

Walking Schoolbus CHALLENGE



Sponsored by **Activate Tucson** and the
Pima-County – Tucson Safe Routes to School Program

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**Pima County - Tucson Safe Routes to Schools
Walking School Bus Challenge**



Pima County - Tucson Safe Routes to Schools Program

Walking School Bus Challenge

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
How to Organize the Contest.....	2
Ideas for Publicizing the Contest.....	5
Promotional Talking Points.....	7
Instructions for Teachers.....	8
Instructions for Parents and Students.....	10
Contest Announcements.....	11
Checklists.....	14
How to Organize a Walking School Bus.....	16
Sample Letter for Walking School Bus.....	19
Sample Participation Forms.....	20
Resource List.....	22





Introduction

The Walking School Bus Challenge is a punch card that rewards students when they walk or bike to school. The students get their cards punched on weekly Walk and Roll to School Days. In addition, volunteers also punch cards on random, unannounced days. Every time a student accumulates 5 points, their name is entered into a drawing to win valuable prizes. At the end of the contest a drawing is held to select the prize winners. The contest is set up to run for six weeks starting on International Walk to School Day, the first Wednesday in October.





How to Organize the Contest

The Basics

The Walking School Bus Challenge card uses randomness to entice students to walk every day because they will not know when their card will get punched. On the day that cards are punched, put out a banner or sandwich board to alert students where the cards will be punched. Students who have walked or biked to school will have one square “punched out” by volunteers. We will provide you with a specially shaped punch so that students cannot use a normal circle punch on their own cards.

When a student has all five squares punched out they turn in their card for a new one and get the card entered into the drawing. A drawing is then held at the end of the contest period to award prizes.


Cards can also get punched on regular weekly Walk and Roll to School Days. This allows more children to participate. However, it is the random days that create more regular daily walkers and bikers so we advise that you don’t replace the random days with regular days but combine the two.

Getting Started

Start announcing the contest at least two to three weeks prior to the start of the contest with posters and announcements. One week prior to the contest, distribute cards to the students with instructions on how to play. This can be done through backpack mail or by sending a volunteer to each classroom. The contest can also be explained to the whole school during a regular scheduled assembly.

Participating in the Contest

Be sure that the students understand how the contest works and what restrictions apply.



Schedule a set time and place when children can have their cards punched and turn in their drawing ticket. Weekly check-ins are recommended for the duration of the contest. This could be at the regular Walk and Roll to School Day tables, during lunch, or through the school office. Include the days, time and location(s) of the weekly check-ins when you advertise the contest, so students fully understand how to participate. Remind students that there will be random, unannounced times when the cards will also be punched. This will encourage students to walk or bike more often than the weekly Walk and Roll to School Days. Students who ride the bus to school can participate and earn tickets by walking around the school or track when the bus drops them off.

Good places to set up your check-in table are:

- ✓ At a central location in front of the school
- ✓ At the school bike racks
- ✓ At the main entrance to the school
- ✓ At various entrances to the school for random days

The check-in process is easy; just follow these simple steps:

- ✓ Arrange for at least two volunteers per check-in table. More volunteers are recommended if you have a large number of students participating. This is a great activity for the Student Leadership.
- ✓ Provide your volunteers with the following materials: punch (use a special punch that cannot be duplicated) tickets, pen, extra punch cards, refreshments (optional).
- ✓ Punch the cards for every student that has walked or biked to school or who walked after riding the bus.
- ✓ Children that have 5 points on their cards will be exchanging their cards for a ticket and new punch card at the table.
- ✓ Make sure that the student puts their name and phone number on the half of the ticket that is kept for the drawing. That way, if the child loses his or her ticket they still are entered in the drawing.



Providing Extra Incentives:

Here are some suggestions for incentives that target both the youth who walk and bike on a daily basis, as well as those who really cannot participate because of where they live, disabilities or because of before and after school care.

For Frequent Riders:

You can keep track of those students who turn in cards on a regular basis. Publish their names in the school newsletter or on a special bulletin board. You can ask your PTA to provide special rewards for the top-earning students.

For Bus Riders:

Students who ride the bus to school can participate by walking around the school once or twice after the bus drops them off. Decide where they should walk (eg. Walking around a track three times, or walking around a route on the playground) in order to qualify for a punch.

For Those Who Can't Walk Or Bike To School:

You can also create special tasks for children who really cannot participate because of where they live, disabilities or because of before and after school care. Have them create a poster or write an essay that encourages more walking and biking and let them chose a reward. Put these up on the bulletin board. You can also have them volunteer at the table checking cards.



Ideas for Publicizing the Contest

It is most effective to use all these methods simultaneously.

1. Provide teachers with information about the contest. It has been proven important to provide teachers with the correct contest information and ensure that they fully understand how it works, to avoid teachers misinforming their students about it.
2. Announce the contest at an assembly program.
3. Assign volunteers (especially room parents who walk or bike with their children to school) to go to each class and explain the contest and answer questions. This is also a great opportunity to involve your student council/leadership to assist in announcing the contest to the classes. Be sure to train the students ahead of time so that they understand the contest and can effectively present it to the students.
4. Advertise the contest in your weekly school newsletter. You can use newsletter announcements to both publicize the contest and to announce the names of the winners.
5. Post the contest posters on walls and bulletin boards. Use the same bulletin boards to advertise the names of the students who have won prizes. Create a display somewhere in the school that publicizes the contest and shows the prizes that students can win.
6. Provide the school office with weekly loudspeaker announcements that remind kids to participate and to turn in their cards. Change the announcements from week to week by adding in the names of students who are being very active in the contest or name the prizes to be given out in the drawing at the contest's end.





7. Provide a graphic display that shows how many students are participating in the contest. List the students who have already exchanged their cards. Post pictures of students who are frequent walkers or bikers. Post how many pounds of carbon have been saved from the atmosphere.
8. Have class discussions on why walking and biking are important for health and environmental reasons. Ask the students to talk about all the ways that they can make a difference.
9. Invite students to submit posters or essays on why walking and biking is good for their health, for their community or for the environment. Post the entries in your school newsletter or on your bulletin board. Ask the teachers to make this a homework assignment.





Promotional Talking Points

Here are a variety of ways you can talk to others about the Walking School Bus Challenge, to excite them about making positive change in their school commute pattern, and help them understand more about the benefits for their community:

TIME SAVINGS – Save time by reducing the number of days you drive your children to and from school.

REDUCED TRAFFIC CONGESTION – Fewer vehicles on our streets equates with less accidents, less stress, and a safer commute environment for parents and children.

INCREASED SAFETY – Traffic in school parking lots and drop-off zones can become highly concentrated – and dangerous for motorists and pedestrians - when several hundred parents are trying to get their children to and from school at the same time. Fewer cars mean greater safety for students.

COST SAVINGS – A Walking School Bus can save you money by reducing the amount of driving you do. You'll use less gas and save wear and tear on your vehicle.

MEETING NEW FRIENDS – Every Walking School Bus is a social opportunity and a great way for you and your child to make neighborhood friends.

LESS POLLUTION – Fewer vehicles on our streets translates into cleaner air for all of us.

IMPROVED HEALTH – Walking and biking to school provides the minimum daily exercise children need.



Instructions for Teachers

The Walking School Bus Challenge will be starting next week. This sheet contains a description of the contest and frequently asked questions (FAQs) to help you answer any questions your students may have. The punch cards have already been distributed to the students through _____. However, students will approach their teachers with questions, so this information should provide you with the answers you need.

Description:

The Walking School Bus Challenge rewards children who come to school by walking or biking. Every time a child walks or bikes on weekly Walk and Roll to School Days they stop in at the check-in table and get their card punched. In addition, volunteers will be posted on random days and at random locations to punch cards for those who walk or bike on non-Walk and Roll to School Days.

During the days, times and at the locations at your school noted below, volunteers will be manning a table where students can exchange their completed cards for a new card and a drawing ticket. At the end of the six-week contest, a drawing is held to select winners of the prizes.

Date(s): _____

Location(s): _____

Start Time: _____ End Time: _____





Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Where do I turn in my card?

A. Tickets are turned in at _____

Q. What can I win?

A. For every 5 points accumulated, students receive drawing ticket for a chance to win. At the end of the contest, all students whose names have been entered into the drawing will be eligible to win. The most valuable prize is a _____.

Q. I lost my card. Where can I get a new one?

A. The school office will have more cards or will provide you with the name of the Safe Routes to Schools parent volunteer who can replace the lost one.

Q. I take the bus to school. Can I participate?

A. Students who ride the bus to school can participate by walking around the (school, track) once or twice after the bus drops them off.



Instructions for Parents and Students

Included with this letter is a Walking School Bus Challenge participation card. This contest will occur for a period of six weeks, from _____ to _____. During this time period, students will be rewarded for walking and biking to school.

If you follow these simple steps you and your child will be able to enjoy the fresh air and wonderful times of getting to school together, and be eligible for some great prizes!

- ❑ Step #1 Walk or bike to school. Or, if you ride the bus, you can participate by walking at school after the bus drops you off.
- ❑ Step #2 Clip your card to your backpack or somewhere where it can't be lost and will always be with you when you come to school.
- ❑ Step #3 Bring your card into your school's weekly scheduled Challenge card check-ins for a volunteer to punch. For every 5 points your child accumulates, he or she will receive a drawing ticket.
- ❑ Step #5 There will be volunteers punching cards at random locations on unannounced days, so be sure to walk or bike as much as possible to earn more points.
- ❑ Step #6 Hope for good fortune.... With every ticket, your child has a chance to win one of several prizes, including a _____(grand prize).

Remember:

1. Use crosswalks when walking to school.
2. Wear your helmet when bicycling to school.





Contest Announcements


Newsletter Announcements

Introducing the Contest

Celebrate fall by trying out a new habit. Choose freedom from vehicular drop-off line stress and share some healthy time with your child. Join the fun of the Walking School Bus Challenge and win prizes for walking or biking to school.

For the next six weeks, students will be rewarded at school for getting to school in healthy ways. Activate Tucson has teamed up with the Pima County - Tucson Safe Routes to Schools Program to provide prizes to children who commute in these ways. Make sure your child has their punch card with them at all times for your child to make them eligible to win prizes – including a _____ (grand prize). Here is how your child can participate:

- **Step #1** Walk or bike to school. Or, if you ride the bus, you can participate by walking at school after the bus drops you off.
- **Step #2** Clip your card to your backpack or somewhere where it can't be lost and will always be with you when you come to school.
- **Step #3** Bring your card into your school's weekly scheduled Challenge card check-ins for a volunteer to punch. For every 5 punches your child accumulates, he or she will receive a ticket for the prize drawing.

- 
- **Step #5** There will be volunteers punching cards at random locations on unannounced days, so be sure to walk or bike as much as possible to earn more points.
 - **Step #6** Hope for good fortune.... With every ticket, your child has a chance to win one of several prizes, including a _____(grand prize).

For more information on volunteering for Safe Routes to Schools, or if you have any questions please call _____ (provide name and phone number).

Middle of the Contest Announcement

How many Walking School Bus points have you collected? Have you biked or walked recently? If you have, you are eligible to win some great prizes including a _____! Remember to keep your punch cards you received with you at all times and bring them in on the weekly scheduled Challenge check-in days. The tables are located at _____(location) on _____(day(s)) with rewards for those with 5 points. If you have questions, please call _____ (provide name and phone number).

Final Week of Contest Announcement

This is the last week of the Walking School Bus Challenge. REMEMBER TO TURN YOUR CARDS INTO THE OFFICE BY FRIDAY at _____(time).

Thanks so much for participating. We hope that you have enjoyed your trips to and from school. Stay tuned for the winners of the prizes.



Prize Winners Announcement

We are pleased to announce the winners of the Walking School Bus Challenge. They are:
_____ (list names of students and their prizes. Some team leaders list all the names of the kids that participated and the amount of points they collected as well).

Thanks to everyone that participated. Stay safe, have fun and treasure your neighborhood! For more information on volunteering for Safe Routes to Schools, please call
_____ (provide name and phone number).

Loudspeaker Announcements

Middle of the Contest Announcement

Have you been biking or walking to school recently? Are you keeping track of your Challenge points on the cards you received? You can win prizes when you accumulate 5 points or more! Remember to bring your card in on _____ (day(s)). The tables are located at _____ (location) between _____ and _____ (times).

Last Day of Contest Announcement

Bring in your Walking School Bus Challenge cards tomorrow and drop them off at _____ (location of drop off). This is your last chance to join the drawing to win many fabulous prizes including a _____ (grand prize). Thanks to everyone for reducing traffic at our school and reducing pollution in Tucson.



Checklists

Contest Coordination Tasks

- ❑ Inform the school administration and the PTA of the contest
- ❑ Photocopy instruction sheets for the teachers and inform them of the contest
- ❑ Recruit volunteers and enter them on your volunteer list
- ❑ Solicit Prizes from local businesses if necessary
- ❑ Post banners and posters
- ❑ Post contest announcement in the school newsletter
- ❑ Distribute Challenge cards and instructions
- ❑ Ask Principal to make loudspeaker announcements and provide script
- ❑ Coordinate card check-in days
- ❑ Coordinate collection of cards on contest's last day
- ❑ Tally participation numbers for each student
- ❑ Coordinate prize assembly



Check-In Table Supplies

- ❑ Volunteers - two or three
- ❑ Tables – best to have two, one close to the bike rack
- ❑ Chairs – two or three
- ❑ Pens
- ❑ Punch
- ❑ Extra cards and instruction sheets





How to Organize a Walking School Bus

What is a Walking School Bus?

A Walking School Bus is a group of students with one or more “driver” adults who accompany them to and/or from school. The driver need not be a parent. Some Walking School Bus programs recruit senior citizens, college students or other community volunteers. We recommend that all volunteers should receive background checks and be trained in safety procedures.

The Walking School Bus can have pre-determined designated “bus” stops and a published time schedule just like a school bus, or the Walking School Bus participants can determine the route together. Children can be picked up at their homes, or at designated “bus” stops. Participants can also choose to meet as one group at a central location, like a park or a community/shopping center. A meeting time will need to be pre-arranged.

We recommend that you have at least one adult for every 6-8 children, depending on the age. For children 10 or older, fewer adults may be needed. If children are ages 4-6, one adult per three children is recommended.

What is a Bike Train?

A Bike Train is like a Walking School Bus, except that everyone rides bicycles. Bike trains are recommended for children 9 or 10 and up, or for those riding attached bicycles with parents. We recommend a greater ratio of adults to children for a Bike Train, especially if there are younger children involved. Children should have a bike in good working order that is appropriate for their size. Adults and children should wear a helmet, and it is important that adults do not let children ride ahead or fall behind.





Recruiting Volunteers

Put out a notice in your school newsletter for parents willing to walk or bike with a group of children. In addition, you can find parents who already walk or bike with their own children and ask them if they would be willing to take a group of children. If you are organizing a Walking School Bus in your own neighborhood, call parents who live near you either through using the school directory or by using your own list of contacts. You can also recruit volunteers from a local seniors group, college students, or a local church group. Advertise in their newsletter or make a presentation to their group.

Determine the Routes

Spend a weekend day walking or biking the routes you have chosen for the buses, and timing how long it takes to each stop. Also, be careful to note any safety concerns, and establish how these will be handled. For instance, if there is no sidewalk on part of the route, children will need to walk single file with an adult in the front and at the back. Report any safety concerns to your Walking School Bus organizer.

It is best to choose routes that minimize the number of streets that you must cross. If available, choose routes that have good sidewalks or pathways, even if that means creating a longer route. Use crosswalks and controlled intersections when they are available. A controlled intersection is one where there is a stop sign or traffic light.

Create Route Maps

Create a map that shows the route and a schedule for meeting up with the Walking School Bus. Be sure to mark the “bus” stops on the map. Indicate how long the “bus” will wait for students at each stop – don’t wait more than a couple of minutes. Send home the maps and schedules of your Walking School Buses. Let people know what days the “buses” will operate and invite them to join in. Establish children’s responsibilities: behavior, tardiness, obeying traffic rules. Be sure to have at least two volunteers for each bus. Arrange a schedule and have back up people available. Make sure that the volunteers understand that it is their responsibility to show up on time and to let the coordinator know ahead of time if they cannot lead the bus on their shift.



Safety First

Large groups of children are very visible, and therefore provide a greater measure of safety than children walking alone. Children are more apt to obey traffic laws in a group with adult supervision. Instruct the children in basic traffic safety rules on the first trip together and repeat these rules often. You can even make a game out of it. We advise that you wear bright clothing and create a way to identify your group and make it visible. Increasing your group's visibility also may be an opportunity to do something festive (like balloons or hats.) You might want to use special safety vests or sashes. If you have a large group of children, break up into smaller groups, each with the adult supervision, and be sure not to let children run ahead or lag behind.

Weather, Heavy Backpacks and Other Impediments

In extreme heat, be sure that everyone is wearing a hat and has plenty of water. If there is a particularly bad storm, you might want to convert to a carpool. Be sure to consult with participating parents before canceling or altering the bus.

You can bring a wagon along to carry school projects and even back packs. Decorate your wagon to make it more festive. If you are riding bikes, someone can pull a bike trailer or you can outfit the bikes with panniers or other bike packs.



Sample Parent Letter for Walking School Bus

Dear Parent:

We are pleased to announce the formation of a Walking School Bus(es) at _____ (your school) – to encourage more children to walk and bike to school and help alleviate safety hazards and traffic congestion associated with the drop-off and pick-up of students at schools. The Walking School Bus is a safe and fun way for your child to participate in the Walking School Bus Challenge.

Join a Walking School Bus:

A Walking School Bus has at least one adult leader who walks along an agreed route to and/or from school. The routes will have designated “bus stops” along a specific route to school.

Join a Bike Train:

A Bike Train is the same as a Walking School Bus only on bicycles. It is largely for older students and requires more skills and adult supervision. Please make sure that your child’s bike is in good working order and that he or she is wearing her helmet.

Attached please find a map of the Walking School Bus routes and a schedule to determine when and where the stop is near your home. Please be on time to catch the “bus” and instruct your child to obey all traffic laws and pay attention to the “driver.” If you would like to start an additional Walking School Bus you can contact _____ at _____.

Thank you for working with us to help improve safety by decreasing traffic congestion around your school and increase the health of your children by letting them walk or bike to school.





Sample Participation Forms

Walking School Bus Child Participation Form

My child, _____, will walk with the Walking School Bus. He/she will join the bus at the stop by (cross-streets)_____. If we arrive at the stop after the bus has left I understand that I am responsible for taking my child to school. I understand that my child must follow the Walking School Bus Behavior Contract and that if he or she is unable to act in a responsible manner he/she will be asked to not walk with the bus in the future.

Signed:_____

Date:_____

Address:_____

Phone#:_____

Emergency Phone #:_____

Child's Class:_____





**Walking School Bus
Student Behavior Contract**

- I want to walk or bike with the walking or biking School Bus.
- I agree to listen to the adults at all times.
- I agree to wear my helmet while riding my bike, skateboard, rollerblades or scooter.
- I agree to stay with the group at all times and not drag behind or run ahead.
- I agree to respect other students, adults, and myself.
- I agree to respect other people's property such as their yards or cars.
- I will be on time.
- I understand that if I cannot behave responsibly I will be asked to not walk or bike with the School Bus in the future.
- I have signed my name on the line below. By signing, I understand and agree to follow the rules above.

Signed: _____



Resource List

For more information on International Walk to School Day and Walking School Buses, see these websites:

International Walk to School in the USA

www.walktoschool.org

International Walk to School

www.iwalktoschool.org

Go For Green: Active and Safe Routes to School in Canada

http://www.goforgreen.ca/asrts/home_e.html

Marin County Safe Routes to School

www.saferoutestoshools.org

UK: Sustrans, Safe Routes to School pages

www.saferoutestoshools.org.uk

National Center for Safe Routes to School

www.saferoutesinfo.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: KidsWalk-to-School

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/kidswalk>

