

How to start walk/bike to school day program:

Step 1:

Form a team-build a strong, inclusive core community to make a more impactful event.

You may want to invite:

school administration/principals

teachers

parents

PTA/PTO

Community organizers or leaders

Crossing guards or school district transportation coordinators

School champions

Businesses

Public officials and local government

Youth leadership groups

Health or safety advocacy groups

Bicycle shop owners and bicycling advocates

Step 2:

Envision the event-Having a theme for the event can help other planning decisions fall into place. What motivates the community? Is there interest in promoting physical activity? Was there a tragedy involving a walker or bicyclist? Is there a way to strengthen the connection between families and the school? Understanding what inspires you, other partners, the school, and broader community should help guide event planning. Think about whether it makes sense to include walking, biking, or both.

Step 3:

Get Buy-In from the school-School principals are key partners. It is important to get their buy-in before publicizing details and logistics of the event. Principals can be involved in many ways and can really make your event a success!

Step 4:

Register your event-Registration is the only way that the event can be tracked at the national level and shows local, state, and national leaders that walking and bicycling to school are valued. Register at www.walkbiketoschool.org.

Step 5:

Recruit volunteers-volunteers can help plan event and assist on event date itself.

Consider using volunteers to:

Design, print, and distribute fliers for the event

Contact potential speakers and help the speakers prepare for the event

Organize student activities

Help test walking and biking routes

Lead walking and biking groups

Coordinate logistics for a park-and-walk event

Step 6:

Finalize event plans-review all final details of the event. You may want to plan what time students will arrive at school, where to meet upon arrival, investigate any road closures prior to the day, and lastly review all ground rules and bike safety measures with the participants.

Step 7:

Promote the event-post announcements 1-2 weeks before event, send home fliers, educational materials for parents to review, and day before the event send a reminder (sticker or flier) home with students.

Step 8:

Celebrate Walk or Bike to School Day-arrive early, designate a spokesperson to talk to media, congratulate walkers/bikers, thank those involved, record the number of participants, take photos/videos with permission and lastly, have fun!

Step 9:

Event Follow Up-Save materials and keep track of contacts, celebrate successes, send thank you notes to community partners, share photos, explore how to keep the program going, gather feedback-what did/didn't work for the event?

According to the CDC, "regular physical activity in childhood and adolescence is important for promoting lifelong health and well-being and preventing a variety of health conditions. Schools are in a unique position, regardless of learning mode, to help students attain the recommended 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily." Studies have shown that students who walk or bike to school have improved attention, better mood and memory, improved heart and bone health, healthier weight, lower risk of depression and better grades. Teachers have noticed more students are on task and getting better grades, improved classroom behaviors, and fewer absences.