

Extending Your Event to Year Round

Walk to School Day events create a lot of excitement and allow parents and kids the opportunity to try out walking and bicycling to school. In some cases, it isn't possible to encourage walking and bicycling year round because of distance or traffic safety. But in many cases, kids and their parents can walk and bicycle to school.

Where it's possible, use your Walk to School Day event as an opportunity to kick off a regular walking and bicycling program. Here are some ideas to consider:

Walking Wednesdays

In 2007 in Oxford, Walk to School Day was the kick off for the year-long *Walking Wednesdays* program in the Oxford School District. Each Tuesday the city and school district add a reminder to their websites and signs are placed near drop-off and pick-up locations on school campuses reminding parents and students of Walking Wednesday. Participants are often joined by local celebrities and various college groups like athletes, and they receive incentives for their participation. Most of the schools designate a meeting location from where the walk will begin. At one location, walking on local streets isn't safe, so the weekly walking event is held on the school campus. The program just completed its fourth year in spring 2011.

Walking School Bus

In Jackson, a loosely organized walking school bus came together when one family started walking and others began to join. Now, the parents and children meet and walk to school together. If a parent is unable to walk on a particular day, another parent will walk with the children. According to parents, one of the greatest benefits is the chance to socialize and get to know others.

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 rotated schedule of trained volunteers. A variation on the walking school bus is the bicycle train, in which adults supervise children riding their bikes to school. The flexibility and the adult supervision aspects of the walking school bus make it appealing. For more information, visit www.walkingschoolbus.org.

Mileage Club and Contests

Mileage clubs and contests encourage children either to begin walking and bicycling to school or to increase their current amount of physical activity by making it fun and rewarding. Generally children track the amount of miles they walk or bicycle and get a small gift or a chance to win a prize after a certain mileage goal is reached. Mileage clubs and contests are usually designed in one of three ways:

1. on an individual basis where every child logs miles walked or bicycled and has a chance to win;
2. as a classroom competition where a classroom's collective miles are compared against other classes;
or
3. as a competition among schools.

Park and Walk

A pre-determined parking lot acts as the meeting area for families who drive and then park and walk the remaining distance to school. This program includes all families, even those who live too far to walk from home to school, and decreases the amount of traffic congestion at the school, thereby improving air quality. Starkville designates a spot each year for two of its schools participating in Walk to School Day.

For more information on Mileage Clubs and Contests, Park and Walk programs and other ideas to encourage continued walking and bicycling beyond your Walk to School Day event, visit <http://guide.saferoutesinfo.org/encouragement/>.

