

Indiana Safe Routes to School Partnership
Alliance for Health Promotion
401 W. Michigan Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202



September 1, 2012

Dear School Community Members,

Remember walking or biking to school when you were a kid? The Indiana Safe Routes to School Partnership invites you and your students to lace up your shoes and pump up your tires again for **Walk to School Day, Wednesday October 3, 2012**. Safely biking and walking to school provides our youngest citizens with the opportunity to arrive at school energized and ready to learn.


We recognize there may be challenges to walking and biking to school. Safety is of highest priority. Maybe sidewalks and crosswalks are missing near your school or traffic is too fast or heavy for safely biking to school. Perhaps students live more than two miles away.


The good news is that administrators, teachers, parents, planners, engineers and health officials across the country have tackled many of these issues and found creative solutions. To date 120 awards have been issued in Indiana under the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program to support more walking and biking. Numerous organizations and local leaders can provide you suggestions and contacts for the resources you might need to join in the festivities.

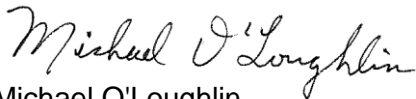
Our goal is for more children to walk and bike to school **every** day. This event provides a great opportunity to raise awareness, build enthusiasm, and promote the changes needed to ensure a lasting impact. Attached is a simple four-step process for getting started and a fact sheet with lots of information and websites. **Please register your local biking and walking events at www.walktoschool.org**. This site is also your one-stop for everything you might need to organize your events. And don't forget, the members of the [Indiana Safe Routes to School Partnership](http://www.indianasafeschoolroutes.org) are available to provide input, help find answers and share resources.


We hope that you will choose to participate in Walk to School Day on October 3rd and that your school community will embrace walking and biking as preferred options for getting to school every day. We look forward to hearing about your success!

Sincerely,


Kim Irwin
Executive Director
Alliance for Health Promotion


Marcie Memmer
Director, Nutrition and Physical Activity
Indiana State Department of Health


Michael O'Loughlin
Program Manager, Safe Routes to School
Indiana Department of Transportation


Michael LaRocco
Director, Office of School Transportation
Indiana Department of Education



Getting Started

Walk to School events can be as simple as a few kids and parents meeting to walk to school or very elaborate celebrations. Event logistics range from a central walking location to people walking from their homes. Below are four simple steps for getting organized. Visit the website www.walkbiketoschool.org for extra help, materials, and resources.

1. Get Partners

Principal, Police, Parents:

Successful events have the support and participation of the principal, police and parents. Ask them to be partners. The school principal can give the school's commitment, while the local police department is a valuable resource and will ensure that safety is a priority. Parents add energy and enthusiasm and make the walk work.

Public Officials:

Schools have gotten sidewalks fixed and new trails built in record time because of partnerships with public officials and other community leaders, such as mayors and city council members. Walk to School celebrations give leaders the opportunity to publicly support health, environment and safety initiatives, so consider finding ways to involve them.

2. Plan

Work with partners to plan the celebration. Together, decide what type of event fits your school and community. Then choose a focus for the walk, such as promoting physical activity or pedestrian safety, and determine whether the event will last one day or a week. Local businesses may be willing to sponsor the walk by providing refreshments or small gifts for participants.

3. Register

Registering an event makes it known to media, the community and other participants. Registered communities will also get access to additional materials.

4. Promote It

Tell students, parents and others how to participate. Making announcements at school, publishing school newsletter articles and sending flyers home are just a few ways to get the word out. Posting signs along the route a few days ahead will help the community know. Business sponsors may want to hang signs in their stores.

Media coverage of the event brings visibility to the event's purpose and any changes that need to be made to make it safer for kids to walk and bike to school. When media cover your event, they help spread the word of the great health, safety, environmental and social benefits of more children walking to school every day. Colorful signs held by smiling, walking children and adults creates a perfect photo opportunity.

Walk to School Day 2012

Wednesday, October 3

Related Facts and Information

All statistics, except where otherwise noted, are taken from the [2011 Talking Points resource](#).

- In 1969, 89% of students (grades K through 8) who lived within one mile of school walked or bicycled to school, and 48% of all students did. In 2009, only 35% of those living within one mile walked or biked, and only 13% of all students did.
- The average cost per student using bus transportation was \$866 in 2007-2008, up from \$490 in 1980-1981. At that rate, each bus route costs nearly \$50,000.
- About 30% of Indiana youth are overweight according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).
- Experts recommend that children get at least 60 minutes of age appropriate physical activity on most, preferably all, days of the week.
- Walking or bicycling to and from school is an easy way for children to get some physical activity each day, which all children need.
- It takes about 5-10 minutes for children to walk a quarter of a mile or bicycle an entire mile.
- Physical activity is associated with improved academic performance in children and adolescents.
- The daily walk to school offers children an opportunity to spend time in the natural environment; exposure to nature and time for free outdoor play can have multiple health benefits including stress reduction, relief of ADHD symptoms in children, and increased cognitive and motor functioning.
- Passenger cars, trucks, motorcycles, and SUVs together account for 62% of transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions. The transportation sector is responsible for 1/3 of all carbon dioxide emissions in the US.
- Private family vehicle trips to school account for 10-14% of morning rush hour traffic.
- Air pollutants can be especially harmful to children because their respiratory systems are still developing; nearly 13 million school days are missed annually due to asthma.
- Teaching children walking and bicycling safety skills – such as how to choose where to walk and cross streets, obeying crossing guards, and being visible to drivers - can help create lifelong traffic skills.
- Vehicle speed is a key element in safety. A pedestrian hit by a car traveling 40 mph has a mere 15% chance of survival; at 20 mph, that chance of survival increases to 85%.
- Safety education also includes working with parents, drivers, law enforcement, and local officials.

Related Websites

Walk to School Day: www.walktoschool.org

National Center for Safe Routes to School: www.saferoutesinfo.org

Safe Routes to School National Partnership: www.saferoutespartnership.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/kidswalk

Indiana Safe Routes to School Program: saferoutes.in.gov

Indiana Safe Routes to School Partnership: www.healthbydesignonline.org/INSRTS.html