Why is traffic so bad around my child’s school, and what can be done to improve the safety of pedestrians around the schools?

Traffic around schools is always a challenge in every city in America, and the City of Lake Oswego is no different. With ten public schools making up the Lake Oswego School District, each school has separate but similar issues. The two high schools have speeding issues by students and parents alike. The two middle schools have speeding issues by parents. All six elementary schools have traffic flow issues, speeding, distracted drivers (cell phones), pedestrian crosswalk issues, and failing to obey traffic control device problems.

One thing to understand is that the Lake Oswego Police Department is fully aware of all the issues surrounding our schools in the morning and afternoon. We are consistently doing what is necessary not only to enforce the violations as they occur, but we are also looking ahead for potential changes with each school and the City of Lake Oswego Traffic Engineering Department to improve the safety of our students, staff, and community members surrounding all of our schools.

As the LOPD School Resource Officer for the Lake Oswego School District, I highly recommend to all parents several things to consider as it relates to traffic safety and our schools:

1. Utilize bus transportation for your students as this will dramatically decrease the vehicular traffic at all of our schools. Less vehicles = Less risk of safety issues.
2. SLOW DOWN...school zone speed limits are 20 MPH. The faster you drive means the less time you have to react to potential safety hazards, i.e., pedestrians and crossing guards. It is also worth repeating that the school zone speed limit doesn’t end when you have dropped your child off at school. It applies to every drive passing in and out of the school zone.
3. Stay off your cell phones and other things inside your vehicle that may distract you from focusing on driving safely.
4. Yield to all pedestrians in crosswalks. We have had an increase in pedestrian close calls with vehicles at nearly all of our schools this schools year. Again, slow down, stay off your electronic devices, observe the school zone speed limits, and pay attention.
5. Respect the residents that live around the schools with your driving behaviors and parking.
6. Red curbs and fire hydrants mean no parking. Do not, for any reason, leave your vehicle unattended in these areas as this will create an extremely dangerous situation for all occupants of any of our schools in the event an emergency occurs.
7. Finally, review and adhere to the traffic flow maps that all of your principals have sent out to all parents at the beginning of the school year.

One final reminder: no one can change another person’s driving behaviors...not even the police. The improvement of traffic safety as it relates to our schools and traffic safety in general requires all of us to check ourselves and be mindful of our surroundings. Drive safely. Drive how you would want everyone else to drive around your own student. I’d rather see you contribute funds to the school fundraiser than have to pay for a citation.

*Have any ideas about school safety? We’d love to join the conversation. I can be reached at bsheldon@lakeoswego.city.*

Officer Bryan Sheldon, School Resource Officer
Lake Oswego Police Department