



Photo courtesy Governor's Council on Physical Fitness

# Walk to School Day<sup>1</sup>

## Easy Win:

School students from around the world participate in International Walk to School Day. The one-day event builds community awareness and parent support for safer routes to school. To include bicyclists and wheelchair users, call your event Walk & Roll to School Day and plan a bicycle train and/or rolling school bus.

## Outcomes:

Community awareness and support  
Health and safety message  
Student enthusiasm  
SR2S team recruitment

## Optional Materials:

- Walk to School Day flyer (CD)
- Walk to School Day fast facts
- Invitation letter (CD)
- Permission slip (CD)
- Walk to School Day ideas
- Classroom activities
- Press release (CD)
- SR2S Newsletter, Volume 1 (CD)
- SR2S DVD—binder pocket
- Do Something Fun—Appendix D
- Sun Safety—Appendix S (CD)
- Walking Safety—Appendix W

## Communication Power:

Get the word out. Announce Walk to School Day at staff meetings, assemblies, family nights and in the school newsletter.

## Remember:

Contact the SR2S office at <http://saferoutesmichigan.org/w2sd> to register for Walk to School Day. Registered schools will automatically receive planning and promotional materials for their event.

## WHAT IS WALK TO SCHOOL DAY?

- An international one-day event celebrated in over 40 countries
- Parents, school staff and community leaders walk, bicycle and wheel to school with students
- Adult-led bicycle trains and rolling school busses join in

## WHY DO IT?

- To promote health benefits of walking, bicycling, and rolling
- To build parent and community support for Safe Routes to School
- To raise awareness about safety hazards on the way to school

## WHEN?

- Can be scheduled anytime, but often occurs during the first week in October throughout the U.S. and internationally

## WHERE?

- On most commonly used routes within school attendance area
- From alternative bus drop-off locations
- On school property, when safe routes are not available

<sup>1</sup> Many schools include bicycle trains as part of Walk to School Day. Bike trains are led by a knowledgeable adult—wearing a helmet correctly—who leads a small group of students along a safe route to school. Bike trains require adequate adult supervision and helmet use by all participants. A rolling school bus is a group of wheelchair users or other rolling participants, led by responsible adults, who travel together along a safe route to school.

# Optional Walk to School Day\* Checklist

Steps	By When	By Whom
1. Identify a Walk to School Day coordinator.		
2. Meet with the principal, ask for support and pick date for your school.		
3. If not already registered, register your school at <a href="http://www.saferoutesmichigan.org">www.saferoutesmichigan.org</a> . If unsure about registration status, contact the SR2S office at 1-800-434-8642 to find out if your school is registered.		
4. Contact police and ask for participation.		
5. Announce Walk to School Day at PTA, PTO and parent meetings.		
6. Modify materials (on the CD) for your event, including flyer, special invitations and press release.		
7. Distribute flyers to students and parents and send invitations to dignitaries and other community members.		
8. Send out press release.		
9. Use the bicycle education lessons and walking safety information (in Appendices B and W) to prepare students for Walk to School Day.		
10. Tell high school athletes, service clubs, honor society, etc. about Walk to School Day and recruit volunteers.		
11. Plan the follow-up meeting to explain Safe Routes to School and recruit team members.		
12. Set up a greeting and sign-in table with materials explaining Safe Routes to School.		
13. Conduct Walk to School Day and follow-up meeting.		
14. Form SR2S team.		
15. Provide information at <a href="http://www.saferoutesmichigan.org">www.saferoutesmichigan.org</a> on the number of participants.		

\*Walk to School Day is an international event often held the first Wednesday in October. However, any date is fine; pick a day that works for your school's schedule.



- ✓ **Quality time for parents, students and community members...**
- ✓ **Commune with the great outdoors...**
- ✓ **Get exercise the fun way...**

All this and more when you participate in

## ***Walk & Roll to School Day***

on [YOUR DATE].

[INSERT SPECIFIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE EVENT, AND TIME AND LOCATION OF THE FOLLOW-UP MEETING TO DISCUSS SR2S]

Walk & Roll to School Day is the first event for Safe Routes to School.  
We need your help to make this fun day a reality!

### **Please join us!**

Questions?

Call [EVENT COORDINATOR] at [PHONE NUMBER].





# Walk to School Day

## Fast Facts

### ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Motor vehicle use is the second largest source of Green House Gas (GHG) emissions in the United States. (Fast Facts, U.S. Transportation Sector Greenhouse Gas Emissions, 2013)

86% of children's trips to school are made by car or bus. (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008)

### PEDESTRIAN IMPACT

46% of traffic crashes involving kids as pedestrians occur when a child darts out into the street. (NHTSA)

50% of children hit by cars near schools are hit by parents of other students. (Washington State D.O.T.)

Thirty years ago over 66% of America's children walked to school. Today, only 13% of America's children walk or bike to school. (US Centers for

areas, narrowed roads and installed traffic islands. Accidents fell by 85%. 37% of people working or studying in Copenhagen use a bicycle for their commute, compared to 1% in the U.S. (The Official Website of Denmark. Dept. of Environment and Transport Regions, London, England, UK)

### PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND HEALTH

Michigan is consistently ranked among the worst 10 states for the percentage of overweight/obese adults in the U.S. (US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

The percentage of overweight children and adolescents has tripled in the last three decades. (National Center for Health Statistics)

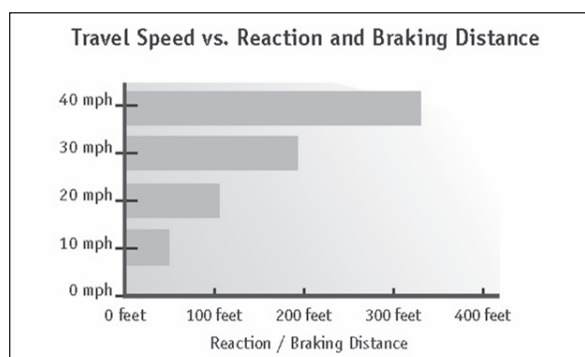
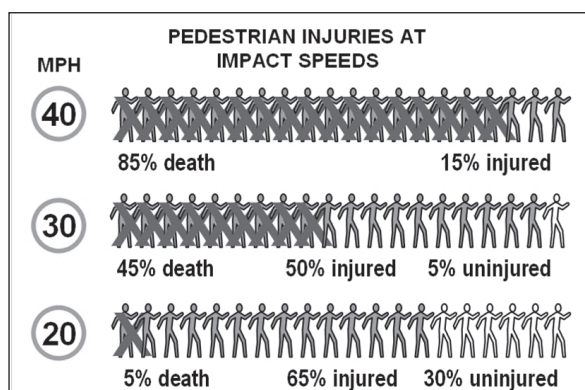
27.3% of Michigan high school students are obese or overweight. (Overweight and Obesity in Michigan: Surveillance Update, 2013)

On average, American children ages 6 to 11 are watching four hours of television each day. These youth are significantly more likely to be overweight than children who watch television for two hours or less. (University of Michigan Health System)

Children who are overweight or at risk for becoming overweight are more likely to have heart disease risk factors such as high cholesterol and high blood pressure, and are at greater risk for developing Type II diabetes, a serious condition that was seldom seen in youth before the increase in number of overweight children. (*Pediatrics*, 103(6), 1175-1182; *Journal of Pediatrics*, 136(5), 664-672; *Diabetes Care*, 23(5), 381-389)

Physical activity during childhood:

- Helps build and maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints.
- Helps control weight, build lean muscle, and reduce fat.
- Prevents or delays the development of high blood pressure.
- Reduces feelings of depression and anxiety and is related to higher levels of self-esteem. (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)



Disease Control and Prevention)

Odense, Denmark, created a network of traffic-free foot and bike paths, established slow-speed

Source of pedestrian injury graphic: "Killing Speed and Saving Lives." U.K. Department of Transport. 1997.

Source of braking distance graphic: "Transportation Tools to Improve Children's Health and Mobility." Parisi and Associates.

© 2005 Michigan Fitness Foundation and Michigan Department of Transportation

## Walk to School Day Invitation



Note: print on school stationery

Dear Parents and Community Members:

At [YOUR SCHOOL] we are always looking for ways to have a positive impact on our students and our community outside the classroom. On [DATE] we will celebrate International Walk to School Day with 49 other states and more than 40 countries to encourage a more walkable world and we would like to invite you to walk with us.

Walk to School Day was established in the United States in 1997 by Partnership for a Walkable America, a national alliance of public and private organizations committed to making walking safe, easier, and more enjoyable.

While walking to school was commonplace just a generation ago, traffic jams around schools are now the norm. Students are losing an opportunity for regular physical activity that is good for their health by riding to school in cars. On Walk to School Day, students have a special opportunity to celebrate the fun of walking and biking.

Please join students, parents and community members for our school's Walk to School Day. [PROVIDE DETAILS ON WHEN AND WHERE THE EVENT WILL OCCUR, AND ON ANY CELEBRATIONS OR SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL MEETINGS THAT WILL OCCUR AFTER THE WALK. IF YOUR SCHOOL IS STARTING, OR HAS, A SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM, INCLUDE A SENTENCE THAT DESCRIBES HOW SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL AND WALK TO SCHOOL DAY WORK TOGETHER.]

[INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING IF APPROPRIATE] Parents are also receiving a permission slip with this letter, which they should complete and return to school by [DEADLINE FOR RETURNING PERMISSION SLIP].

[INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING IF A SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL MEETING WILL FOLLOW WALK TO SCHOOL DAY]. Join other parents and community members at a meeting following the walk in [LOCATION OF MEETING]. We will discuss how to make walking to school safe and fun at the meeting. [IF YOUR FOLLOW-UP MEETING DOES NOT OCCUR IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE WALK, INSERT THE DATE, TIME AND LOCATION].

Albert Schweitzer states it best, "Example is not the main thing influencing others—it is the only thing".

We value your support. If you have any questions, please contact me, [NAME] at [PHONE NUMBER].

Sincerely,

[NAME]  
[TITLE]



## Walk to School Day Permission Slip



### PERMISSION SLIP

As parent/guardian of (student name) \_\_\_\_\_,

(student name)\_\_\_\_\_ has my permission to walk, bicycle, or roll to school on [YOUR DATE] for the Walk to School Day event.

\_\_\_ **I will**      \_\_\_ **I will not** be walking with my child to school. My child will leave from:

- \_\_\_ home
- \_\_\_ school sponsored walk
- \_\_\_ walking/rolling school bus or bike train
- \_\_\_ other

I understand that if my son/daughter becomes ill or is injured during this trip, someone will attempt to contact me or an emergency contact at the numbers listed below:

\_\_\_\_\_ (phone #) \_\_\_\_\_ (Name)

\_\_\_\_\_ (phone #) \_\_\_\_\_ (Emergency Contact)

If I cannot be reached, I understand and agree that my son/daughter may be taken for medical assistance, and I agree that I will be solely responsible for any and all costs incurred as a result. I further agree to indemnify and hold harmless [SCHOOL NAME], the district, its board members, its employees and any volunteer for this event for any injury that occurs to my child which is not the result of action or inaction by the district or its representatives.

\_\_\_\_\_ (parent or guardian) \_\_\_\_\_ (date)







# Walk to School Day

## Walk to School Day Ideas

If you think your school can't possibly host a Walk to School Day event, think again! The ideas listed below can help make it work.

For other information and resources, go to [www.saferoutesmichigan.org](http://www.saferoutesmichigan.org) and look for Walk to School Day. More helpful hints can be found at the International Walk to School website at [www.iwalktoschool.org](http://www.iwalktoschool.org) and the International Walk to School in the USA website at [www.walktoschool-usa.org](http://www.walktoschool-usa.org).

### WALKING SCHOOL BUS

The walking school bus addresses the needs of students and the concerns of parents. One or more adults accompany a small group of students who pick up other students along a planned route, similar to the traditional school bus. They walk as a group on their commute to and from school.

Adults can take turns walking with the students by having assigned days of duty. Children can be picked up at their homes or at "staging areas" where they "catch the bus." The staging areas should also have adult supervision. Students can wear a specific color (yellow for visibility and to symbolize the bus, for example), use a wagon for their backpacks, or hold a rope linking them all together. Adults can utilize the opportunity to teach pedestrian safety skills to students while walking to school as well.

### BIKE TRAINS

Bike trains are similar to the walking school bus except that students ride their bikes to school in groups. These are usually utilized when older students are involved.

A bike safety workshop (sometimes called a bike rodeo) should be offered to teach students important safety habits, including the importance of wearing a bike helmet. Bike racks should also be available to students to secure their bikes while at school. Bike trains need more adults to supervise bicyclists and adults should be good role models (i.e. know and obey bicycle safety rules).

### ROLLING SCHOOL BUS

A rolling school bus includes wheelchair users and other rolling Walk to School Day participants.

One or more responsible adults accompany the rolling bus, which travels along an accessible and safe route to school. When routes are not accessible or safe, rolling school bus participants in Walk to School Day roll on school property as part of the event.

### WALKING WEDNESDAYS

Another way to promote walking to school is to begin a "Walking Wednesdays" program. Designate Wednesday as "Walking Wednesday" or "Walking and Rolling Wednesday". Encourage students to walk to school with their friends, family, caregivers, or as part of a walking school bus. Keep track of the number of students walking and bicycling and reward the class that has the greatest percentage of students participating. This program can be held on any day of the week; if Wednesdays do not work for your school, choose whichever day works best.

### ALTERNATIVE DROP-OFF

In situations where a majority of students are bused or are driven because they live far away, finding an alternative drop-off location for Walk to School Day participants is a great idea. Buses and private vehicles can stop a few blocks away from the school in a parking lot that has safe sidewalks connecting to the school. Students are greeted by adult volunteers who walk with the children the remaining way to school.

Walking buddies include police officers, grandparents, high school athletes and band members, parents, and community leaders. Recruit volunteers before Walk to School Day and provide them with directions to the alternative drop-off site.

Look for an alternative drop-off lot that has enough space for busses and other vehicles to stop, safely drop-off students and park, so parents and community members can leave their vehicles and walk with students. Examples of alternative drop-off locations are: shopping centers, community centers, parks, and places of worship.

Be sure to invite your school district transportation director and bus drivers to walk with students!

*continued on next page*

# Walk to School Day

## Walk to School Day Ideas, cont.

### **WHEN ROUTES AREN'T SAFE OR IF WALKING IS NOT POSSIBLE...**

Walk to School Day builds public support for having safe walking and bicycling routes to school. The Safe Routes to School program is a great follow-up to Walk to School Day. While Walk to School Day is a one-time event, Safe Routes to School is an ongoing initiative to identify safety hazards to walking and bicycling to school and to develop an Action Plan that targets making specific changes.

However, even before route safety is improved, your school **CAN** hold Walk to School Day! Ways that schools have improvised Walk to School Day when walking routes aren't yet safe include "Walk to School Day—at School." Students arrive by usual transportation mode, are greeted by walking buddies (see previous page for walking buddy information) and walk/roll the perimeter of the school property several times.

Parents and other community members are given directions on where to park and when students will arrive at school so they can walk with students on school property.

"Walk to School Day—at School" is an effective way to bring community attention to the lack of safe routes for walking and bicycling to school. It is also a great way to involve students who must be bused or driven to school on Walk to School Day. For a variety of reasons it may not be possible for all students to walk to school; however, all students should be able to join the celebration.

### **CELEBRATIONS**

Schools sometimes hold an assembly after students, parents and community members arrive at school. It is a good opportunity to emphasize healthy, safe lifestyle choices.

Guest speakers might include police officers who teach pedestrian skills and high school students who model positive attitudes toward physical activity, such as members of the cheerleading squad or sports teams. Another way to celebrate Walk to School Day is to hold a meeting to talk about the interest in starting a Safe Routes to School initiative.

### **DON'T FORGET!**

- Promote your event to the news media.
- Count student, parent and community participants this year and use these figures to increase participation next year!
- Invite your district transportation director and bus drivers to participate in Walk to School Day.





# Walk to School Day

## Classroom Activities

These activities are a sampling of the many ways to create enthusiasm for walking and biking to school. Share these activities with classroom teachers, club leaders and other community youth groups.

### 1. Class by class competition.

Reward the class with the most students who: walk, roll or bicycle to school; wear decorated shoes for the walk; have the most parents walking, etc. Throw a party for the class with the most walkers and bicyclists.

### 2. Frequent Rider Miles contest.

This contest rewards children who come to school walking, biking, rolling, by bus or carpool. An excellent guidebook for holding a frequent rider miles contest is available on the Marin County (CA) Safe Routes to School website, [www.saferoutestoschools.org](http://www.saferoutestoschools.org).

### 3. Hold a “Best Ways to Get Your Parents to Walk & Roll to School With You” contest.

Have students come up with one-sentence ideas for getting parents to walk with kids. Get a panel of local radio, TV and news journalists as judges (this assures coverage in local media, too). Reward both creativity and practicality. Compile a top 10 list, printed with the winners’ names.

### 4. Have students draw a memory map of their walk to school.

Have the teacher review the highlights with the class. Find out what different things, people, and events the children pass on their way to school. Discuss what interesting things they saw, what was beautiful, or what needed improving. The teacher can assign or read Dr. Seuss’ *And to Think I Saw That on Mulberry Street*.

### 5. Have students start a family exercise program.

Have students work with their parents to substitute one driving trip with a walking trip that week. Have students report the trip destination and mileage. At the end of the week, figure out how many car miles were reduced or how many gallons of gas the class saved as a whole.

### 6. Count people who are walking.

For one day have kids count how many pedestrians they see and if they see them doing something unsafe.

### 7. Have students interview people who walk a lot.

The postman, police officers on foot patrol and neighbors who walk for exercise are all examples of people who spend a lot of time walking. What do they see because they walk a lot? What needs to be improved for more people to walk?

### 8. Invite local experts for a school assembly.

The entire school can hear about traffic/walking safety from a policeman or benefits of walking and bicycling from a fitness professional, etc.

### 9. Have students try the 2-1-5 Plan for a week.

That’s no more than two hours of TV per day, at least one hour of daily physical activity, and five or more servings of fruits and vegetables every day.

### 10. Write letters to city or county council members.

For students in higher grades, have them write letters to city or county council members asking for more sidewalks and more safe places to walk, ride bikes, and play in neighborhoods. Students in lower grades could draw a picture of a safe place to walk or ride their bike.

## Walk to School Day Press Release



FOR RELEASE [DATE OF RELEASE]

Contact: [CONTACT'S NAME]  
[CONTACT'S TITLE, IF APPLICABLE]  
[CONTACT'S PHONE NUMBER]

### **[YOUR SCHOOL NAME] Teaches Children to Put Their Health and Safety First**

[MODIFY TO EXCLUDE BIKING IF THAT IS NOT AN ORGANIZED EVENT]

[YOUR TOWN], MI. Walk to School Day at [SCHOOL NAME] occurs on [DATE] at [TIME]. Part of International Walk to School Day, parents and community members will walk and bicycle to school with students to experience the fun of walking and bicycling along the routes children use everyday. Parents and community members are invited to participate in this celebration of health and safety, and learn more about non-motorized ways to get to school.

Walking to school was common just a generation ago. In Michigan and other states, traffic jams around schools are common now, causing safety hazards for children, environmental pollution and school headaches.

"Walking to school addresses many quality of life issues for students," said Marilyn Lieber, President and CEO of the Michigan Fitness Foundation. "When students walk or bicycle to school using safe routes, they receive the physical activity needed for good health. They also learn valuable pedestrian and bicycle safety skills, lessons on the environment, and the importance of community."

[INCLUDE A QUOTE FROM SCHOOL PRINCIPAL ABOUT THE LOCAL IMPORTANCE OF WALK TO SCHOOL DAY AND OTHER DETAILS ABOUT WHERE TO MEET. IF WALK TO SCHOOL DAY IS THE FIRST ACTIVITY FOR THE SCHOOL'S SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM, INCLUDE THIS INFORMATION. IF A SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL MEETING WILL BE PART OF WALK TO SCHOOL DAY FESTIVITIES, GIVE THE MEETING TIME AND LOCATION].

Safe Routes to School is an international movement that builds on the momentum of Walk to School Day. Many schools in Michigan begin a Safe Routes initiative as a follow-up to Walk to School Day.

To learn more about Walk to School Day and Safe Routes to School, contact the Michigan Fitness Foundation at 1-800-434-8642.

###

