



October Walk to School Month

How to Include Students Riding School Buses in Walk to School Events

Why Include Students Riding School Buses?

By providing an opportunity for students who ride school buses to participate in your Walk to School activities, you are making an attempt to include the *entire* student body. This includes those students with disabilities who typically take the school bus. By engaging all students, you may get more support from the school administration and parent community. Additionally, you are giving *all* students the chance to learn safe pedestrian skills and an equal opportunity to incorporate physical activity into their day.



Ways to Include Students Riding School Buses:

First and foremost, a team leader or community champion, such as a parent or teacher, is needed to coordinate Walk to School activities. The ideal team leader is well connected to the school, a good organizer and passionate about getting more kids walking and biking to school.

Re-route the school bus for walk events

On event days, consider having the school bus drop-off the students at a “remote drop-off site”. The school bus first stops at the school and lets any student who doesn’t want to participate get off the bus. The bus then continues on to a drop-off site near the school to let the students walk the short distance ($\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile) back to school. This takes advanced planning, so give yourself plenty of time to get the logistics in order.

- Know the school’s morning timeline. Consider what time students begin arriving at school, what time the free and reduced priced breakfast is served, what time the school bus arrives, and what time students have to be in their classrooms.
- Have an open dialogue with the school principal, school bus drivers, and school transportation office ahead of time. To get maximum buy-in, explain the event and why it is important to include students who ride the school bus (i.e. improved health and pedestrian safety for *all* students). Ask the principal and school bus drivers for suggestions of appropriate and safe remote drop-off sites that would work with *their* school schedule and morning timeline. Determine the best way to conduct the activities with a minimal amount of disruption to the normal school routine. Make a *detailed plan on paper* that everyone can agree upon.
- Present the plan to the teachers and school administration at a staff meeting. Recruit as many school administrators and staff as possible to escort the students back to school. Explain that it will take a few extra minutes of their time, but it is a great energizing way to start the day. They will meet the school buses at the school, then ride with the students to

the remote drop-off site and walk back with the students to school. This allows the administration and teachers to connect with the students in a fun and informal way, helps to safely supervise the students during the walk, and provides an opportunity for everyone to be physically active before the school day.

- If there is adequate parking at the remote drop-off site, invite other students and parents to use the site as well. Some schools call these “Drop-and-Walk” or “Park-and-Walk” sites. Students on the bus love to see all their friends waiting at the drop-off site for them, and there is the added safety benefit of walking in a larger group.



Lunch or Recess Walking Program

A walking program during the school day helps to promote walking as a form of physical activity for all students, including those who ride the bus to school. Students can walk around the schoolyard or the track with staff and friends while burning energy and getting fresh air. Some schools choose to offer incentives or rewards to participating students (i.e. tokens, raffle tickets, or punches on cards).

In-school curriculum

With a little creativity, there are countless ways for teachers to integrate walking and biking into the school curriculum. The California Walk to School Day Headquarters website has information on incorporating walking and biking into classroom activities. There are also training materials and resources available to provide basic pedestrian and biking safety information to all students (www.cawalktoschool.com). Additionally, consider inviting the high school drama club, school leadership team or an after school club to perform pedestrian safety skits for the younger grade levels.

After-School Walking Club

After-school walking clubs are an excellent way for students and staff to be active by walking laps around the schoolyard. It also provides an opportunity to educate students on physical fitness and pedestrian safety. Consider keeping track of distance walked on a club log and/or individual student logs. The club log can be made larger and displayed in a common area for all to see. A few additional ideas include: figure out how many laps equal a mile by using a pedometer and have students create goals for the number of miles they walk in a day, week or month; have students create banners or flags that they can carry while they walk; integrate stations such as jump roping, jumping jacks, abdominal crunches; or play music on a boom box to keep everyone energized while walking.



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January 1, 2012