

Walking Wednesdays

Objective:

Every Wednesday kids can walk to school with adult supervision. Promote this program by handing out safety gear packages for those who will walk to school on Wednesdays. The packages can include brightly colored bandanas, stickers, shirts, and/or light-up buttons. These not only promote the event but also make the pedestrian more visible to motor vehicle drivers. Orange cones can be set up along the route to increase awareness to motor vehicle drivers that more kids will be walking this day and to highlight the path the students will be walking. Parents can be involved by volunteering to be assigned to a hazard area (street corner, street crossing, or slippery spot) or they can walk with their child(ren) to school. If funding allows, add in a bagel or donut breakfast with juice and coffee at the school. This is a great weekly walking event for kids to spend more time with their parents.

Materials:

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Suggested Steps for Walking Wednesdays:

1. Gather Information and Identify a Need

Use surveys, conversation with parents and teachers, and neighbors to determine if an event is what your school needs. Surveys can give numbers and facts that help develop your argument for the program's existence.

Note: The National Center for Safe Routes to School has a ready-to-use survey for initially finding out who walks, bikes, and why or why not. Print it out at: www.saferoutesinfo.org, distribute it in backpack mail, collect completed surveys, send them to the National Center for Safe Routes to School, and they will compile the data and send you the results!

2. Get Organized

a) Designate a Coordinator

The Coordinator should be enthusiastic about walking and/or bicycling to

school, be organized and responsible and have excellent communication skills. The Coordinator could be a teacher, school administrator, parent, or community member.

b) Network with School, Parents, Community Members, and Law Enforcement

Hold a meeting, picnic, or coffee, and include local law enforcement. They can help your event by increasing policing and with possible street blocking during it. Communicate early about:

- 1) The need
- 2) The program
- 3) Concerns and fears of parents
- 4) Volunteer supervision (see “Recruiting Volunteers” beginning on page 127)
- 5) Basic locations of children
- 6) Contacts of school administration, parents, and community members
- 7) What time most kids get to school and are dismissed

c) Develop a Budget

After deciding what the school wants to do, then figure out the amount of funding the school needs to do it. Compile a list of anticipated income and expenses for the event. Put money into the budget to survey the students and parents to forecast the amount of participants. If there is a need to fundraise, decide a fundraising strategy and plug it into the budget.

Note Expense Examples: Food, beverages, giveaways, fliers/forms, and equipment (orange cones, stop signs, and high-visibility vests), facilities, insurance.

Note Fundraising Examples: Entry fees for participants; have each student fundraise money for the school to offset their entry fee and offer prizes for obtaining money in a certain bracket.

d) Consider committees or individuals for each position:

- 1) **Communications Committee:** Communicate effectively and efficiently with parents, community members, media, school administration, staff and volunteers about the event through meetings and newsletters.
- 2) **Food and Giveaways Committee:** Come up with the caterer and fun prizes to give away or raffle to participants.
- 3) **Promotion Committee:** Make fliers and banners to post throughout the school and community. Include other promotional areas as well such as loudspeaker announcements and media involvement. Consider inviting a high-profile community member to the event to boost media coverage.
- 4) **Volunteer Committee:** Recruit and schedule Volunteers for the event.
- 5) **Equipment and Facility Coordinators:** Figure out the equipment and facility space needed for event and obtain it, for example, gymnasium space and tables.
- 6) **Budget Committee:** Keep track of expenses and revenues for the event.

e) Choose a Date and Time for the Event

The start of the event could be part of a celebration for a special holiday or

grand finale to a traffic, bike, or walk safety lesson program. Come up with a motto that is catchy, such as “Be Seen, Be Safe.” Media coverage and high-profile persons will be drawn to participate and cover this event if it is tied to a cause. Good ideas of when to kick off this event are:

- 1) International Walk to School Day (usually first Wednesday in October)
- 2) International Walk to School Month (October)
- 3) Earth Day
- 4) Trail Day
- 5) Car-Free Day
- 6) Bicycle to Work/School Day
- 7) Bike Month
- 8) Traffic Safety Day

f) Choose a Start, Route and Finish Line

g) Map the Route

h) Recruit Volunteers

i) Make Contact Lists, Sign-up, and Sign-in Forms

- 1) Staff
- 2) Participants
- 3) Include a waiver in the sign-up forms

j) Use Food and Giveaways

A good incentive for students and parents to participate in the event is to have food, beverages, and giveaways when they reach the school. It is fun for participants because it allows time to socialize and network before school begins. Contact local food vendors for sponsorship or donation of food and drink, otherwise include in the budget. Also turn towards your local bike and athletic shops for fun giveaways, such as bike helmets.

3. Execute Plan

a) Network with Parents, Students, School, and Community Members again with final information

b) Newsletter Packet

Distribute final information about the program to parents/guardians in a newsletter packet at least a week before the first day. You can use backpack mail or include it in a PTO/PTA meeting, or schedule a separate kick-off meeting. The Newsletter Packet should include:

- 1) What are Walking Wednesdays?
- 2) Flier
- 3) Map: the start and finish line and route
- 4) Time of start
- 5) Food and giveaways
- 6) Contact list, including Coordinator, Principal, Volunteers, and Parents/Guardians of children participating
- 7) RSVP with Sign-up Form and Waiver/Consent Form

Additional Resources:

1. Active and Safe Routes to School. A Program of Green Communities in Canada. Walk/Wheel on Wednesdays. www.saferoutestoschool.ca/walkwheelwed.asp
2. iwalk. International Walk to School in the USA. Event Ideas. www.walktoschool.org/eventideas/index.cfm
3. San Francisco Walk to School Day Booklet. www.sfwalktoschool.com/pdf/2008_W2SD_Toolkit_contents.pdf

Examples:

1. National Center for Safe Routes to School. Encouragement Guide. Using more than one encouragement strategy. www.saferoutesinfo.org/guide/encouragement/using_more_than_one_encouragement_strategy.cfm
2. Davidson School District. North Carolina. Walking Wednesdays. www.ci.davidson.nc.us/index.asp?nid=265

Figure 6-1: Walking Wednesdays Coordination Tasks

Walking Wednesdays Coordination Tasks

- Inform the School Administration and the PTA of the event
- Solicit Funding or Donations of food and treats
- Recruit Volunteers and enter them on your Volunteer list
- Create a Map of the Routes including Start and Finish
- Develop and post banners and signs
- Send event flier to parents through backpack mail
- Post event announcement in the school newsletter
- Create and Distribute Safety Kits: high-visibility stickers, bandannas, shirts, etc.
- Obtain Safety Equipment: signs, orange cones, and high-visibility vests
- Ask Principal to make a loudspeaker announcement and provide script
- Coordinate weekly/monthly welcome tables and Volunteers

Figure 6-2: *Walking Wednesdays Supplies Check List*

Walking Wednesdays Supplies Check List

- Volunteers
- Signs and Banners
- Sign-in Sheets on Clipboards
- Safe Routes to School Table Materials
- Trash Containers
- Table and Chairs
- Food and/or Giveaways
- High-Visibility Safety Equipment
- Balloons (optional)

Figure 6-3: Walking Wednesdays Sign-Up Form

Walking Wednesdays
DATE
TIME
WHY HOSTING

Please fill out this form legibly and send back to the address below by

_____ **(DATE)** _____ :

XXX Street
City, State Zip
or
Main Office of School

Name of Student: _____

Grade: _____

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

***Please check all that apply:**

- Yes, Parent(s)/Guardian(s) listed above will be participating in the event**
- Yes, you can contact Parent(s)/Guardian(s) listed above to help volunteer for event**

Figure 6-4: Walking Wednesdays Food and Giveaway Donation Request Letter

Date

Name of Recipient, Title

Name of Business

Street Address

City, State Zip

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name,

This year, (School Name) will be hosting Walking Wednesdays on (Date of Event). We are seeking donations of drinks, snacks, and prizes for distribution to students and parents who walk and bike to school. We believe your business will benefit greatly by contributing to our regularly scheduled event, and would like to request a donation from you. We are seeking (use *one of the descriptions below*):

- a week of drinks and snacks (XX cans/bottles of _____ and XX cookies/apples/etc.)
- a month of drinks and snacks (XX cans/bottles of _____ and XX cookies/apples/etc.)
- a year-long supply of drinks and snacks (XX cans/bottles of _____ and XX cookies/apples/etc.)

In exchange for your donation, your business will receive:

- ✓ Recognition in the school's newsletter.
- ✓ Publicity to our entire school population at our event welcome table.

Walking Wednesdays at (Name of School) is setting an example for increasing the number of youth safely walking and biking to school by integrating health, fitness, traffic relief, environmental awareness and safety under one program. Add in success statistics for this program from your school or other schools in area.

Thank you in advance for supporting the health and happiness of your community. I will call you next week to answer any questions you may have about this request. You may also contact me directly.

Sincerely,

Name, Title

School

Street Address

City, State Zip

Phone Number

Fax Number

Email Address

Figure 6-5: Walking Wednesdays Parent Information Letter

Date

Name of Recipient

Street Address

City, State Zip

Dear Mr. and/or Ms. *(Last Name)* ,

This year, (School Name) will be hosting a Walking Wednesdays on (Date of Event) . We are inviting you and your children to participate in the event. There will be drinks, snacks, and small prizes for distribution to students and parents who walk and bike to school. We believe you and your child(ren) will benefit greatly by participating in our regularly scheduled event.

Using the descriptions of the event at the beginning of this chapter and your own ideas, please insert a description and benefits of the event here. If the program has been going on and you are looking for more participants, use success statistics for this program from your school, or for a new program, search for model schools and success stories from other schools in area.

Interested parents are invited to sign-up for Walking Wednesdays on the enclosed forms. Please return the forms by (Date) to (Name, Address or Main Office) . The Kick-Off meeting will be held on (Date) , from (Time) , at (Place) .

We are looking forward to bringing the parents together and getting this program off the ground. If you have any questions, please contact me directly by phone or email.
Thank you.

Sincerely,

Name

Title

School

Street Address

City, State Zip

Phone Number

Fax Number

Email Address

Figure 6-6: Walking Wednesdays Loudspeaker Announcements

Walking Wednesdays Loudspeaker Announcements

“Tomorrow is Walking Wednesday. Stop by the tables located at (Table Location) to Sign-in or pick up food and prizes tomorrow morning. Remember to always wear your helmet if you are biking and never walk with strangers. When you walk or bike to school, you can stay healthy and help the environment. Try it tomorrow; you'll like it!”

“Walking Wednesday is tomorrow! Start your day with fresh air and receive a free snack. When you walk or bike to school, you are staying fit and helping to keep our air clean. Grab your helmet, hop on your bike and ride safely. Remember to never walk with a stranger. Pick up some food and a prize at (Location) . Try out Walking Wednesday; you'll like it!”

Figure 6-7: Walking Wednesdays Job List

Walking Wednesdays Job List

Committee/Job	Name(s)	Phone Number	Email(s)	Dates Working
1. Communicator				
2. Food and Giveaways				
3. Promotion				
4. Equipment and Facility				
5. Budget				
6. Volunteer				

Figure 6-8: Walking Wednesdays Participant List

Walking Wednesdays Participant List

Student Name	Parent(s) Name(s)	Phone Number	Email	Address

Figure 6-9: Walking Wednesdays Parent Participant Contact List

Walking Wednesdays Parent Participant Contact List

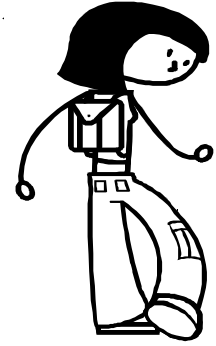
Parent Name	Child(ren) Name(s)	Phone Number	Email	Address

Figure 6-10: Walking Wednesdays Budget Form

Walking Wednesdays Budget
Date of Event

Budget Item	Expense	Revenue	Total
Staff			
Facility			
Equipment			
Food & Drinks			
Giveaways			
Promotion			
Insurance			
Fundraising			
Grant			
Donations			
Entry Fee			
School Funds			
<i>(other)</i>			
Total			

Figure 6-11: Walking Wednesdays Flier



Join us at
[Name of School]
for
**Walking
Wednesdays**
(Date)

**Walking Wednesdays is a (weekly/
monthly/annual) event held to promote
safe walking and bicycling to school!**

What are the benefits of kids walking and bicycling (or using a skateboard, skates, scooter, wheelchair or other means to get) to school along safe routes?

1. Daily exercise for kids!
2. Fewer cars dropping off kids at school, which means less congestion, safer streets and better air quality!
3. Parents save gas money!
4. Students spend time with their friends and arrive at school energized and ready to learn!

For more information, call (Coordinator Contact) or visit (School Web site)

For information about how to encourage kids to walk or bike to school every day, please visit the Iowa Safe Routes to School Web site at www.iowasaferoutes.org.