

Walking Programs

Overview

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. Walking uses all of the major muscle groups in the upper and lower body and is a low impact activity. Students who are physically active are more likely to maintain a healthy weight, have better academic performance, and improved mental health. Walking is one of the healthiest, safest, and easiest ways to begin a fitness program and can be a big step toward improving your health and the health of your students.



Take Action

Incorporate some of the ideas below to help children incorporate exercise into their daily routine and create a lifelong habit.

- Create a walking club. Meet in a designated area before (i.e. Morning Mile) or after school (i.e. Active Afternoons) and set a walking goal for the week (i.e. a certain number of laps or amount of time).
- Build in 10 minutes between classes or before lunch to walk around the school as a class.
- Schedule a weekly walk with the entire school (Walk on Wednesdays), pairing older and younger children together.

- Encourage students to “walk and talk” during recess instead of sitting. Keep your students moving!
- Schedule a weekly “Walk with the Principal” or other role model (i.e. teacher, Mayor, other local leaders) where all students have the opportunity to participate.
- Organize a Walk Across America or another geographic area (i.e. state, community, a location being learned about in class, etc.).

Students walk measured laps where each lap represents a unit of distance in a journey from their school to specific destinations, which are mapped on a school bulletin board.

Social Emotional Health Highlights

Activities such as these help students explore...

Self Awareness: Walking can be helpful for identifying emotions and self-perception. Whether your walking program is outside or throughout the school, a short 10-minute walk can give students an opportunity to regain the capacity and confidence they need to approach challenges and tasks in the classroom.

Relationship Skills: Joining together on a short walk can serve as a simple yet effective way to start conversations with peers and/or adults. Encourage students to share about their day or a favorite movie or hobby of theirs to explore connections and similarities with others. Walking programs are an affordable way to bring students and staff together to communicate and build stronger relationships while getting a little bit of movement in at the same time!

Tips











Starting small is okay! Start with classroom goals and then widen to a school or community-wide initiative.



Think of safety first! Be sure your route is safe for students and there is adult supervision. Consider reviewing safety tips at the beginning of your walking

program.

-  Promote walking clubs during Parent Teacher Association meetings, staff meetings, student clubs, back-to-school packets, morning announcements and flyers around the school.
-  Provide a [personal physical activity tracker](#) to each student and provide healthy incentives when students reach milestones (time or distance walked). Incentives may be having their name on a Top Walker board or small prize (pencil, wristband, or other [healthy rewards](#)).
-  Involve students: Recruit participation from older students to be leaders and role models or ask the school's football or soccer team to lead a walk once a week. Ask for feedback to evaluate success and make changes where needed.
-  Paint animal footprints of the school mascot on sidewalks surrounding the school to increase participation and
-  Create a catchy title, like Walk to Wellness, or plan a kickoff event such as a walk-a-thon.
-  Engage local sports businesses to sponsor the club with donations of water bottles, t-shirts, tennis shoe laces etc.
-  Incorporate the importance of physical activity and walking in the classroom and throughout the school. Consider using hallways and other areas in your school building as places to host your club and incorporate walking opportunities. Ensure route and direction signs are posted so students know where they should walk.
-  Engaging volunteers in your network who have skills or

motivation.

interests that complement your needs.

For more activities and ideas like this one, be sure to [sign up for our news and updates](#). And if you like what you see, please [donate to support our work](#) creating more ways to help build a healthier future for kids.

Additional Resources

[Start a School Walking Program](#)

([Advocates for Health in Action](#))

Related Programs

Bike to School

A bike to school program is great for schools to promote active transportation along with a social opportunity for parents and students to connect outside of school hours and allow students to improve their bicycle safety skills.

Get Moving on Bike to School Day

Whether you have wheels or not, celebrate this exciting day with movement before, during and after school.

Celebrate Walk to School Day

International Walk to School Day is held each year in October. It's a great chance to get your school psyched about physical activity.

Walking Trails with Fitness Stations

Is your school looking for a sustainable way to provide more

physical activity for students and families? Consider building a walking trail!
