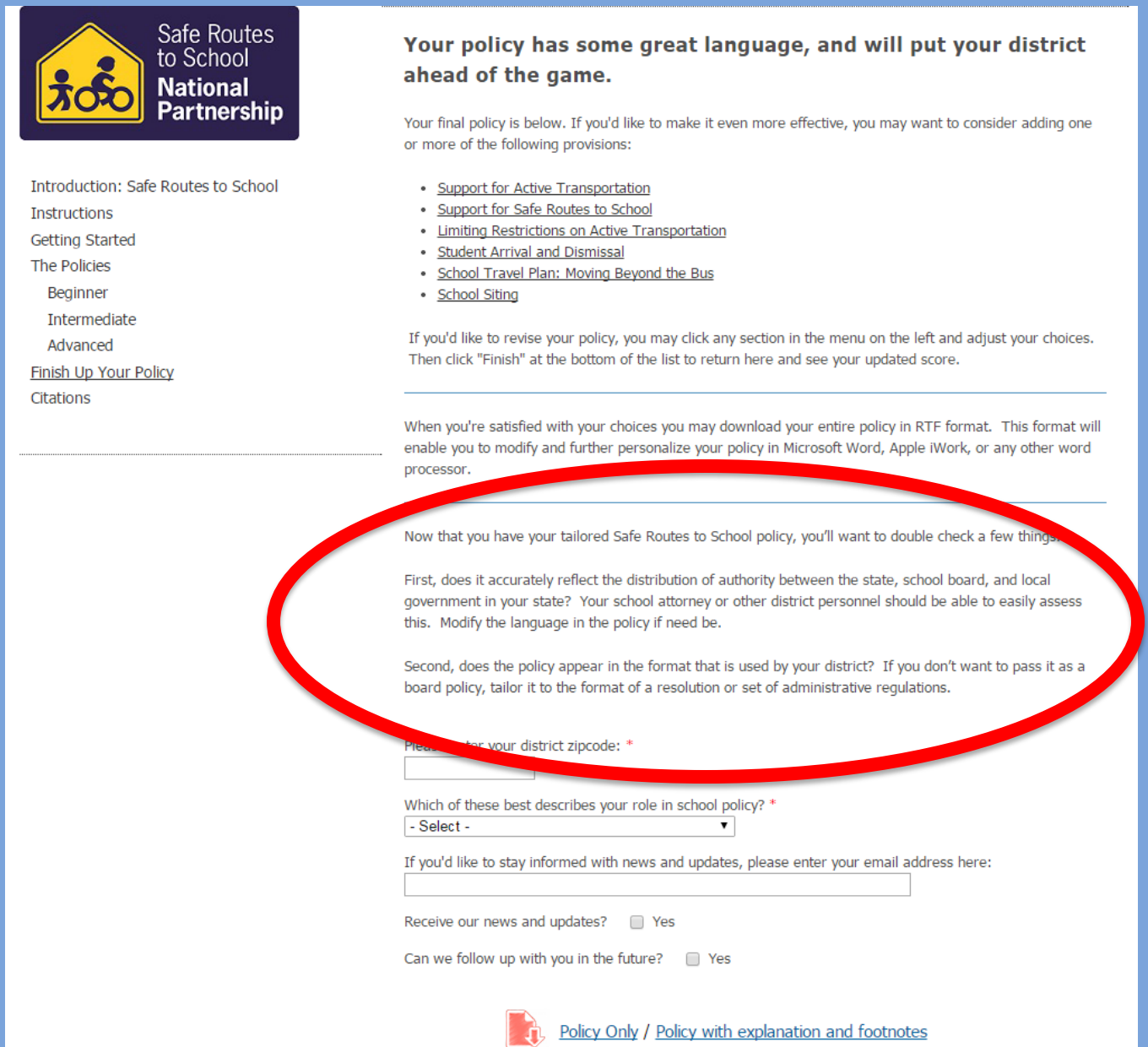
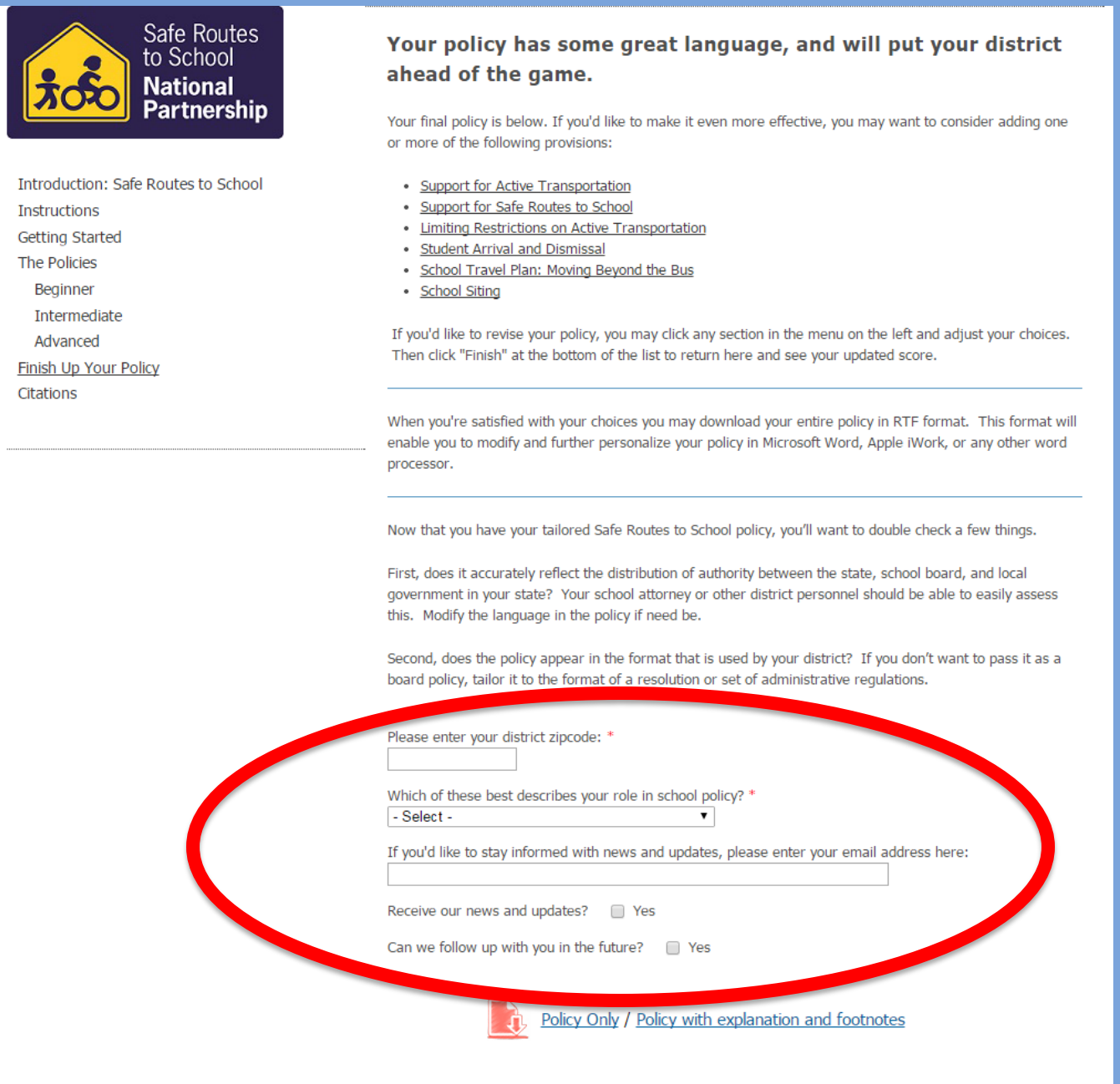
Please enter your district zipcode: *
Which of these best describes your role in school policy? *
- Select -
If you'd like to stay informed with news and updates, please enter your email address here:
Receive our news and updates? Yes
Can we follow up with you in the future? Yes
Policy Only / Policy with explanation and footnotes

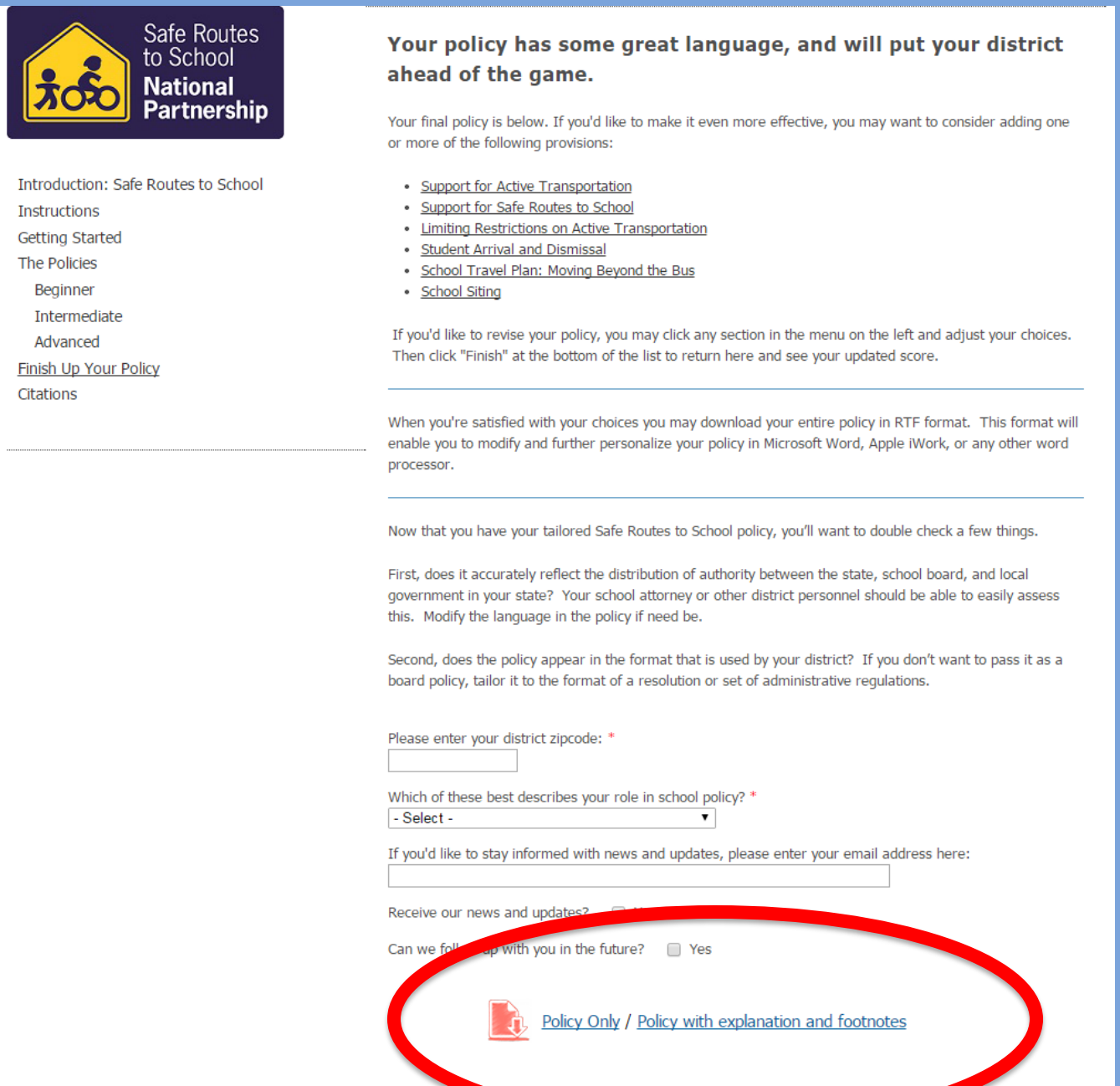
Final Checks



Information and Updates



Options for Downloading your Policy



Tailored Policy

Walking School Buses and Bicycle Trains

Explanation: By encouraging groups of students to walk or bicycle to school together, Walking School Buses and Bicycle Trains effectively address a variety of parental concerns about safety. These programs can be part of an organized school-wide effort, with trained safety leaders and multiple groups walking or bicycling from different neighborhoods to the school. Or informal groups of children can meet up to walk, skateboard, scooter, or ride together. Younger students can be accompanied by an adult volunteer or older student. Walking School Buses and Bike Trains are effective tools for reducing traffic safety risk and improving personal safety.[44] They reduce the risk of bullying and other personal harm by bringing more eyes and ears to the street, a known crime reduction technique. They also build social cohesion and can even reduce tardiness.

District requires that individual schools establish and promote regular Walking School Bus or Bicycle Train programs. Such programs shall occur on a regular basis, at least [one per week].

Legal Note on Liability and Walking School Buses: School districts are often concerned about their potential exposure to liability if a child were to be injured while participating in a Walking School Bus or Bicycle Train program. Although liability rules vary from state to state, districts are generally entirely immune from liability for decisions to simply sponsor or endorse a program such as a Walking School Bus or Bicycle Train program.[45] Sponsoring a program can involve allowing it to take place, informing

Why use the policy workbook?

- Presents a wide array of policy options
- Assists districts in committing to strong policies
- Helps avoid problems and liability concerns by ensuring a well thought-through, vetted approach

Working with School Boards

How do you get policies adopted?

- **Engage**: Get people excited about their vision for change
- **Assess**: What's the problem? What solutions are there?
- **Propose**: Draft a strong policy that expresses the vision
- **Advocate**: Identify and meet with decision makers
- **Implement**: Stay focused even after a policy gets adopted

Some Resources on Working with Districts

Tips for Working with School Boards

- To start: Do some basic research & get the inside scoop on school board members.
- Build relationships with board members by first looking to inform and engage them.
- Figure out what a board member wants. What is important to them? Would they like to serve on your task force? Ask!
- Meet with board members before presenting your ideas at a board meeting.
- Keep your superintendent in the loop.
- Offer your resources & recognition & SRTS photo ops.

Questions?

What policy opportunities exist for Safe Routes to School in your district?

What obstacles may arise?

Sara Zimmerman

Technical Assistance Director

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