

## **Walk to School Day Tips and Resources**

Thanks to Fred Graff Elementary School for the following week of ideas:

### **Monday**

We provided each child with a foot charm, and asked them to wear yellow clothing. The emphasis this day was safety and we gave the kids pedestrian safety pointers.

### **Tuesday**

As earth friendly green day, the kids learned about the environmental benefits of walking. All of the children dressed in green clothing. As a way to show kids alternatives to sugary snacks, we also provided a healthy snack for the kids this day.

### **Wednesday**

For purple pride in walking day, we had a big event with our school colors. Parents were involved for an evening event at the school and came to walk with the kids on the track. We provided a water bottle for each child.

### **Thursday**

To focus on the benefits of physical activity, each child got a heart healthy sticker and wore fitness clothing.

### **Friday**

We hosted Hats Off to Walking by wearing hats.

Every day of this week the children spent their lunch hour walking on the track accumulating laps for their classroom. At the end of the week we awarded the classes with the most laps the golden shoe award for each grade level.

## **Classroom Activities**

Encourage walking and bicycling by incorporating related topics into the classroom.

### **Art, Computer Class**

Create posters promoting Walk to School Day and safe driving and walking messages.

### **Geography**

Survey and create maps of walking routes to school.

### **Health**

Use pedometers to measure steps, or simply measure walking time accumulated by students; study health benefits of physical activity.

### **Physical Education**

Do some physical conditioning. Learn walking warm-ups and stretches and do some progressively longer walks in class to prepare for Walk to School Day.

### **Mathematics**

Keep logs of walking time or steps; calculate speeds and distances, individual and group averages, trends and statistical analyses (do boys or girls walk more?)

### **Physics**

Study the biomechanics of walking. For example, measure stride lengths-do they vary with height, weight, age, leg length? How does walking speed depend on you step speed and stride length?

**Biology**

Look for specific plant or animal species, or inventory indigenous species along walking routes. Catalogue seasonal changes in the flora and fauna.

**English**

Write press releases and public service announcements to promote Walk to School Day. Write essays or keep a diary about your experiences walking.

**History**

Study historical locations in your community by walking to them.

**Social Sciences**

Photograph important things about your community observed while walking to school. Anything you'd like to change? What can you do about it?

**Great Ideas for Your Event**

Some of these ideas are quite simple and others are more complex. Take a look at this list and choose what fits your event and community. Many of these strategies came from International Walk to School Award applicants.

1. Carry signs that display pedestrian safety messages.
2. Have a nutritious breakfast before or after the walk.
3. Incorporate a walking theme into your physical education class.
4. Invite the school mascot or wear your school colors while walking.
5. Use the Walkability Checklist or make a list of problems spotted along with the walk.
6. Take disposable cameras on the route and document possible pedestrian hazards.
7. Carry colorful balloons during the walk.
8. Play walking songs.
9. Hold a walk during lunchtime.
10. Ask the mayor to sign an Official Proclamation for International Walk to School.
11. Invite local celebrities to participate.
12. Have kids design promotional materials for the event.
13. Hold a pep rally before the walk.
14. Take a tour of an ambulance or fire truck in conjunction with the walk.
15. Create your own walking web site.
16. Hold a safety coloring contest.
17. Have community leaders greet and congratulate kids as they arrive at school.
18. Do a flag salute before the event.
19. Make and hang posters promoting the event at school, along the walking route and throughout the community.
20. Provide parents with maps of safe routes to school.
21. Use the school PA's system to announce pedestrian and bike safety tips and make reminders about the event.
22. Have the students help plan the event.
23. Hold a pedestrian safety assembly or "question and answer" session for the kids along with the walk.
24. Use the concept of a walking school bus at your event.
25. Encourage students to work towards a school-wide goal of "One Million Minutes of Motion."

26. For schools that are too far or dangerous for walking, use the event to kick-off a year-round walking-at-recess program.
27. Have older elementary students use the walkability checklist and present the results to the city council.
28. Use the day to showcase safety changes that have already been made to build support for future improvements.
29. Mark routes to school with the mascot's prints.
30. Work with your local health department to promote physical activity.
31. So that children who live further away can participate and to reduce traffic congestion at school, designate an area for parents to Park and Walk.
32. Student walkers and cyclists collect "stamps" for "passports" which are redeemed for pencils, pencil cases and other small gifts.
33. Provide an area where children can store wet walking shoes and change into dry ones.
34. Create a student "Walk to School Committee" responsible for calculating, posting and announcing statistics about the number of walkers, miles walked or any other related goals.
35. Create a "5-minute Walking Zone" around the school. Assign students the task of measuring and promoting it.
36. Invite parents and grandparents for refreshments at the school on the first Walking Wednesday of every month.
37. Parents or students write songs and have them sung by the school choir.
38. Choose a motto that captures the reason for walking or biking to school, like "spare the air, save a bear." Give out gummy bears as treats in keeping with the theme.
39. Set a unique school-wide mileage goal like climbing Mount Everest, walking the Nile or walking the Great Wall of China. Daily reports calculated by students chart the progress. For a week-long event, use Friday to present a certificate at a school assembly to recognize the accomplishment.
40. Design and laminate a Frequent Walker Punch Card that hangs from students' backpacks. Choose regular and "surprise" walking days to punch cards good towards small gifts.

### **Frequent Walker/Bicyclist Punch Card**

As an incentive to get kids to walk to school regularly, make and hand out punch cards that they can attach to their back packs or keep in their notebooks. Every day they walk or bike to school, or on designated walking days, punch one of the spots on the card to log their walking. When they've punched each of the spots on the card, award them with a prize such as a pencil, balloon, ice cream gift certificate, etc. Allow kids who cannot walk to school to earn punches by walking at recess.

### **Ongoing Walking Programs**

#### **Walking Wednesdays**

Designate the first Wednesday of the month, or every Wednesday, as Walk to School Wednesday.

**Class-by-class walking competitions**

Reward the class that has the greatest percentage of students walking to school at least three days a week, and the one that collectively walks the greatest distance. Also reward the class that increases their percentage of walkers the most over the month, semester, or year.

**Walk at school opportunities**

Not all children live close enough to walk, so provide recess or PE time for walking, so that all classes have an equal chance.

**Park and walk**

Designate areas 1/4 to 1/2 mile from school where parents can drop off children and they can safely walk the remaining distance to school. This assures that even children who must be driven to school get to take part in the fun and enjoy the benefits.

**Pedometer-based walking program**

A pedometer is a small, pager-sized step counter worn on the hip; some are available for as little as \$4 a piece in bulk. Get them for kids and see if they can increase their total daily steps because of their walks to and from school.

**Travel the globe**

Keep track of your class' or school's accumulated walking distance and set a goal to walk to a specific destination such as the Great Wall of China or New York City. Study your target destination and plan a party based on the local culture for when you "arrive."

**Hold Top Ten contests**

Have students list the top ten ways they got parents to walk with them, top ten funny things they saw while walking, top ten reasons to walk, top ten things that must be improved, top ten walking songs or poems. Have monthly contests or votes to pick the best ten school-wide.

**Mile-walk challenge**

Do the mile walk challenge. Walk a mile for time at the beginning of the year, then repeat after eight months of walking to (or at) school.