

# WALK TO SCHOOL DAY

# 2015

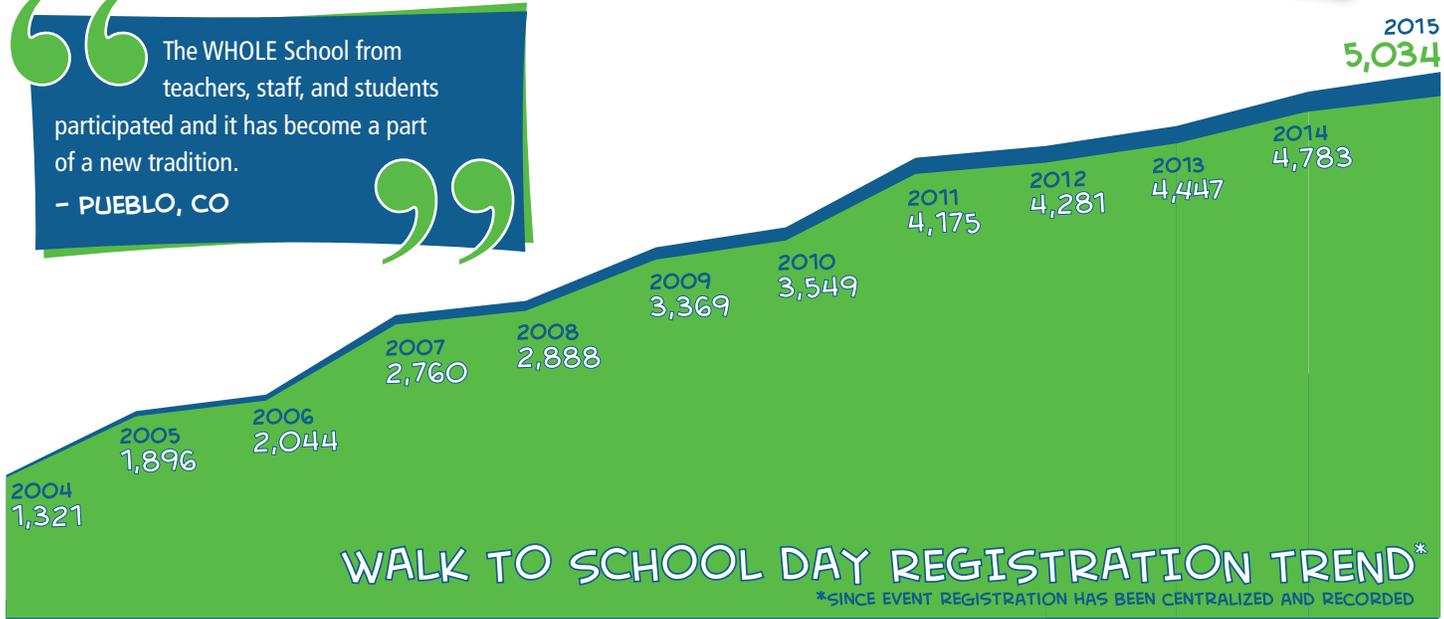
## 19TH YEAR OF RECORD BREAKING PARTICIPATION

What an amazing year! Walk to School Day thrived in 2015, both deepening its roots in schools that make participating in Walk to School Day a tradition, and budding in new communities with many first-time celebrations. For the 19th year in a row, Walk to School Day participation set a new record with 5,034 events registered nationwide. What helps Walk to School Day take off in so many places?

In post-event surveys, Walk to School Day organizers expressed how much they care about their students' and school communities' well-being. Most said that their school organized an event to help students get the physical activity they need, to highlight pedestrian safety issues along school routes, and to support their schools' ongoing safe routes to school efforts. Event organizers also reported their school participated because Walk to School Day helps build a sense of community and bolsters school spirit. In fact, one in five schools reported that their students participate in a walking school bus either as part of Walk to School Day or throughout the year. A walking school bus is a group of children who walk to school together supervised by one or more adults. What a great way to get active, promote safety, and build a sense of community! Here's to sowing more seeds of change with Walk to School Day events and experiencing the benefits for children, schools and communities.



“ The WHOLE School from teachers, staff, and students participated and it has become a part of a new tradition. ”  
 - PUEBLO, CO



WALK TO SCHOOL DAY REGISTRATION TREND\*

\*SINCE EVENT REGISTRATION HAS BEEN CENTRALIZED AND RECORDED

## NATIONAL SUPPORT

Walk to School Day drew support from U.S. Secretary of Transportation, and former mayor of Charlotte, Anthony Foxx. Secretary Foxx helped kick off Walk to School Day by releasing a video message encouraging communities nationwide to join the celebration. "Every October, parents and kids celebrate this day by walking to school in the morning and back home in the afternoon. In doing so they are celebrating a lifestyle that is good for our environment, good for our health, and that is just a fun way to start the day," explained Foxx.

The event also saw tremendous support from community leaders across the country in 2015. Mayors in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Fort Worth, Nashville, and Philadelphia and many other cities laced up their sneakers and joined students in their trip to school.

Philadelphia Mayor Michael A. Nutter participated in the event as a way to bring attention to pedestrian safety in his city. "It is everyone's job—whether you are a parent, aunt, uncle, teacher, friend, or neighbor—to teach our children to walk and bike to school safely," explained Mayor Nutter. "We need to make sure that those of us who drive vehicles do so in a responsible way, especially in neighborhoods and near school and recreation center buildings, so that everyone has a safe environment in which to walk."

Communities across the country organized creative events of all shapes and sizes. Students at Central Brockport Schools in Brockport, New York were cheered on by their local college basketball team and serenaded by a rock band during their trip to school. Meanwhile, a school in Salt Lake City had a "dinomite" Walk to School Day when a parent dressed up as a dinosaur in celebration of the event.

We do a joint city/board of education proclamation. The Superintendent and Mayor work with the Principal to create a fun, healthy event for the children.

– PRATTVILLE, AL



Walk to School Day is always a huge, exciting event. We usually have close to 100% participation and have many community leaders. This year our city Mayor did the Whip/Nae Nae with the school. Everyone loved it.

– SPRINGFIELD, MA

# HIGHEST REGISTRATION RATES



This year marks the 14th Walk to School Day with a 100-percent participation rate among states. Nationally an estimated 5% of elementary and middle schools\* registered an event this year. Many states recorded exceptional participation with 19 states beating their registration totals from last year and 17 states setting all-time event registration highs.

States with more schools would be expected to have more events. In order to level the playing field between smaller states and bigger states, a Walk to School Day participation rate was calculated to compare states. In other words, for each state, the total number of events is divided by the total number of public and private elementary and middle schools, where the vast majority of events take place.

\*Based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) for "schools beginning with grade 6 or below and having no grade higher than 8." The number of public schools derives from the Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey (current as of the 2013-2014 school year) and the number of private schools derives from the Private School Universe Survey (current as of the 2013-2014 school year). Go to <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/> for more information.



“ This was our first year of participating in this type of event. We had 70% of our students participating! The kids asked when we were going to do it again. ”  
 - SMITHTON, IL

## INSPIRING CHANGE

Walk to School events have a track record for leading to policy and engineering changes that help make it safer to walk and bike to school. In 2015, fifty-five percent of event organizers indicated that their event led to planned, or already completed, policy or engineering changes. Events are a great way for communities to experiment with walking to school and often lead to more permanent change.

### TOP POLICY OR ENGINEERING CHANGES

**25%** OF EVENTS LED TO THE ADDITION OF REQUIRED SAFETY EDUCATION

**22%** LED TO THE ADDITION OF WALKING/ BICYCLING PROMOTION TO EXISTING SCHOOL POLICIES (SUCH AS A SCHOOL WELLNESS POLICY)

**14%** LED TO INCREASED TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT NEAR SCHOOLS



## GREAT IDEAS

Communities impress us year after year with fun events that reflect their community's personality. To get your creative juices flowing for next year's celebration, take a look at a sample of what happened around the country in 2015:

"Online registration for chaperoned groups allows organizers to assign chaperones to best locations and drop sites that do not need to be staffed. Online registration also "commits" the families ahead of time, and I think this helps with follow-through, especially when the weather is less than ideal."

- SIMSBURY, CT

"The event went very well!! For a school of 600 kids, 182 kids participated in Walk to School Day. We set up a spot where they could get off the bus and walk if they chose to, and this allowed many more kids who live far away from school to get the extra exercise together."

- WOODLAND PARK, CO

"We walk every Monday and Wednesday morning to school as the weather allows. The longest distance traveled is 1.2 miles. We have junior high (7-8 grade) students acting as mentors and leaders for our young group. Our youngest walkers are preschoolers!"

- SOLON, IA

"We brought the entire school out to our recreation facility and walked for 30 min, with a DJ, community support groups, churches, armed forces representatives, first responders, and community athletic groups to support and cheer our students as they walked to create the atmosphere of a major 10k or marathon type event."

- HENRICO, VA

"Our event went VERY well! At the last minute, we had our 5th grade band members accompany us as a group so they could play a march for us walking in. Our parents were awesome! Our 8th grade Honor Society Members were a HUGE help. Honor Society helped guide along the paths and escort the younger children to their classrooms."

- EASTAMPTON, NJ



"We invite our community policemen to escort us safely to school. Most of them will run their lights for us and block traffic at the main streets. To show our appreciation, our kids made signs thanking our policemen for keeping them safe along with their Walk to School Day signs! Our school police officer even stopped at our school entrance and shook hands with all the students he could! So much fun!!!"

- MUSTANG, OK

"As part of our Green Schools Initiative, we host a walk to school day each month for the entire year. The October event is our "kickoff" and gets students and parents fired up about participating all year."

- GREENACRES, FL

"A classroom walked to a nearby National Park/Landmark that is accessible from school via safe pathways and crosswalks installed by the state roads department. This activity was meant to show the kids they can walk to local attractions and also fulfilled part of their social studies curriculum."

- GRANTSVILLE, MD

## THANK YOU FOR WALKING!

Save the date: International Walk to School Day 2016 will be held on October 5. Don't want to wait that long? We don't either! This spring, celebrate National Bike to School Day on May 4, 2016.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, VISIT [WWW.WALKBIKETOSCHOOL.ORG](http://WWW.WALKBIKETOSCHOOL.ORG)

**SafeRoutes**

National Center for Safe Routes to School



U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Highway Administration

Prepared by the National Center for Safe Routes to School with support from the Federal Highway Administration. Sources for this report: Walk to School event registration (<http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/go/register-your-event>), Walk to School organizer surveys and Walk to School organizer photos.