

**WALKING
SCHOOL BUS**



Canadian
Cancer
Society



Promotion and Recruitment Toolkit



Research shows that schools that are most successful in implementing a Walking School Bus (WSB) program engage in continuous promotion. Continued promotion keeps the program front of mind of families, raising awareness about the program and increasing participation levels. This toolkit has been developed to provide guidance and resources on how to promote the Walking School Bus program and recruit new walkers throughout the school year.

The activities in this toolkit can be modified and adapted to suit your school's environment and capacity. For each activity, a description has been provided along with the level of effort required, and additionally a list of "tools" available to assist you. It is recommended that at least one activity be implemented each month of the school year.

If you have used other activities to promote the WSB program and recruit new walkers, we would love to hear about it. Please email us at wsb@ontario.cancer.ca

A Note about "Tools"

For many of the activities within the guide tools such as template emails, postcards etc. have been developed to make implementation easier and more efficient. You can access these templates by clicking on the links that have been imbedded throughout the document. Once you have accessed the document you can download it and modify it as needed.

If you are using a printed version of this toolkit, you will find samples of the tools in the Appendices.

Host a First Walker event

Best time of year: late August

Level of effort: moderate to high

Late in the summer, just prior to the start of the school year, invite kindergarten students and their parents to participate in a First Walker event. Like First Rider programs offered to students who take the school bus, a WSB First Walker event will help children become familiar with the WSB procedures and inform parents about how the program operates. During the session, students and parents will walk the WSB route that applies to their family and they will learn about the safety protocols as well as general information about the program and how it works. This is also a time for parents and children to meet the Walk Leaders for their route. If there are multiple routes offered at the school, the walk could occur first with the educational portion occurring at the school with the larger group, followed by an introduction to the Walk Leaders. Refreshments and snacks could be served as well. Postcards with information about the program and how to register can be given out as well.

Potentially, this could be coordinated with Student Transportation Services.

Tools

- First Walker invitation template
- WSB Info Postcard
- Walk Leader Bio's Example





Promote Walking School Bus at school drop-off

Best time of year: anytime, may want to do a few times per year

Level of effort: low

Many families, who live within the walk zone of the school, travel to school by car. Volunteers can meet these parents, as they drop off their children, to share information with them about the WSB. In order to prevent congestion and keep cars moving, this will need to be a somewhat quick interaction. Provide volunteers with postcards to hand out along with key speaking points that they can use to guide the conversations.

Tools

- WSB Info Postcard
- Elevator Speeches

Target families that use before and after school program

Best time of year: anytime, August & Sept may be best as families are creating routines at this time.

Level of effort: low

Families who use before school programs may have a stronger interest in the WSB program as it could make morning routines easier or possibly replace the before school care needed. You can communicate information about the program to these parents in a variety of ways, such as:

Email communication: send an email to all families via the before school care program Coordinator and/or ask to include information about the program in an email or newsletter that is already being sent.

Presentation: check if there are any opportunities to present the program to this group of parents as part of another event.

In person: meet with parents as they drop off their children and provide information postcards/sell sheets about the WSB.

Display: set up a static display or post information about the WSB in an area where it will be highly visible to parents.

Tools

- Email/Newsletter templates
- Presentation slides
- WSB Info Postcard
- Sell sheet



International Walk to School Month (October)

Best time of year: October

Level of effort: low to moderate

International Walk to School Month (IWALK) is an annual mass celebration of active transportation that takes place around the world every October. It includes International Walk to School Day which falls on the first Wednesday of October. This is a great opportunity to showcase the WSB program and recruit more students to walk. If you are just launching the program or opening a new route, IWALK day is a perfect time to do this.

The Ontario Active School Travel initiative, led by Green Communities Canada, leads this program in Ontario. To learn more and access resources visit

<https://ontarioactiveschooltravel.ca/international-walk-to-school-month/>



Winter Walk Day

Best time of year: February

Level of effort: low to moderate

Winter Walk Day is celebrated by schools across Ontario on the first Wednesday of February each year. Walking to school is fun every day so we encourage students to walk throughout the entire month of February. This a great time to launch a new route and encourage new participants to join the Walking School Bus.

The Ontario Active School Travel initiative, led by Green Communities Canada, leads this program in Ontario. For activity ideas and resources visit:

<https://ontarioactiveschooltravel.ca/winter-walk-day/>



Share Walk Leader profiles

Best time of year: start of school year, ongoing

Level of effort: low

Many parents express that they feel more comfortable sending their children on the walk to school with people they know. To help parents get to know the Walk Leaders, include a “Meet the Walk Leaders” section to any communications used to recruit new walkers. Include the name of the Walk Leader along with a few details about them (i.e. occupation, hobbies, interests etc.) These profiles could also be added to the school website, shared in a newsletter, posted on School Day or included in a WSB display.

Tools

- Walk Leader Bios Sample



Set up a static display

Best time of year: all year

Level of effort: low

Set up a static display in a high-traffic area of the school where parents will likely see it. This display serves to inform parents about the program and to remind them that registration is on going and children can join at any time. Include route maps, details on how to register and Walk Leader biographies and photos. You may also want to include photos of the WSB in action. A display could also be placed at the neighbourhood community centre.

Regular communication

Best time of year: all year, try to share something at least once per month.

Level of Effort: low

Sending out regular communications about the program will keep it top of mind for parents and provides additional information to encourage participation. Use School Day, email, school newsletters or social media to share messages with parents of the school.

Topics of the communications can vary and might include:

- introducing WSB, details about the program
- an announcement of a new route
- an announcement that the school is participating in a walk event/challenge (i.e. Winter Walk Day)
- recognition of students who walk
- provide tips on dressing for different weather conditions
- testimonials from families who use the WSB
- recognition and thank you to Walk Leaders
- other news or stories you can share about the program

Tools

- Email/Newsletter templates
- Social Media Calendar



Photo contest

Best time of year: anytime a program boost is needed.

Level of effort: moderate

Ask children/families to take photos of things on their walk to school. Submit photos to the school in the format desired (hard copy, digital, post to social media etc.). Prizes could be awarded by based on a random draw of contest participants or based on categories such as traffic signs, nature, groups of walkers, practicing road safety etc. Secure a bulletin board in high traffic area to display the entries. Entries could be limited to one per child per category if concerned about numbers

A note on prizes

Some of the promotion and recruitment tactics outlined in this toolkit suggest awarding prizes. When selecting a prize, try to offer something that promotes active transportation or healthy living. For example, the prize might be related to sports and recreation (i.e. a frisbee, skipping rope, basketball, passes to the community centre etc.)

School website

Best time of year: all year

Level of effort: low

Add information about the WSB on your school's website so all parents are aware that this program is available at the school. Include a link the website for registration as well as profiles of the Walk Leaders.

Tools

- Sample content for school website

Recognition of walkers & Walk Leaders

Best time of year: mid-year or end of school year

Level of effort: low to moderate

Celebrate and recognize students who walk to school. This reinforces that this is positive behaviour and children will feel a sense of pride. Below are a few ideas to get you started, this list is not exhaustive and there may be other opportunities in each school where students can be recognized and celebrated.

- provide students and Walk Leaders with a certificate.
- create a "golden shoe" award to the student who walks the most, or student(s) who reach a certain level of walking (# of kilometers, days walked etc.). The boarding passes can be used to track this.
- create a Wall of Fame in a visible area of the school and post photos of student(s) who reach a certain level of walking (# of kilometers, days walked etc.) The boarding passes can be used to track this.
- Host a year-end party for the students, parents and Walk Leaders who are involved in the WSB
- Have a draw prize for students and Walk Leaders. They can earn a ballot by walking x days.

Tools

- Certificates
- Boarding Passes



Spring into Spring

Best time of year: April

Level of effort: low to moderate

Spring into Spring is a walk and wheel event celebrated by schools in Ontario throughout the month of April. This is a great time to introduce the Walking School Bus in your school and/or promote or test new routes that will launch in the next school year.



The Ontario Active School Travel initiative, led by Green Communities Canada, leads this program in Ontario. For activity ideas and resources visit:

<https://ontarioactiveschooltravel.ca/spring-into-spring/>

Create your own challenge

Best time of year: anytime

Level of effort: low to moderate

Create a walking challenge within your school. This can be set in a variety of ways and can extend over any length of time. As an example, collectively students could be challenged to walk across Canada or climb Mount Everest. Each day students could report the distances travelled by foot and progress is tracked on a large map. Another option is to have a competition between classrooms to see which class can walk the most over a set period. This can be measured in days walked, kilometers, minutes or steps.



Attend school and community events

Best time of year: as opportunities arise

Level of effort: low

Throughout the school year there are many events, meetings etc. that parents attend at the school. During these events host a display booth about the WSB or ask if you can have 5-10 minutes to present the program to the parents. There may also be events for families within the neighbourhood where a display could be hosted.

Tools

- Sell Sheet
- Elevator Speeches



Measure carbon footprint reduction from walking.

Best time of year: Anytime.

Level of effort: low

Use "Map my emissions": <https://mapmyemissions.com/home> to measure the positive environmental impact of walking. This website allows individuals to measure the distance from home to school and then calculate the amount of emissions produced if the route is taken by car. If route is taken on foot then these emissions are eliminated, reducing your carbon footprint!

Check to see if your school is an "Ecoschool" or has an eco club. This activity could be connected with their work

Appendices

Invite to First Walker Event



Insert School Logo

Hop on the Walking School Bus! **First Walker Event**

Please join us to learn how The Walking School Bus can work for your family. The Walking School Bus works like a regular bus except it is done on foot. Trained and screened adult volunteers lead groups of students along a specific route to school.

Our school **has [insert #]** of routes operating. During the event, parents and children can walk the route they are interested in. This will allow you to familiarize yourself with the program, meet the walk leaders and discover how much time it takes to walk the route.

Please join us **[insert location (example: in the library at 6:30)]**. Following a short 15-minute presentation we will divide into groups families will walk the route that meets their needs.

Please RSVP to **[insert name of organizer]**, WSB lead at **[insert name of school]**

[insert contact email or phone #]



Postcard


Side 1



Side 2

 **WHAT'S THE WALKING SCHOOL BUS ?**

The Walking School Bus enables elementary school children to walk from home to school safely under adult supervision. The pedestrian school bus runs on a planned route with scheduled stops. Participating children are accompanied by volunteers who are often parents or other community members, such as retirees.

 **HOW THE SCHOOL BENEFITS**


- Less traffic around the school
- Increased pedestrian safety
- Parents mobilized around a project that brings people together
- Environment conducive to physical activity

 **HOW THE CHILD BENEFITS**

- A chance to make friends
- Enjoyment and sense of belonging to a group
- Opportunity to become a good pedestrian
- Better concentration in class
- Increase in the level of daily physical activity

 **HOW THE PARENT BENEFITS**

- Sharing the responsibility of taking children to school with other parents
- Quality time with their children
- Easier morning routine several times a week

 **HOW THE COMMUNITY BENEFITS**

- Less dependence on motorized transport as families walk more to get around
- Greener neighbourhoods
- Involvement of citizens in an intergenerational project

Sell Sheet : Side 1

WALKING SCHOOL BUS



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THE WALKING SCHOOL BUS!

To increase the level of physical activity among youth, the Canadian Cancer Society is using walking as a means of active transportation. How? By developing the Walking School Bus, a network of pedestrian school buses, across Ontario.

Being active lowers the risk of cancer. The Walking School Bus helps children develop the habit of walking to get around.



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HOW THE COMMUNITY BENEFITS

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Sell Sheet : Side 2

When children participate in the Walking School Bus, their interest is shared with others who become enthusiastic about walking. So, the whole family spends less time in the car!



STARTING A WALKING SCHOOL BUS

Would you like to launch the Walking School Bus in your school? The Canadian Cancer Society can offer customized guidance.



- Training on the implementation of the project
- Training on road safety
- Assistance in volunteer recruitment:
 - Financial contribution towards volunteer recruitment activities in the neighbourhood
 - Development of partnerships with organizations, businesses, local media or associations for the promotion of the project
- Practical tools: posters, brochures, vests for volunteers, "boarding passes" and more
- Tips and advice from our experienced development staff

Physical activity on the school journey increases alertness and attention during the school day.

Walking School Bus provides an opportunity to increase physical activity by 20 minutes per day.

Only 9% of Canadian children and youth meet the recommended 60 minutes of daily physical activity.

Compared to those who are driven to school, active travelers are more active over the course of the entire day, adding as much as 45 minutes of physical activity.

80% of children live less than 1.6km from their school, but only 20% of them walk or cycle to school.



FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

1 888 939-3333

CANCER.CA/WALKINGSCHOOLBUS

Made possible thanks to the financial support of:



An agency of the Government of Ontario
Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

In partnership with:



WALKING SCHOOL BUS



Canadian Cancer Society

Elevator Speeches

An “Elevator Speech” succinctly communicates a concept or idea in the span of a short elevator ride. You can use this approach when speaking with parents about the WSB and you have limited time, such as at the school drop-off area.

Below you will find key speaking points that can be used in delivering your elevator speech. Each “speech” is focussed on a different benefit of the WSB and you can select the key points you want to raise based on the audience you are targeting and what you feel will be important to them.

A few tips to making a great elevator speech:

- Use plain language and speak naturally, not as if your speech has been rehearsed.
- Stay on track and avoid rambling
- Include your story if its appropriate (in a nutshell)
- Maintain eye contact
- Listen to their concerns and address these
- Include a call to action, if appropriate (i.e. visit the WSB website, attend an event to learn more about the program, join the walk challenge and see if you enjoy it etc.)

Key Speaking Points

WSB and Physical Activity

The Walking School Bus is great way to increase physical activity levels of children. Not only do children get 15-20 minutes of physical activity on the walk to school, but research also shows that those who walk to school are more active throughout the rest of the day as. Through the WSB children learn road safety and develop navigation skills which prepares them to walk on their own as they get older. Lastly by developing these habits early in life it is likely these habits will be carried on and the children will continue with an active lifestyle in the adult years.

WSB and Health/Learning

The Walking School Bus provides children with many health benefits. By walking to school children get an additional 15-20 minutes of physical activity each day. They also develop healthy habits early in life that are carried on into adulthood. By participating in the WSB children experience improved mental health, new friendships and a sense of belonging to a group. They arrive at school alert and prepared to learn.

WSB and Community

The Waterloo Region Walking School Bus is an organized system of walking children to school. Children in the same neighbourhood walk to school together under the supervision of adult volunteers. When volunteers help children walk to school, they are creating a greater sense of community and strengthening relationships in the neighbourhood.

When children learn to feel safe in their neighbourhoods—when they feel safe walking to school, the local store, and playing at the park—we all feel the benefits of a community that trusts each other, that cares about each other, and that looks out for the well-being of all of our children and of all the other members of our community

WSB and Safety

Traffic at arrival and dismissal can be very heavy at school sites. Cars jockeying for position, pulling in and out of spots and sometimes even making u-turns creates dangers for those children who are walking. Keeping cars away from the school reduces congestion and makes it safer and more pleasant for those children who do walk.

Studies have shown that having a lot of people using the sidewalks results in cars driving at slower speeds. Full sidewalks create intrigue and cause motorists to “sit up and pay attention”. The more people walking, the safer it becomes for everyone.

WSB and Convenience

The WSB offers a more convenient way for children to get to school. Parents who work can send their child to school on the WSB and have more time to get ready and get to work. No more long waits at the drop-off zone and you can feel good that your child is getting a great start to their day by using a safer and healthier form of travel.

WSB and the Environment

When we burn fossil fuels, we contribute to the emissions of some common air pollutants that have local and global effects on human health and the environment. These pollutants include carbon dioxide, methane, particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide and carbon monoxide. Every motor vehicle contributes to these pollutants. Vehicles dropping children off, often idling, results in concentrated air pollution at school sites. Children’s developing lungs are more susceptible to the effects of car emissions than the lungs of adults and so it is important to keep motor vehicles away from school sites.

Sample Walk Leader Profiles

PIONEER PARK VOLUNTEERS - WEDNESDAYS

THE WALKING SCHOOL BUS!

To increase the level of physical activity among youth, the **Canadian Cancer Society** is using walking as a means of active transportation.



NAME: Edwin Lamey

STUDYING: Supply Chain and Operations Management

HOBBIES: Poetry, Spoken Word, Songwriting, Listening to Music, A Capella singing, Having interesting conversations with interesting people.

NEXT ITEM ON MY BUCKET LIST: Eliminating "what ifs".

THE WALKING SCHOOL BUS!

To increase the level of physical activity among youth, the **Canadian Cancer Society** is using walking as a means of active transportation.



NAME: Vaishali Tyagi

PROFESSION: Social Worker

HOBBIES: Cooking, reading and writing

NEXT ITEM ON MY BUCKET LIST: Paris.

Content for School Website

[Name of school] is pleased to provide the Walking School Bus!

The Walking School Bus works like a regular bus except it is done on foot. Trained and screened volunteer walk leaders walk along a specific route picking up children along the way and getting them to school. The Walking School Bus offers an opportunity for children to have socialize and have fun on their way to school. It is a safe, healthy and environmentally friendly way to travel to school.

Become a Volunteer

Volunteers can be parents, grand parents or neighbours. It is a great way to build community, help your neighbours and get active.

Learn more and register your child or become a volunteer by visiting www.walkingschoolbus.cancer.ca

The Walking School Bus is provided with support from the Canadian Cancer Society and Waterloo Regional Block Parent Program.

[You may wish to include photos from your school as well as information about the routes and walk leader profiles]



Email/Newsletter templates

About the Program

Hello **[insert school mascot name e.g. Cougars]**

Did you know that here at **[Name of school]** we have the Walking School Bus Program? The WSB works like a regular bus except it is done on foot. Adult volunteers lead groups of children to school along a specific route.

Joining the WSB helps to keep cars away from the school site. It also is a social time for your children and allows them to get some fresh air and exercise so that they are ready to learn at school.

For more information about this exciting program please go to walkingschoolbus.cancer.ca or contact our school lead **[name of lead]** at **[contact for school lead]**

New route

Hello **[name of school mascot]**

We are very excited to announce that we will be launching a new route as part of our Walking School Bus Program. The route will begin at **(location) (time) (date)**. See map attached **[attach map]**

Please join us any where along the route. For more information and to register please go to walkingschoolbus.cancer.ca

[name of school lead]

Walking School Bus Lead

Announcing a Challenge or Event

Hello **[name of mascot]**

October is International Walk to School Month! To celebrate, the Walking School Bus Program has the following events planned. Please show your support by joining us **[insert details about your school's events]**

OR

February **XX, 20XX** is Winter Walk Day! The Walking School Bus Program invites you show your support and join us as we celebrate winter walking. **[insert details about your school's event]**

OR

This April, spring into the new season by participating in the Spring into Spring event! The Walking School Bus Program invites you to show your support and join us as we establish new spring routines. **[insert details about your school's event]**

Walking Tips for fall and winter

Be Ready to Walk in the Rain. We won't melt and walking in the rain is more enjoyable than you might think. The proper gear is important. Choose a waterproof coat and boots. To make sure your child is seen, choose bright colours. Pack a small fold-up umbrella in your child's backpack so that they are always prepared.

OR

Be Ready to Walk in the Snow. It might surprise you that in Canada, students in Nunavut have the highest rates of walking to school. Dress for the weather. Choose a warm winter coat and snow pants, waterproof mittens, neck warmer, hat and winter boots with a nonslip tread. Dress in layers as walking briskly warms you up quickly.

Additional Fact and Info that can be shared via email or newsletter

Mental health benefits

- Active school travel is associated with mental health benefits including reduced stress, depression, and anxiety, and increased happiness (Lambiase et al., 2010; Ramanathan et al., 2014; Iancovich, 2015).
- Children and parents who walk or bike to/from school report also more positive emotions during the school trip than those who travel by car (ParticipACTION, 2018).
- Active school travel helps to meet Ontario Ministry of Education goals for student well-being and helps to build life-long habits of independent and active mobility (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014).

Traffic Congestion and Safety

- Reducing traffic volumes creates safer school zones. Improving walking and cycling routes to school also enhances the safety, connectivity, and quality of life for the community as a whole (Hall, 2013).
- Improving walking and cycling routes to school also enhances the safety, connectivity, and quality of life for the community as a whole (Hall, 2013).

Physical Health Benefits for Brains

- The increased physical activity specifically associated with the school journey has been found to increase alertness and attention during the school day (Lambiase et al., 2010; Martinez-Gomez et al., 2011).
- Physical activity supports healthy brain development, which can lead to improved learning and academic outcomes. • Research has shown that children who are more physically active for as little as 20 minutes daily have more active brains and improved attention in the classroom (Hillman et al., 2009) and better standardized test scores (Donnelly & Lambourne, 2011). •
- “Many of the brain processes that make for better, more efficient learners—such as focus, memory, and recall—are enhanced after single or repeated bouts of physical activity. Overall, active children and youth make for better achieving students.” (ParticipACTION, 2018)



**WALKING
SCHOOL BUS**



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CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION

SUPER ASSISTANT WALK LEADER

Awarded to:

Congratulations for your outstanding work on the Walking School Bus!

Date

Signature



**WALKING
SCHOOL BUS**



Canadian
Cancer
Society

CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION OUTSTANDING WALK LEADER

Awarded to:

Thank you for your exceptional involvement with the Walking School Bus!

Date

Signature



**WALKING
SCHOOL BUS**



**Canadian
Ministry
of
Education**

BOARDING PASS

START ↓

SCHOOL

NAME

WALKING SCHOOL BUS



Canadian
Cancer
Society



wsb@Ontario.cancer.ca

Walkingschoolbus.cancer.ca