



Section 2.5 - Tips & Tricks for Parents

This document is for parents who are looking for inspiration and ideas on how to incorporate active school travel into their families' lives. Below is a list of things that parents can do to encourage walking/wheeling and to make it an easy choice. Each idea will be identified by age-appropriateness; some things will work better for younger kids than older kids, and vice-versa. This does not mean that you can't still try them out with your kids, no matter what age they are. This is simply a way to help parents tease out some of the things that may or may not work for their families.

1) Create a day/night routine for your kids – Gr. K-3

Nighttime:

- Pack lunch
- Gather school things
- Pick outfit for next day
- Go to bed early to be well rested to get up the next morning

Morning:

- Get up early enough to allow time to make/eat breakfast, get dressed, etc.
- Add buffer time into the morning schedule to allow for walking/wheeling to school (e.g. if school starts at 9 a.m., ensure you leave an extra 15 mins to allow time for walking/wheeling to school)

2) Walk and bank – Gr. 2-8

- Allow your kids to be driven to school once a week; give them the option to bank those days for the future (i.e. winter time when it's cold) if they choose to walk every day in the fall
 - Parent keeps track of banked days

3) Plan/test a route for your kids to walk or bike – Gr. 2-8

- Parents pick the route they want their child to travel on – should lessen some safety concerns
- Testing the route a few times will give parents an idea of how long it will take to walk to school and can help them in planning their schedule

4) Identify “walking buddies” – Gr. 2-5

- Talk to parents who live near you and arrange to have your kids walk to school together
- If time allows, have one parent walk the kids one day, and the other parent walks them the next day
- OR specify a time every morning for the kids to meet and walk by themselves
- Be sure to remind your kids of traffic safety (i.e. look both ways before crossing the street, make eye contact with drivers, only cross where it’s safe, etc.)

5) Drive and walk – Gr. K-8

- If you have to drive to school (i.e. you are on your way to work in the morning), drop your kids off at a location 5 minutes away from the school and walk with them or have them walk the rest of the way

6) Walking/wheeling incentives – Gr. 2-8

- Set a minimum number of times that your child is expected to walk; once they hit that number they get some sort of reward (i.e. if they walk/wheel 10 times, they get to pick an activity to do on the weekend, have their favorite meal, etc.)
- Keep increasing the minimum number each time

7) Incorporate games into walking – Gr. K-3

- To make walking to school more fun for your kids, play some games on the way (i.e. point out items along the walk that start with each letter of the alphabet, I Spy, etc.).

8) Walking home – Gr. 2-8

- If walking to school in the morning is just not working out, don’t forget about the trip home – this is another opportunity to walk rather than pick up your child in a car.

9) Weekly walks – Gr.2-8

- We know that changing travel behavior will take some time, so start out slow! Pick a day of the week to walk or wheel to school, and then slowly increase the number of days you walk/wheel each week over time

10) Start kids early – Gr. K-3

- If you have a child that is in Kindergarten, start getting them used to the idea of walking/wheeling to school
- Kids who start walking at a young age will gain confidence and independence and develop the habit of actively getting to/from school

11) Comfort/warmth – Gr. K-8

- Of course, there will be days when walking isn't the appealing choice; on these days, make sure your childre are dressed for the weather and have what they need (i.e. rain boots, raincoat, umbrella, winter coat, hat, mitts, winter boots, etc.)

12) Safety education – Gr. K-3

- Safety is a big concern for many parents, so it is very important that you go over/ practice these rules with your kids:
 - When crossing streets, hold your child's hand and always observe the traffic safety laws.
 - Observe all traffic signals and let the school crossing guard help you.
 - Be sure to look all ways before crossing the street, and continue to watch for vehicles. Remind children that drivers may not always see them.
 - Consider starting a walking school bus by inviting families in your neighborhood to walk children to school together as a group. Adults may take turns walking with the group, so make sure each child knows the adults in their walking group.
 - Wear reflective or bright clothing – will make drivers more aware of kids walking