

Marathon Challenge

Overview

Walking and running are two of the most accessible ways for most students to be physically active throughout the school day. They provide students with opportunities to improve their aerobic fitness, which strengthens the heart and develops overall cardiovascular endurance.

Research shows this type of cardiovascular fitness also improves overall mood and wellbeing, self-esteem and confidence.

Kids who participate in walking and running programs may also get more sleep and cope more effectively with physical and emotional challenges.



Hosting a school marathon challenge may be just the spark you need to get your students and school community up and moving. You're probably thinking completing 26 miles seems like a crazy idea! But you don't have to do it alone. Team up with friends and family for this marathon challenge, and support each other along the way.

Steps for Success

Marathon challenges have become a popular activity to engage students and the community. Kick off a challenge of your own with some of these simple ideas!

- If you're doing a school-wide challenge, it's important to gain support from your school administrators and identify teachers who will champion and oversee the program.

- Kick off the challenge by hosting a health education unit or lesson on cardiovascular fitness and the benefits of physical activity.
- Set your marathon challenge timeframe and create a schedule for your challenge. Include when you'll start recording miles, steps or minutes and when you will end the challenge.
- Create and provide a personal physical activity tracker for each student to complete as they reach goals and milestones.
- Identify any necessary parameters for how challenge leaders will collect and report each participant's tracking log. Consider posting daily or weekly progress for all participants!
- Determine which metric you'll use to track participation in the marathon challenge. Some suggestions might include:
 - Total # of miles in a marathon - 26.2 miles
 - Total # of steps in a marathon - 52,000 steps
 - Total # of minutes (on average) to complete a marathon - about 286 minutes of physical activity
- Determine which physical activities will count toward the marathon challenge. It's more than just walking and running. For some individuals, walking or running may not be great options for cardiovascular fitness. Participants can hike, swim, bike or even participate in team or individual sports or activities to count toward the overall goal.
- Create strategies to boost your challenge around inclusive practices. Feel free to get imaginative!
 - Implement a [walk with the principal challenge](#).
 - Host relay races to student's favorite music.
 - Plan a visit to a track field as a class trip.
 - Integrate activities using technology such as GoNoodle and YouTube videos.
 - Host a "Walk and Talk" session during recess with different teachers and special guests.
 - Host a [Walk/Bike](#) to School Day event before or after school.

- Hold a celebration at school or in the community for reaching the marathon challenge goal. Invite a special guest to talk about the importance of physical activity and recognize students, staff and families for their accomplishments.
- [Provide healthy incentives](#) when students reach milestones. Incentives may include listing participant names or classes on a top challenger board or a small prize.
- Ask a parent (or small group of parents) to consider forming a walking or running club before or after school. Invite students to participate and set goals to achieve a specific distance with the end goal being the achievement of 26 miles.
- Invite members of the cross country or track teams from a local high school or college to come in to lead students in stretches, a workout or a Q&A session about their sport.
- We want you on our team! Not ready for 26.2 miles? If a half-marathon or couch-to-5K is more your speed and an immediate goal for your running club, consider doing it for [Team Healthy Kids](#). You can also host your own local fitness event, dedicate your birthday party to AFHK, or contribute to Team Healthy Kids runners.

Tips



Think of safety first! Be sure your activities are safe for students and there is adult supervision.



Think of safety first! Be sure your activities are safe for students and there is adult supervision.



Promote, promote, promote! Promote the challenge during Parent Teacher Association meetings, staff meetings, back-to-school packets, morning announcements, school social media accounts, and flyers around the school.



Incorporate the importance of physical activity throughout the challenge activities. Students who are physically active are more likely to maintain a healthy weight, have better academic performance, and improved mental health.

Related Activities

12 Days of Fitness

Get kids moving during the holiday season with themed fitness activities.

Get Moving During Math Night

Study after study shows kids who get regular physical activity experience improvements in their fitness levels AND brain function. Put this research to practice by including physical activity as part of your school's math night!

Passport to the Winter Olympics

Prepare for the Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games just like an Olympic athlete. Create your travel passport, pick your events, and practice for the big day.

Walking Programs

Walking is an activity that is easy and accessible to most students, staff and parents and can be made into an engaging, interesting activity in many ways.