

Step by Step—Starting a Walk to School Program

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At Morton Way Public School a walk to school program (“**Walk and Roll**”) has been in place since 1999. The purpose of this guide is to provide ideas to help other schools encourage students and their parents, grandparents and caregivers to leave their car at home more often and instead, use active means of transportation (walking, cycling, rollerblading, or scootering) to get to school. Walk for cleaner air, safer streets and healthy bodies (and a sense of community). The suggestions are based upon plans that have been successful at Morton Way. It is important to realize that any attempt to promote active means of transportation to get to school should be seen as beneficial.

Participation in International Walk to School Day/Week is an excellent way to kick off a walking program for the year (see "**Getting Started**" on Page 5). After the event, students should be challenged to walk regularly. It can be as simple as implementing a "Walking Wednesdays" program, where students and their parents are asked to make an extra effort to walk on Wednesdays. (Other options could include "Trekking Tuesdays" or "Fitness Fridays".) At Morton Way, surveys show that between 89% and 95% of the students in Grades 1-5 walk on Wednesdays. Walking to school is also promoted for every day of International Walk to School Week, Environment Week and Earth Week.

Several years ago “Walking School Buses” (WSB) were initiated at Morton Way. The WSBs run (walk) every day of our "Walking Weeks" (International Walk to School Week, Environment Week and Earth Week), as well as every Wednesday. Parent volunteers and/or staff members act as

"drivers". The WSB drivers wear blue and fluorescent vests for identification with "Morton Way Walking School Bus" written on them with black marker. Walking School Bus drivers meet students 15 minutes before school starts at set locations in the school community, close to the driver's home. Parents leave their children at these WSB stops and can be assured that they will arrive safely at school accompanied by this responsible adult. Often a staff member will also walk to the "bus stop" and walk with the group. The number of participants on each WSB has grown from about 9 or 10 to over 45 on most routes. Students walking to school are thrilled when accompanied by the principal and/or another staff member every Wednesday. Children from the surrounding streets are eager to join in as the WSB passes by. Several parents, on their way to work, stop their cars and let their children join in. Parents who enjoy walking with their children daily, also frequently participate with the WSB.

The majority of students want to walk to school. The WSBs give every child the opportunity to get some exercise and join in the fun. The WSB passengers show a lot of spirit on their walks to school. Many of them carry signs ("**We Rock 'cause We Walk**" and "**Morton Way Walk and Roll**"). Several students carry a banner donated by the Peel Police Services Board which reads, "**Peel Students Walk**". Sometimes they sing songs or shout cheers on the way to school.

In the spring of 2005, the staff members who had morning duty in the front of Morton Way Public School realized that the number of cars dropping off children was increasing. On some days, we had over 70 cars. With our Walking Wednesday program in place and Walking School Buses available, we decided that 25 cars or less was a realistic goal. Without saying a word to the students, computer-generated characters were posted all over the school saying, "25 or Less". This peaked the students' curiosity and soon everyone was talking about it. The following week, the words, "We're counting...on you!" were added. Every morning we counted the cars and then announced the total over the PA system. As some of the students began to figure out the meaning of "25 or Less", a poem was read over the announcements (included). A note went home to parents asking them to leave the car at home more often. Students and their families are asked to walk for cleaner air, safer streets and healthy bodies. As the cars pull up to the circle to drop off students, the parents are told how many cars have already come in and they are reminded that our goal is 25 or less. Although

getting everyone to use active means of transportation to get to school continues to be a challenge, we have met our goal on a few occasions.

On the first Wednesday of every month, the staff administrators welcome the parents, grandparents and caregivers, into the library for beverages and treats. The administrative staff invites guest speakers on these mornings. Topics range from Nutrition and Healthy Snacks (Peel Health) to Child Safety (Peel Police).

Morton Way selects 4 students in Grade 5 to make up a "Walk to School Committee". These students are responsible for attaching a "**Walk to School Survey**" (sample included) on the attendance of each teacher in Grades 1 - 5. Since there are four to five classes for each grade, the surveys are copied onto coloured paper, with one colour representing each grade level. This makes results faster to calculate. The students then use the "**Walk to School Data and Compilation**" sheet (included) to figure out the percentage of students who walked in each grade level, as well as the school total. These results are transferred onto the "**Walk to School Results...How many walked?**" sheet (included) and posted on the bulletin board. A chart, with every teacher's name on it, is also on the bulletin board. The results for each class are recorded on the chart and posted for all to see. When the whole class walks, a star is placed beside the teacher's name. At the end of the day, the Walk to School Committee thanks the walkers, offers words of further encouragement and announces the day's results. Classes with 100% participation are announced, as well as the percentage for each grade level. Every class with 100% participation is entered into a draw to win a bag of playground equipment for a week. The bag includes balls, scoops and balls, ring toss, Frisbees, racquets, etc. (When a class wins, the cheers can be heard all the way down the hall!)

Every student has an "IWALK Club Card", donated by Green Communities' Active and Safe Routes to School" program. (To receive these cards, contact www.saferoutestoschool.ca.) Every time a student walks to school, a circle on the card is checked off. After ten walks, a golden shoe sticker (also donated) is awarded. After 50 walks (full card) a plastic foot charm and coloured chain (see www.fitnessfinders.net) is awarded. (These are purchased by Morton Way.) Throughout the year, students have an opportunity to earn 3 foot charms, which are worn with pride on zippers, wrists, shoes or backpacks. In addition, if a student walks on a Wednesday, they write their name on a "Walking Wednesday Prize Ballot" (sample

included). It goes into a draw to win a small prize (like a hat, pencil, poster, etc.) at a school assembly. Another motivator is a "Golden Shoe Certificate" which can also be created for each classroom, the first time the class walks. Every time the whole class walks, the teacher can write the date on the certificate, for all to see.

A Walk to School program can bring a lot of spirit to a school. At Morton Way, the older students are proud to be setting an example for the younger students. At the same time, students are learning about climate change, the need to take care of our environment and the importance of staying physically active. One of our parent volunteers composed a song, "Morton Way Walks" (lyrics included), which is sung by our choir on special walking days. Additionally, we have compiled songs on a cassette that relate to walking, which we play on our stereo in front of the school on Wednesday mornings. Several parents and students are frequently seen "walking and rolling" and moving to the music. It puts a smile on everyone's face!

Students are always reminded to wear helmets when cycling to school, as well as protective gear when they ride their scooters, skateboards or rollerblades.

Getting Started

International Walk to School Day/Week

Participating in International Walk to School Day/Week is easy and is one great way to start a regular walking program at your school. You can put as much effort into it as you like. As a minimum, a school can register on the Green Communities website (www.saferoutestoschool.ca), make regular announcements to the staff and students and advertise the event in the school's monthly newsletter. At Morton Way Public School we conduct surveys to determine the number of students who use active transportation to get to school (see attached). These surveys can be done prior to implementing a walking program, to help determine the improvement in walking scores. Here are some ways that you can promote International Walk to School Day/Week:

- * Beginning in mid-September, use the PA system to regularly promote the importance of walking to school; for cleaner air, safer streets, less congestion, and healthy bodies;
- * Publish an article in your monthly newsletter which goes home to all families of your students;
- * Colouring pages (from Green Communities) can be photocopied for all students and posted on the walls all over the school, especially important for Open House;
- * Find a local mall or parking area (and get permission, if necessary) where the teachers from out of town can park, so they, too, can walk to school;
- * Leave posters at local businesses to tell people to “Watch for Our Children”;
- * Use a bulletin board in the school to promote the event;
- * Find parent volunteers to lead walking school buses;
- * Distribute an overview of the importance of walking to school to all teachers along with a map of the school area, so they can plot the locations of all their students’ homes and routes;
- * Suggestions for integrating this event with the curriculum can be provided (e.g. graphing, health, language arts, etc.);
- * Older students can design their own posters to hang throughout the school;

- * Create flyers and distribute to all vehicles driving children over a one-week period prior to the event;
- * Celebrate International Walk to School Day with an assembly. Invite special guests (your MPP, health department, superintendent, mayor, etc.) and ask them to walk to school with the kids. Prior to your event, visit the www.iwalktoschool.org website to find out how many countries and students are participating;
- * Involve your school choir in the Walk to School assembly and have them sing songs related to walking (or have them perform a rap created by the students);
- * Sidewalk chalk along all the walkways leading to the school can be used to remind students and parents of the upcoming event;
- * After the event, have students go on-line to post their comments on www.iwalktoschool.org

Walk to School Survey

Teacher: _____ Date: _____

Grade: _____

* How many students walked to school today? _____

* How many students are present? _____



Yes!!! They all walked!

Walk to School Survey

Teacher: _____ Date: _____

Grade: _____

* How many students walked to school today? _____

* How many students are present? _____



Yes!!! They all walked!

Walk to School Survey

Teacher: _____ Date: _____

Grade: _____

* How many students walked to school today? _____

* How many students are present? _____



Yes!!! They all walked!

Data and Compilation

- 1) Divide up the Walk to School surveys by grade level.
- 2) Start with the Grade 1s. Add up the number of students present today. Write the sum on **A**.
- 3) Add up the number of students who walked. Write the sum on line **B**.
- 4) To calculate the percentage of students who walked, divide **A** into **B**, then multiply by 100. Round the number and write on line **C**.
- 5) Repeat steps 2 to 4 with each grade level.
- 6) Add up the denominators for each grade level (the 5 numbers in **A**). Write the number on line **D**.
- 7) Add up the numerators for each grade level (the 5 numbers in **B**). Write the number on line **E**.
- 8) To find the percentage of students in the whole school who walked, divide **E** by **D**, then multiply by 100. Round and write the value in **F**.

Grade 1

$$\frac{(B)}{(A)} = (C) \%$$

School Total:

Grade 2

$$\frac{(B)}{(A)} = (C) \%$$

$$(D) \frac{(E)}{(F)} = (F) \%$$

Grade 3

$$\frac{(B)}{(A)} = (C) \%$$

Grade 4

$$\frac{(B)}{(A)} = (C) \%$$

Grade 5

$$\frac{(B)}{(A)} = (C) \%$$

How many walked or rolled to school?

(cycled, scootered, roller bladed or skateboarded)

Classes with 100% Participation:

Grade 1s _____ %

Grade 2s _____ %

Grade 3s _____ %

Grade 4s _____ %

Grade 5s _____ %

Total : _____ %

Of our students used active means of transportation to get to school on

(date)

25 or Less

By Kirstin Schwass

25 or less, 25 or less,
What does it mean?
You have to guess.
Is it the number of kids in a class?
Or the number of students expected to pass?
Is it the average teachers' wage?
I heard someone say it's the principal's age!
Is it the activity you should get in a day?
"Oh no! Far more than that!" you should say.
Have you thought of it yet? Do you need a clue?
Could it be the students' average I.Q.?
Put your thinking caps on. What could it be?
A goal for our school that would help you and me,
Every day we're outside, and we have to count,
And on the PA we report the amount.
That's it! You've got it! You all shout it out,
"It's the cars in the circle, you're talking about!"
Too many cars are coming to school.
"Don't drive," we all tell you, "'cause walking is cool!"
Your parents save gas (oh, what a cost!)
And we won't have to breathe in all your exhaust.
If we try really hard then we'll have the solution,
Stop driving to school and end the pollution.
Twenty-five or less is all there should be,
So when school time approaches, don't turn the key.
Let your feet do the walking,
Show the world that you care,
Walk to school every day,
And help clear the air.
We can all make a difference,
You know that it's true,
And remember we all will be counting.....on you.
25 or less, 25 or less,
Can we all do it?
The answer is YES!

MORTON WAY WALKS TO SCHOOL

Written and composed by Cathy Clark (teacher), former parent council member at Morton Way P.S.

Cheer:

Morton Way, let's walk to school
Morton Way, we know it's cool
Morton Way, let's Go for Green
And Morton Way, let's be seen!

Chorus:

Let's walk to school
Cause we know it's cool
Let's Go for Green
And let's be seen.

Verse #1:

There're butterflies and birds in the air
Keep on walkin' and they'll still be there
Walk to school and skip the car
Walk to school cause it's not too far.

Chorus

Verse #2:

Walk when you can and stay in shape
Breathe clean air and you'll feel great
Come on Morton Way, let's walk to school
Look after our health, that's the golden rule.

Chorus

Verse #3:

Keep on walkin' cause it's good for you
Keep your body active and feelin' like new
Get some exercise and always play smart
Let's walk Morton Way, you know it's good for your heart.

Chorus

Verse #4:

Walk to school and walk to win
Check out the cleaner air and breathe it in
The streets are much safer when all of us walk
We'll be with our friends and we can talk.

Chorus--Cheer--Chorus

Quotes from Grade 5 students at Morton Way P.S.

- * "With the help of our teachers, we help the younger students understand how walking to school can decrease the amount of pollution in the air."
 - * "We show our school spirit and how we all could work together. We choose this (walking) because we want to be more active and healthy."
 - * "Everyone in our school tries to walk for a healthy body and safer streets. I like walking to school with my friends because we could talk. Walking is way better than riding in a car because walking is more fun than getting a ride."
 - * "Some people don't walk because it is raining or snowing or it is wet outside. But Mrs. Schwass, our gym teacher, said we should walk in rain or shine, so the people that don't walk, don't have an excuse."
 - * "Walking helps me be physical and active. I walk on Wednesdays because I like being a leader of the school on Walking Wednesdays."
 - * "I like Walking Wednesday because I am having fun and keeping healthy at the same time."
 - * "Walking to school is good exercise for us and we enjoy it very much. It makes us fresh and fit. Walking to school adds to Morton Way Pride."
 - * "I love walking to school because then you don't have to use the old car and get the air polluted and kill animals. Instead, you'll have a healthier body and cleaner air."
 - * "Some people don't walk because they think that riding in a car is faster. It is, but walking is about 2 minutes longer. In those 2 extra minutes, you get more exercise."
 - * "I always walk, even when I am almost late for class. Walking to school is very fun. When I walk, I get a little exercise. And it is safer to walk than to drive in the winter."
 - * "If children walk, there will be fewer cars on the road. Walking to school decreases pollution and makes us healthy."
 - * "I think Walking Wednesday is good for your heart and you get exercise at the same time."
 - * "I have tried walking to school every day, and I have felt better in the last few days. When I walk to school, I feel better because I am getting stronger and healthier than I was before."
 - * "Walking to school is a habit at Morton Way. Walking every Wednesday is a task that every kid must participate in. We walk for cleaner air, safer streets and healthy bodies and because it's fun!"
 - * "Most of the students walk with friends or family. I walk with my grandma so she gets the exercise she needs, too."
 - * "People shouldn't just walk on Wednesdays. They should walk regularly. Walking keeps you healthy and you get to chat with your friends."
 - * "It is super fun walking to school. You can rollerblade, scooter or ride your bike to school. Walking to school makes your mind refreshed."
- "When I am doing all those activities, I feel refreshed, healthy and proud because I am helping Brampton by not polluting the air. I am 100% sure that there is no school as active as ours, and if there is, I would like to tell them, 'Everybody at Morton Way is proud of you'."