

Low
Cost

Elementary
School-Oriented

Middle
School-Oriented

A walking club invites students to start their day with physical activity and a healthy breakfast.

Objective

Raise students' awareness of the importance of eating a healthy breakfast and staying active all year round, and motivate them to incorporate physical activity into their lives through fun group activities.

The Event

Students, school staff, families, and community members can form a walking club that meets regularly before school. To kick off the program, schools can hold an event that includes a guided walk and a school breakfast. The program leader begins by saying a few words about the benefits of physical activity and a healthy breakfast, and leads the walkers on a designated and well-marked route. Participants can gather in the cafeteria after the walk to enjoy a healthy school breakfast.

Planning

Decide how the club will work. Teachers, the school nurse, members of the wellness committee, and parents can serve as the walk coordinators. Involving students in the planning process can also strengthen the program. Make decisions about how often your club will walk, how far each walk should be, what routes to take, and how to keep your club safe when walking outdoors. Meet with local law enforcement and perhaps a local traffic engineer to identify safe routes for walking. Consider launching your walking club in conjunction with Walk to School Day in October, then hosting walks at regular times throughout the school year, both indoors and outside.

Plan club events. Select a regular date and time to meet. You may also consider walking at school, such as around a school track, field, or gym. Map safe walking routes, gaining approval from your school administration. Coordinate with the school nutrition director, particularly in terms of the kick-off event, as it may bring additional participants in for breakfast.

Get the word out. Promote the event through the school's public address system, newsletter, and Web site, as well as in gym classes, where students can also learn about walking safety. Use outdoor signs to promote your activity and alert drivers. For more ideas, consult the list of promotion tips (see page 3).



Team Up ^{FOR} Success



School

- Prior to the walking club's launch, encourage all members of the school community to participate in walking events. You can distribute the *Healthier Middle Schools* materials (see appendix, page 98).
- Invite the principal, classroom teachers, and other school staff to lead or join a walk.
- Pair older and younger students together so that everyone has a "walking buddy."

Classroom



- Kindergarten teachers can use *Discover MyPlate's Lesson 6: Let's Play, Let's Party* to promote physical activity through song and dance, story, and role-play (see appendix, page 94).
- Elementary school teachers can introduce the *Serving Up MyPlate* curriculum (see appendix, page 94) to raise awareness about the connection between healthy food choices and physical activity. Middle school classes can explore Team Nutrition's *Nutrition Voyage: Grade 8, Trek 1: Finding Fitness* (see appendix, page 95).
- In art classes, students can create footprint cut-outs or color copies of the school mascot to post as signs along the walking route.
- In math class, students can measure the distance they will walk individually or as a group. If the school has access to pedometers, students can track the number of steps they take.
- Teach children about pedestrian safety using free resources from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration at <http://www.nhtsa.gov/nhtsa/everyoneisapedestrian/index.html>.
- If your school is an elementary school, display the *Launch Your Day With Breakfast* poster (see appendix, page 96).
- If your school is a middle school, display the *You Control You* breakfast poster (see appendix, page 96).



Cafeteria

- Invite school nutrition staff to participate in the walk and speak briefly at the breakfast about the types of healthy breakfast foods served every day at school. Provide handouts about the School Breakfast Program (see appendix, page 101).



Community

- Ask local figures, such as team mascots or the mayor, to join the walking club on specific days.
- Ask businesses to provide donations, such as water bottles and shoelaces.
- Consider asking retired members of the community to volunteer and join the walking events.

Team Up for Success (cont'd)



Media

- Invite a local TV anchor to walk with the students and film the event for a feature segment.



Home

- Encourage families to join students on the morning walks, as well as incorporate walking into their home routines. Post resources for family breakfast planning on the school's Web site, such as FNS' videos and widgets on milk and whole grains (see appendix, pages 98-99) and *Core Nutrition Messages: Especially for Mom* materials (see appendix, page 101).

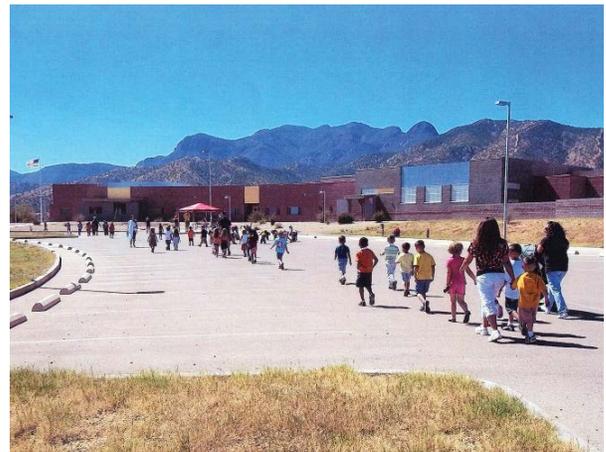
Schools **IN** Action

At **Stafford Elementary School** in **Stafford, KS**, students learned about walking safety and the importance of physical activity and a balanced breakfast. Then, on National Walk to School Day, the students walked to school together and were led by the middle school drum line. Everyone received a free nutritious breakfast upon arrival at school, and families were encouraged to walk together.

Southeast Polk Junior High in **Pleasant Hill, IA**, encouraged students to join a walking club and walk on the track surrounding the football field after they were finished with lunch. During the winter months, the indoor gym was also open for walking. One fall day, the students were surprised to find that the mascot of the Kansas City Chiefs, the Kansas City Wolf, wanted to lead the club around the track for several laps.

Fort Huachuca School District in **Arizona** has taken advantage of its community resources by partnering with soldiers at Fort Huachuca to hold a walking club every other Friday during lunch recess. Troops typically conduct 5 minutes of stretching with the students, and then they all walk for 20 minutes before going to lunch. One year, pedometers were used with the second grade students as they "walked to San Diego." The students and the community have enjoyed their walking club so much that the school plans to make it a weekly event in the future.

In **Fort Scott, KS**, a "walk and talk" program for middle school students invited different grades to walk each day before school for 18 minutes. During the walks, music played over the public address system. Students tracked the number of laps they walked and converted the distance into miles, and awards were presented at mile markers and marathon goals. Close to 450 students participated, and many of them found they could walk farther than they originally anticipated.



[Photo] **Fort Huachuca** students and their families enjoy walking together each week.