

Walking for Transportation and Fitness



Benefits of Walking

WHY START A WALKING (OR BIKING) INITIATIVE?

» HEALTH

By incorporating walking or any other active mode of transportation to and from school into your daily routine, we can all meet the suggested guidelines for daily physical activity. Physical activity also helps build self-esteem and a positive self-image. In addition, it helps improve concentration and improves learning.



» SAFETY

In many Philadelphia neighborhoods children are frequently driven to school. This results in chaotic congestion around the school which presents major risks for all children as they enter and leave school. A Walking School Bus offers an excellent opportunity to sensitize children and adults to safety issues and to teach and reinforce safe habits for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists (having more 'eyes on the street' also increases other forms of safety in the neighborhood).

» COMMUNITY

Our increasing over-dependence on the car means that many children have limited opportunities during their formative years to experience both the people and the physical environment of their community. The decreased person-to-person contact among all community members also reduces community awareness and involvement. Children and adults who participate in a Walking School Bus can feed

their curiosity with a broader range of experience and thus develop a more diverse view of the environment and their community.

» AIR QUALITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

We know that car emissions in general contribute to climate change.

Short trips are the most polluting because a car's engine has not had time to warm up enough to efficiently control emissions. Walking School Buses offers one solution by reducing the number of motorized vehicles on the road.



On-going Walking Initiatives

A great way to follow up International Walk and Bike to School Day is to start on-going walking initiatives at your school! This guide will outline several methods and types of walking activities that students at your school can use for transportation and fitness!

NOTE:

Contact Safe Routes Philly for support in starting your walking initiatives and the materials to adjust each resource to your schools needs.

WHAT ARE WALKING INITIATIVES?

Walking initiatives can range from groups of students walking to school together, a formal club, or a school-wide challenge to track how much each student walks. You can use the menu of options below to design the walking initiative that works best for your school! Each option can be used separately or in combination with other options.

Getting People Involved

1. STUDENTS

WHO (YOU CAN CHOOSE ONE OR A COMBINATION OF ALL THE SUGGESTIONS BELOW)

- » **INDIVIDUALS:** Students' track their own distances walked while it adds up for the school's combined total distance.
 - Encourage students in the school to use walking for transportation! Students can keep an individual log of how much they walk outside of school (including their walks to and from school).
- » **TEAMS:** Students select their own teams of 5 – 10 students and compete against other teams for distances walked. Team distances can be added to the school's total distance.
- » **CLASSROOMS:** Each class is a team. They track their points to compete against other classes and add their distance to the school's total distance.
 - Children over the age of 10, with parent permission can walk without an adult. Children under age 10 should have parent permission and be accompanied by an adult.
 - Encourage organized groups of students to walk to and from school (see walking school bus page).

ASSEMBLE A GROUP OF STUDENTS WHO WILL HELP ORGANIZE AND LEAD THE WALKING INITIATIVES

- » Make sure to delegate tasks (examples below)
- » Participation (recruitment, permission slips, and team organization)
- » Publicity (posters/flyers, classroom visits, assemblies, press)
- » Data collection (keep track of the club's progress toward a goal)
- » Development and Funding (secure money for the club and keep track of spending)

2. THE PRINCIPAL

- » It is important to let your principal know that the walking initiative is part of the “Get Healthy Philly” campaign.
- » Ask if there is school funding available to make T-shirts or to buy water bottles, snacks and pedometers.
 - A pedometer is a device that you attach to yourself and it tells you how many steps you have taken, how far you walk, and how many calories you have burned. They range in price, starting at \$10.
 - Visit www.Pedometer.com for a useful guide on using pedometers

3. TEACHERS AND SCHOOL STAFF MEMBERS

- » Many group walking activities that happen outside of school hours will require adult supervision, especially for children under 10 years of age.
- » Find one adult at your school who is willing to sponsor your walking initiatives.
- » You may want to start by asking staff and teachers who already serve on your school’s Wellness Council.
- » Make sure this person knows that he or she is an advisor, not an organizer of the club.

4. PARENTS

- » Recruit willing parents to help organize the walking initiatives.
- » Parents are a great resource for after-school supervision when students are walking around the neighborhood or to a point of interest. (Especially with children under 10).
- » Parents are key helpers in the Walking School Bus (instructions on page 106).

In Your Neighborhood

- » Decide on a point of interest such as a park, baseball field, community center, or garden.
- » Schedule a time for 3—5 students, or your youth council, and your adult advisor to walk around your school's neighborhood.
- » As you walk, complete the walkability checklist as you walk around the neighborhood, noting factors such as the condition of sidewalks, trash, glass and car traffic.
- » Have one student make a map of the route you walk during your observation, noting which streets would be best for the walking club.
- » Once you have determined the safest route(s), use an internet mapping system, such as Google Maps to determine the distance of your route(s).
- » If you noticed particular issues in your neighborhood that detract from its walkability, create a plan for helping to get rid of those factors (example: street clean up, writing your city council representative)

TIP

Make posters or T-shirts to identify yourselves as purposeful walkers from your school!

Around the School Yard

- » Design a course in your school yard using sidewalk chalk and cones.
- » At each stopping point change the activity to a different task.
- » Moving tasks: skipping, hopping, walking lunges, jogging, etc.
- » Stationary tasks: jumping rope, 10 bending toe touches, jumping jacks, etc.
- » In between the varied tasks, students can walk.
- » Make sure to calculate the distance of the fitness course so students can track it!
- » For an example go to: http://www.healthiersf.org/nutrition/Action6/6-Seek_Inspiration/3inactionWalkingClub.html

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

- » An extra adult supervisor is not needed because students would be walking during regularly scheduled recess hours that are already supervised by staff.
- » An extra perk to this approach is that the group of walkers can participate in front of all of the other students in the school yard, which can encourage more participation!
- » Participating students can plan fitness activities in the school yard during regularly scheduled outdoor recess time. (see below) Note: ask your principal before setting this up!

Publicize

- » **ASK TEACHERS IF YOU CAN VISIT THEIR CLASSROOM** to give a 3 minute presentation about the walking initiative.



You can sign up students on the spot, leave a signup sheet with the teacher, or invite students to an informational meeting where they sign up.

- » **SHARE THE BENEFITS OF WALKING**

- Health: Good for our bodies
- Environment: Good for the Earth
- Community: Good for getting to know one another
- Transportation: Walking gets you from place to place!

- » **CREATE FLYERS AND POSTERS** to get the word out about walking.

- » **SECURE A HALLWAY BULLETIN BOARD** for progress updates, pictures, and recognition!

- » **PARENT LETTER:** Make sure every member has turned in a parent permission slip if they are participating in the walking initiative (see example parent letter at the end of this guide).

Set a Goal for the Walking Initiative

IT IS IMPORTANT FOR ANY INITIATIVE TO HAVE A GOAL! It helps motivate the group toward a shared purpose and allows members to track both individual and group progress. One idea is to challenge your school to walk as many miles as it is to cross your state or other geographic area (see the example below).

- » Have students turn in their logs at the end of each week and add up the totals for each grade in the school.



CHALLENGE YOUR SCHOOL TO WALK ACROSS PENNSYLVANIA!

1. Calculate or research how many miles it is to walk across PA and challenge the walking club to walk that distance by a certain date!
2. Create a large map of Pennsylvania on a school wall to track progress (use the NRG Balance trackers at the end of this guide)
3. Check out walkacrossillinois.org for a good example of this kind of challenge.

TIP

You can use any geographical area to “walk across”. If you want a BIG challenge, walk across the entire state!

Tracking Progress

The only way to know if you meet your goal is to have each student and/or team track their progress.

See the end of this guide for sample tracking logs provided by the NRG Balance program.

*For more walking and health resources visit NRG balance online! www.nrgbalance.org



Walking Initiative Checklist

✓	Task	Date Completed	By who:
	Assemble a group of 3—5 students who will help organize and lead the walking initiative and delegate tasks		
	Find an adult in the building to help sponsor your walking club (remember, the students are the main organizers!)		
	Recruit parent support for your walking initiative		
	Schedule a meeting with your Principal to have the club approved (secure funding, if possible)		
	Decide if the walking club will use school hours or after school hours to walk (or both!)		
	Decide if your club will organize using the individual, classroom, or team model (or a combination of the 3)		
	Create a neighborhood map of the best and safest route near your school (if leaving school premises)		
	Set a distance goal for your walking club, such as “Walk across Pennsylvania”		
	Decide on how to encourage members. This could include incentive prizes or celebrations		
	Plan a Kick-off Event		
	Continuously track student, team, and school progress and make it visible in your school		

TIPS for Success!

- » When completing the checklist, make sure that each club leader has a job.
- » No one person should feel like it is their responsibility to complete all of the tasks.
- » Start a binder or notebook to keep track of everything you have completed for the club, such as adults you have contacted and a timeline for starting.
- » **COMMUNICATION IS KEY!** Let the other leaders know what you have accomplished.
- » Ask your adult advisor for guidance, but make sure that the bulk of the work is coming from you, the students!
- » **ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER!**

Try a Walking School Bus

WHAT IS A WALKING SCHOOL BUS

A walking school bus is a great way to encourage students to walk for transportation! A walking school bus is a group of children walking to school with one or more adults. It can be as informal as two families taking turns walking their children to school to as structured as a route with meeting points, a timetable and a regularly rotating schedule of trained volunteers. The program provides a consistent, safe system in which children can walk to school as a group under the supervision of trained adults. It increases safe passage for students who already walk, and encourages additional students to walk, introducing them to an important and easy form of exercise.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND:

- » What safety training do children need? See Walking School Bus: Guidelines for talking to children about pedestrian safety here: <http://www.walkingschoolbus.org/safety.pdf>
- » Safe Routes Philly promotes biking and walking as fun, healthy forms of transportation in Philadelphia Elementary Schools. Find out if your child's school has begun the Safe Routes Philly lessons by asking your school principal.
- » A good time to begin is during International Walk to School Week, first full week of October. Safe Routes Philly is highlighting this event. Does your school want to get involved too? Contact us at www.saferoutesphilly.org. Walk and look for ways to encourage more children and families to get involved. Have fun!



Where to Begin

START SIMPLE

When beginning a walking school bus, remember that the program can always grow. It often makes sense to start with a small “bus” and see how it works. Pick a single neighborhood that has a group of parents and children who are interested. It’s like a carpool—without the car—with the added benefits of exercise and visits with friends and neighbors. For an informal bus:

1. INVITE FAMILIES WHO LIVE NEARBY TO WALK.

» Things to Remember: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends one adult for every six children. If children are age 10 or older, fewer adults may be needed. If children are ages 4 to 6, one adult per three children is recommended.

2. PICK A ROUTE AND TAKE A TEST WALK.

» Things to Remember: The amount of interest will determine the number of walking routes. Walk the route(s) without children first to make sure they are safe.

3. DECIDE HOW OFTEN THE GROUP WILL WALK TOGETHER.

» Things to Remember: Make sure all the logistics have been figured out. Decide how often the walking school bus will operate and whether or not you want the bus to operate before and after school; once a week or every day? Decide when you want the children to meet the bus and where – at each child’s home or at a few meeting spots? (Keep in mind to leave enough time for slower paced children, but also to ensure that everyone arrives at school on time).

4. HAVE FUN!

» Hold theme days such as color days (everyone wears red one day, blue the next, etc.), or wear your clothes backwards day. Make up songs you can sing along the way.

For additional information and resources on implementing a Walking School Bus Club at your school visit the National Center for Safe Routes to School at http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/guide/walking_school_bus/index.cfm.

Keep Your School's Walking Initiatives Going

INCENTIVES AND ENCOURAGEMENT: KEEP YOUR SCHOOL MOTIVATED!

- » **RECOGNITION PLAQUE** for each student who walks a certain distance (example at the end of this guide).
 - Prizes based on the distance a student has walked (this would require funding).
- » **PLAN A CELEBRATION EVENT** each time participating students reach a certain distance!

Keep the food and drinks at this event nutritious to show your support to the "Get Healthy Philly" Campaign.

» PLAN A KICK-OFF EVENT

- International Bike and Walk to School Day is a great opportunity to get your school excited about walking for exercise and transportation.
- Plan a walk around the school yard or your neighborhood with participating students.
- Make yourselves visible by making posters.
- Coordinate an assembly to educate students about the benefits of walking and eating healthy. This could also double as a recruitment strategy.

» PARTICIPATE IN COMMUNITY EVENTS AND WALKS FOR CHARITY

AIDS Walk

October 17th, 2010

<http://www.aidswalkphilly.org/>

Walk to cure Lupus (an autoimmune disorder)

October 31st, 2010

<http://www.lupusloop.org/events/>

Lung Cancer Research, Free to Breathe Walk/Run

November 7th, 2010

<http://participate.freetobreathe.org>

Philadelphia Bar Association in support of Child Advocates

New date TBA (2010 walk was in the spring)

Charityrun2010.com

Susan G Komen Race for the Cure (Breast Cancer)

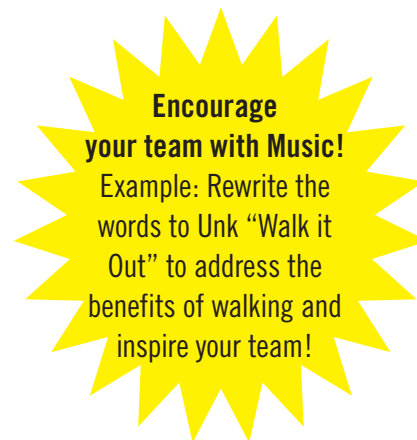
Date: Mother's Day, May 8, 2011

<http://www.komenphiladelphia.org/>

Walk to Cure Psoriasis (a skin disease)

New date TBA (2010 walk was in the spring)

http://walk.psoriasis.org/site/TR?fr_id=1530&pg=entry



Quick Check List for Charity Walks:

1. Find an adult to sponsor and supervise your team's participation.
2. Make sure all participants are available on the day. They usually take place on weekends.
3. Permission slips should be sent home at least two weeks in advance.
4. Keep in mind that many walks ask you to raise money.



Online Resources

www.Americawalks.org

- » Facts about walking and health
- » Facts about walking and community
- » Safe Routes to Schools Webinars

www.Walktoschool.org

- » Health, environment, and community reasons to walk to school
- » Fact Sheets
- » Publicity Resources

www.healthiersf.org/nutrition/Action6/6-Seek_Inspiration/3inactionWalkingClub.html

- » Example of a school-based walking club
- » Video example
- » Walking club best practices
- » Nutrition links

www.healthiergeneration.org/schools.aspx?id=4321

- » Four examples of walking clubs at other schools around the nation

www.umm.edu/news/releases/get_fit_kids.htm

- » News article about a walking challenge in Baltimore

www.walkinghealthy.com

- » walking posture
- » warm up and cool down stretches with pictures

www.thewalkingsite.com

- » Stretch descriptions
- » National Events
- » Frequently Asked Questions
- » Nutrition

www.racewalk.com

- » Walking technique
- » Warm up and cool down stretches with photographs

MAKE THE MOST OF ONLINE RESOURCES!

Decide what information you are looking for before you start your search.

If you are looking for multiple types of information, split the work up between club leaders.

Use the information on this page as a guide to what each site has to offer.

TIP

If you use facts from a website on promotional material, make a note at the bottom that says what site or organization the facts came from! This is called citation and gives credit to the right people!

Get Healthy Philly



[insert date here]

Dear Parent,

Your child has signed up to participate in [insert name of club here], the newly formed walking club at [insert your school name here]. The walking club was formed by the wellness council, which is part of the Get Healthy Philly Campaign. The wellness council is dedicated to making more healthy foods available in and around schools, decreasing the availability and consumption of unhealthy foods and promoting physical activity in schools.

One of the best and easiest ways to increase physical activity is to start walking more! In the last 40 years, childhood obesity has increased 5-fold for kids ages 6 – 11. Walking is a great way to combat an unhealthy lifestyle or to maintain an already healthy one! A brisk walk can reduce body fat, lower blood pressure, and decrease risk of bone fractures (Americawalks.org).

[insert name of club here] hopes to have fun and get healthy at the same time! We are challenging the students at [insert your school name here] who join [insert name of club here] to collectively walk across the state of Pennsylvania, all while staying within 5 blocks of school! Walking times will be held [insert when the teams will meet (during school, after school, independently)]. Each walker will log their distance and add it to the club's combined distance!

Please fill out the form below and sign at the bottom to grant your child permission to participate in [insert name of club here] for the 2010 – 2011 school year.

Thanks for your support,
Your School Wellness Council
Advisor: [insert name of advisor]
[insert advisory signature]

Student Name: _____ Grade: _____ Homeroom: _____

Parent/Guardian Name (print): _____

Are you the emergency contact? _____

Work number: _____ Cell number: _____

Home number: _____

Address: _____

By signing below I give my child permission to participate in [insert name of club here], a walking club that promotes healthy living and exercise in Philadelphia's youth.

Sign here: _____ Date: _____

These Resources are examples of the type of resources you can create for the walking initiative at your school.