



SAME KIDS, JUST HEALTHIER



What is a Walking School Bus?

A Walking School Bus is a group of children walking to school with adult chaperones. Walking School Buses can operate much like a school bus with “stops” along the way, where children are “picked up” and walk together. If the multiple stops are not feasible, students can also meet at a certain time at a centralized well-lit location, such as a church parking lot or store parking lot, and walk together to school with adult chaperones.

Other variations of the Walking School Bus are: Bike to School programs where groups of students ride their bikes to school under adult supervision; and Bus to Walk programs where a bus transports students to a certain point then students walk under supervision the rest of the way to school.

Why Develop a Walking School Bus Program?

Research suggests that Walking School Bus programs significantly increase daily moderate-to-vigorous physical activity.

A Walking School Bus program offers the following benefits:

- ▶ Parental involvement
- ▶ Community involvement
- ▶ Decreased traffic
- ▶ Decreased pollution due to less traffic
- ▶ Physical activity for students, parents, and school staff

How Do We Start a Walking School Bus Program?

1 IDENTIFY SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

Remember it's okay to start small. The program can always grow in number of walkers and number of days walking. A Walking School Bus requires coordination. Consider and solicit the participation of the following:

- ▶ Campus Leadership (Principals, Assistant Principals, etc.)
- ▶ Local Wellness Coordinators
- ▶ Family Communications Liaisons
- ▶ Parent Organizations
- ▶ Neighborhood Associations
- ▶ Community Partners
- ▶ Faith-Based Organizations

2 PLAN A ROUTE AND WALK IT

Invite neighbors, families, and friends to participate in the process of developing a route. Consider the following when determining a route:

- ▶ Sidewalks
- ▶ Amount of Traffic
- ▶ Speed of Traffic
- ▶ Unsecured Animals
- ▶ Criminal Activity

3 IDENTIFY AND TRAIN VOLUNTEERS

Generally, one adult is required to walk with every six children. Also, decide how often the group will walk together and finalize logistical details. A Volunteer Walking School Bus Coordinator is needed to collect all paperwork (background checks, student rosters, contact information and phone tree for Walking School Bus Drivers). Training for these volunteers is available through Blue Zones Project® Fort Worth.

4 GET WALKING!

Plan a kick-off for your program. Consider scheduling the Walking School Bus program around the following initiatives: International Walk to School Day - Safe Routes to School (First Wednesday in October); National Walking Day - American Heart Association (First Wednesday in April); or Walk Across Texas - Texas A&M Agrilife Extension (Ongoing)

For more information about implementing a Walking School Bus program at your school, contact the Blue Zones Project Team:

Stephanie Jackson • StephanieJackson@texashealth.org
Adjoa Brown • AdjoaBrown@texashealth.org