

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
**WALKING ACTIVITY
HANDBOOK**

LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
CITY OF LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



**CITYWIDE
WALK TO
SCHOOL
ORGANIZER
MANUAL**

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL



This activity guide is part of a series produced in a partnership between Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) and Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). Additional guides can be found on www.walktoschool.lacity.org including the Weekend Walks and Bicycle Rides, Walking Field Trip, and the Golden Sneakers Program.

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ABOUT THE LOS ANGELES SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM



Within the span of a generation, the percentage of children walking or bicycling to school has greatly decreased, from 50% in 1969 to just 13% in 2009.

Safe Routes to School National Partnership, 2015

In August 2014, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti launched Vision Zero. Vision Zero uses data-driven approaches to engineering, enforcement, education, evaluation, and community engagement to reduce the likelihood of crashes. Central to the plan is ensuring a safe city with a goal to achieve zero traffic fatalities in Los Angeles by 2025. As youth who walk and bicycle are disproportionately impacted by traffic collisions, the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program is a key strategy to reduce fatal and severe injuries of our most vulnerable populations.

As the lead agency for the City's SRTS program, LADOT uses a prioritization of schools with most need to target safety improvements. Recommended infrastructure improvements and safety education are documented in a School Travel Plan. Analysis of traffic conditions and student travel inform the plan, as does collaboration among principals, parents, students and community members.

To improve safety and encourage more students to walk and bicycle to school, LADOT has developed this activity guide for organizing Walk to School Day events.

INTRODUCTION

WALK TO SCHOOL DAY

Walk to School Day celebrates walking while highlighting the need to prioritize safety for people walking in school neighborhoods.

Safe Routes to School Los Angeles (SRTS) connects schools to Walk to School Day resources to make hosting events as simple as possible while broadening the reach of Safe Routes to School initiatives

In October 2013, the City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) in partnership with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) launched citywide Walk to School Day. With 55 schools taking part the first year, LADOT initiated its intent to assist with technical assistance for similar events annually. The LAUSD supports Walk to School Day too, as a way to be safe and healthy and to support the environment.

LAUSD has played an increasingly important role in implementation. Policy steps reflecting this engagement include program endorsement (2013); the Board of Educator's Walk to School Day resolution (2014); and program inclusion the Blueprint for Wellness Policy Safety Environment Chapter (2015).

SRTS will continue to refine program tools for outreach and promotion, volunteer organizer recruitment, school registration, and event logistics to make hosting an event as simple as possible for volunteer organizers and not detract from valued instructional time.

Tools include the website (walktoschool.lacity.org), this document, a phone hotline, social media, and customized assistance to access support that will make your school based event fun and easy.



Over the past 40 years, rates of obesity have soared among children of all ages in the United States. Today, approximately 25 million children and adolescents — more than 33% — are overweight, obese, or in danger of becoming so.

Safe Routes to School
National Partnership, 2015



23% of children get no free time or physical activity at all. However, walking a mile to and from school, or to a field trip destination, is two-thirds of the recommended sixty minutes of physical activity a day.

Safe Routes to School
National Partnership, 2015

GET READY!

Thank you for being a City of Los Angeles Walk to School Day Organizer!

Who can be an organizer? Local parents, parent support center staff, program providers, or other people at the school who can be the main point of contact and arrange for 5-10 volunteers to help plan or host simple activities.

Walk to School Day encourages parents, students, school personnel and other community members to directly experience the walk to school. For many communities, the event leads to more fun walking all year long. More walking, in turn, pays off in increased physical activity, better school performance, and a safer walking environment for our students.

Walk to School Day events come in all shapes and sizes. Start small or start big – the key is to find a good fit for your community.

Use this step by step Citywide Walk to School Organizer Manual in tandem with walktoschool.lacity.org to register events, download training materials, and access event materials. Although an ideal timeline has you putting the event on the calendar before the end of the previous school year, it is also possible to start planning only a few weeks out and have a super fun day as well. Read it through from start to finish now, so you become familiar with the steps and resources available to support you.

The website also offers helpful materials that can inspire and encourage healthy, active walking and bicycling year round – making every day Walk, Bike and Roll to School Day!



STEP 1: Explore Event Ideas

- How to include families that do not live in walking distance?
- Are there nice places where people can meet to begin the “walking school bus”?
- How will participants be greeted at the gate?



STEP 2: Secure Principal Approval

- Select the date (October 2nd is International Walk to School Day).
- Place the event on the school calendar.
- Discuss how the principal would like to participate.



STEP 3: Register Your Event and Invite Guests

- Register your event at walktoschool.lacity.org
- Consider inviting: public and local elected officials (e.g. City Council Office Member, LAUSD Board Member), community, neighborhood and/or faith-based organization members.



STEP 4: Recruit Volunteers

- Identify 5-8 volunteers for planning, chaperoning the walking school buses, greeting and counting participants at the school entrance and taking photographs.
- Communicate regularly with volunteers.
- Remind volunteers one week in advance of the event.



STEP 5: Finalize Event Details

- Locations for “walking school bus(es)” meet-ups and school entrance welcoming.
- Chaperone(s) to review Walking Safety Tips¹ and lead the walk from each “bus stop.”
- Times for event participants to meet at “bus stops” and begin the walk.
- SRTS will coordinate with School and City Police and the LADOT Crossing Guard Division to raise awareness about school participation.



STEP 6: Promote Your Event

- Hang student-created posters and Walk to School Banner².
- Send flyers home with students including Walking School Bus meeting locations and times.
- Send school e-blasts (texts), e-newsletters and school-to-home calls (robo calls)³.
- Discuss at existing meetings.



STEP 7: Host Event and Celebrate!

- Set up volunteers who are greeting and counting at the school entrance.
- Provide Walk to School Day banner to a group that is walking.
- Send chaperones to meet-up location for “walking school bus” 20 mins before meeting time.
- Review safety with participants and enjoy the walk!



STEP 8: Follow Up on Your Event

- Share an event re-cap with your school community and ladot.saferoutes@lacity.org
- Send Thank You's to volunteers and guests.
- Complete the online Walk to School Day 2019 Survey.

¹ Available on our website at walktoschool.lacity.org

² A free banner will be delivered to schools registered with SRTS

³ Available on our website at walktoschool.lacity.org



STEP 1: EXPLORE EVENT IDEAS

Teachers, parents, parent center support staff, enrichment programs, and neighbors might think it would be fun to take part in Walk to School Day. Talk about how to tailor the event to work for you:

- » How much **parent engagement** is realistic?
- » Will this be a **new idea** for the school or principal?
- » If this isn't the first time, **what went well and poorly before?**
- » **How will the children be greeted** when they get to the gate that morning?
- » What can be done to **include families that don't live within walking distance?**
- » What teachers might want to do to **support event preparation through classroom activities** such as making logos, banners, posters or signs?
- » Are there some **nice places in close proximity to the school where people can meet up** to walk in together on a "walking school bus?"
- » **Consider the neighborhood context.** Perhaps you would feel safer doing a "walk at school" day
- » Would it be useful to get information from families about the quality of their walk using a **walkability checklist?**

There is no need to take on more than you think you can realistically organize, with the help of other volunteers.

Useful materials on the website for this step:

- » Frequently Asked Questions and Answers
- » Walking School Bus Guide
- » Fun Activities Page

STEP 2: SECURE PRINCIPAL APPROVAL

After exploring Walk to School Day activities it is time to present your ideas to the principal or other key administrator so that you can get official approval to begin organizing the event. Getting approval before the end of the school year will help you mobilize quickly when the next school year starts. But don't worry, it is also possible to organize a successful Walk to School Day off the ground in about four weeks.

Schedule a brief meeting with the principal to talk about the event. The goals of this meeting are to introduce Walk to School Day, describe the importance and benefits of the event, share your ideas for the event, and get approval for moving forward.

The *Outreach Flyer* will help you make the case for having a Walk to School Day event at your school and is a fine place to record the results of your meeting. Your principal may already be on board with the idea, but if not, be sure to mention the improved health, behavior, and academic performance benefits of walking. Questions to ask include:

- » Can we host a before school event?
- » Can we put it on the school calendar now?
- » Can we include event information in outgoing school communications such as e-blasts?
- » How would you like to participate?

When your principal agrees that the school can host a Walk to School Day event, work together to confirm a date. The official date in 2019 is October 2nd, but anytime during October ("Walk-tober") is fine.

Start advertising the event as soon as a date has been selected to raise awareness about Walk to School Day and to recruit volunteer help.

Useful materials on the website for this step:

- » Outreach Flyer





STEP 3: REGISTER YOUR EVENT AND INVITE GUESTS

EVENT REGISTRATION

After you get approval, go to the Walk to School Day website at walktoschool.lacity.org to register your event. Registration ensures your eligibility for any marketing and incentive materials that become available. If you do not have Internet access, you can register by calling your Local District's Office of Environmental Health and Safety.

INVITE VALUED COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Consider inviting an elected or appointed official, a neighborhood board member, an LAUSD School Board member, or other valued community members to participate by joining a Walking School Bus or being a greeter on event day. Extend the invitation early to get on their calendars, then call their office with specific time and location information within two weeks of the event.

Useful materials on the website for this step:

» Registration Form

STEP 4: RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS

Depending on how many activities you are organizing, you may need anywhere from two to ten volunteers to plan, promote and participate in the event. One easy way to support volunteer recruitment is to promote Walk to School Day's volunteer opportunities at other meetings. Specific jobs include event planners and day of event greeters, photo takers, walking school bus chaperones, and counters. Speak with your principal about volunteer requirements for this school activity.

Some ideas on how to include community partners are below. Use the *Recruitment Flyer* on the SRTS website to support your efforts.

- » **School administrators, staff and teachers** – Support the event, conduct classroom activities, greet students
- » **Students and Student Clubs** – Make posters, help crossing guards, host a booth
- » **Parents and PTA/PTO** – Help plan, and distribute information
- » **LAUSD Police** – Route planning, walking escorts, and teaching safety skills
- » **Community Based Organizations and Churches** – Publicize, volunteer or host an event
- » **Crossing guards and school district transportation coordinators** – Speak at event, greet students
- » **Neighborhood Businesses** – Publicize, provide prizes, and volunteer
- » **Public and Elected Officials** – Join walking school bus, speak at event
- » **Health/safety/student advocacy groups** – Help plan, host a booth, provide prizes



Communicate with your volunteers as much as possible to ensure things go smoothly leading up to and on the day of the event. Ask volunteers which tasks they would like to be involved with, because if they are excited about it they are more likely to follow through. Contact them with reminders of the jobs they will help with one week before your event. Finally, thank them with certificates of participation, thank you cards and photos from yourself or the students.

Useful materials on the website for this step:

» [Recruitment Flyer](#)

STEP 5: FINALIZE EVENT DETAILS

INCENTIVES

Some schools enjoy giving away small rewards on Walk to School Day. Depending upon available resources, the LADOT or its partners may be able to provide incentives for student participation, such as banners, posters or stickers. Incentives for the academic year will be listed on walktoschool.lacity.org. Local businesses may also offer prizes or food if you ask early enough. It is best to start early and overestimate participation to ensure you have enough for all.

WALKING SCHOOL BUSES

Walking School Buses address parent fears about children walking to school alone, by arranging for a group of children to walk together with adult chaperones along a designated route. This is a fun part of any Walk to School Day event, and we recommend you set up one or more walking routes to campus on the morning of your event. The *Walking School Bus Guide* from Step 1 will walk you through all the steps needed to set up your own, but you are welcome to contact LADOT with questions.

LAUSD has suggested walking routes available at their website: LAUSD-OEHS.org/SafeRoutesToSchools.asp. Please explore walking routes as potential options for your event. Families walking together on the Walking School Buses increase the number of adults per student. Being in a Walking School Bus is especially fun for your very important guests.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

If you are concerned that your school has unique personal security issues that would benefit from a law enforcement presence, now is the time to reach-out to your local Community Police Station. Use neighborhoodinfo.lacity.org and enter your school's address for a list of municipal offices available support your community.

Useful materials on the website for this step:

» Organizer's Event Checklist





STEP 6: PROMOTE YOUR EVENT

Hang up posters, flyers and banners in visible places around the school two weeks before Walk to School Day to alert students and their families about your school's event.

A number of customizable flyers are available on the website to increase awareness among families and within the neighborhood. Sending them home to students through the school's regular communication channels is an effective way to remind parents about the event and get any more last-minute volunteers.

There are several options to promote your event using social media. You can advertise your event by sharing with LADOT Official or LADOTs Liveable Streets. You can post pictures of your preparations, announce what your event will include, and connect with other event organizers to get ideas and share resources. You can also promote your event using the hashtag [#LAWalks2School](#) in your posts.

Send out the same reminders two weeks out, one week out, two days before and the day before your event.

Useful materials on the website for this step:

» [Supporting Promotional Text](#)

STEP 7: HOST EVENT AND CELEBRATE!

About an hour before the school day starts, you can set up a greeting table with materials and prizes for the students. Ask your volunteers to come at that time to help get ready, sign the Waiver and Release of Liability, and get to their posts.

Review the Walking Safety Tips with Walking School Bus chaperones, then send them out to meeting locations 30 minutes before the families are expected to arrive. These volunteers will be greeting families, reviewing the walking safety tips, and walking back to school with families before the bell.

Task someone with taking photos, and send other volunteers to school entrances to count kids walking in and collect quotes from kids and parents about how the experience was for them. If you have a tally poster, ask a volunteer to direct students to the poster and to give them stickers to put on it. Once people start arriving at school, give incentives out to those who arrived by non-motorized or alternative transportation. It does not have to be just for walkers.

At the end of the day, please consider sending Safe Routes to School at LADOT your thoughts of the event, while it is fresh on your mind. It is so nice for us to see some pictures and hear how it went.





STEP 8: FOLLOW UP ON YOUR EVENT

Evaluation activities are essential for LADOT to continue to lend its support to Walk to School Day.

Send Thank You notes to your volunteers and participating elected and appointed officials. Publicize the event's successes by sharing your photos on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook using [#LAWalks2School](#).

LADOT will send out a post-event survey by e-mail after your event. Please complete this survey to record information about the event, which will then be used to improve future Walk to School Day efforts.

