

## **PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE INFORMATION CENTER (PBIC)**

### **Project:**

### **Promoting Physical Activity among Youth through the National Walk to School Program**

### **Type:**

- Physical activity program
- Info/event for parents

### **Setting:**

- School-based

### **Partners:**

- Other: local groups

### **Goals:**

- To increase routine walking by youth.
- To institutionalize improving and maintaining conditions for safe walking.
- To create greater awareness of the need for youth physical activity.

### **Description:**

PBIC serves as a national coordinator for International Walk to School Day. Every October, one day is set aside for children, parents, teachers, and community leaders to walk to school together to celebrate the importance of physical activity, safety, and walkable communities. Walk to School Day is a feel-good event that leads to positive community change. It also helps to combat the recent obesity epidemic among children by creating opportunities for routine physical activity.

Visit the website, [www.walktoschool.org](http://www.walktoschool.org), for more information. The PBIC provides information on how to conduct events, how to identify what to improve about the environment, and ways to encourage more walking and bicycling. The PBIC maintains the national and international websites and online registration for events in the USA.

### **Successes:**

- The program is continuing to grow rapidly. Last year more than 2,800 schools in all 50 states participated.
- Many communities used this as an opportunity to identify things to improve, such as traffic around schools and the need for sidewalks or crossing guards.
- Other communities established walking incentive programs, walking school buses, and other innovative programs to make walking and bicycling a routine part of children's lives.



## **Challenges**

- More work needs to be done to reach new communities that have not yet realized the importance of routine physical activity and the need for walkable schools and communities.
- As communities do become active, it is important that they have access to quality technical assistance so that they are making decisions based on sound science. Finding ways to provide such services to a growing number of communities is challenging.

## **Strategies for sustainability:**

- Create behavioral change. Increase routine walking so that physical activity is an automatic component of the day.
- Establish local coalitions that will directly benefit from improved schools and communities.
- Create policy and environmental change. Encourage coalitions to work to institutionalize improved conditions for safe walking through new facilities and policies.

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