

WALK TO SCHOOL DAY

2014

3 WAYS WALK TO SCHOOL DAY IS BETTER THAN EVER

Thousands of students, parents, school professionals, community leaders and many others at 4,783 schools across the United States celebrated Walk to School Day in 2014. This event has evolved into an important tradition for many schools while continuing to attract new celebrants. In fact, Walk to School Day is better than ever. These three reasons make the case:

1 Walk to School Day events are proving to have short and long term impacts on communities. Over the past seven years, creating a sense of community has become an increasingly important reason why communities participate in this event. Walk to School Day brings students, parents and community members together, helping to build a sense of neighborhood by giving students and parents a chance to socialize and foster school spirit. At the same time, nearly 70% of 2014 events led to policy or engineering changes. These are the kinds of changes that help improve safety and help make it possible for families to walk or bike to school on a regular basis. (Read more about them on page two).

2 Promotion of walking to school and celebration of Walk to School Day are being used to tackle big issues. Communities are seeing walking to school as part of the solution to problems like chronic student absenteeism and community violence. Events encourage student and family engagement and help communities make their routes to school safer. Improving these issues makes communities better places for everyone.

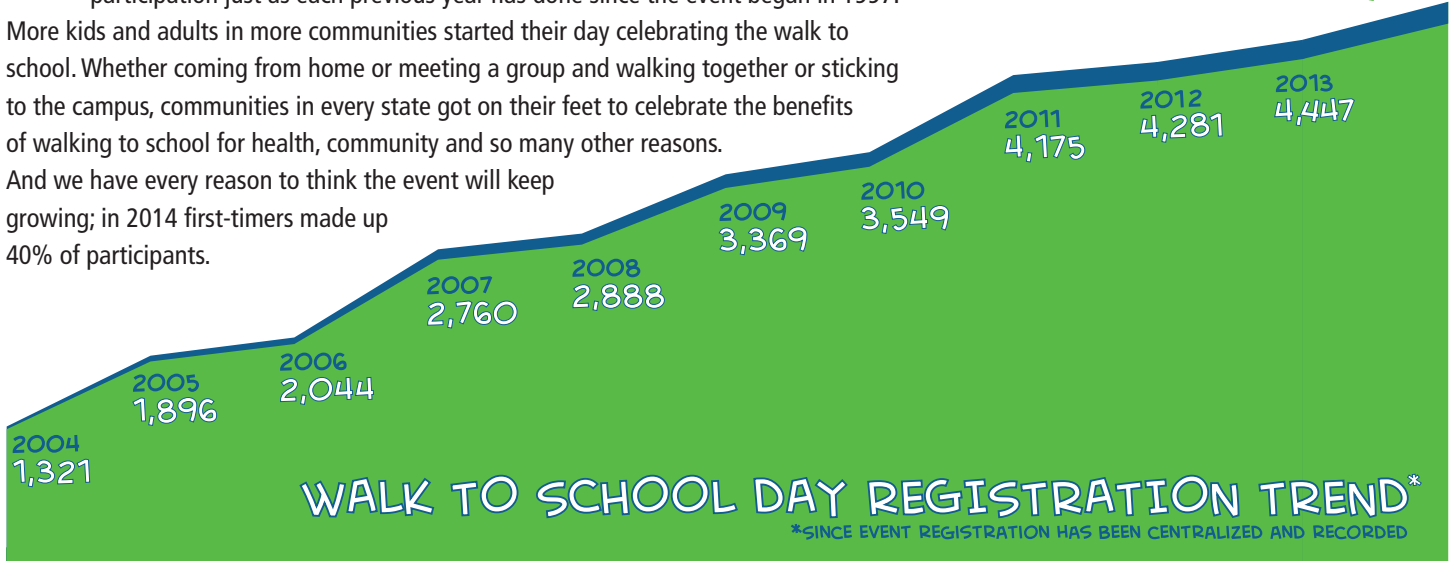
3 Steady growth of Walk to School Day events may be a bellwether for the desire for more active lifestyles. Walk to School Day 2014 established a new record for participation just as each previous year has done since the event began in 1997. More kids and adults in more communities started their day celebrating the walk to school. Whether coming from home or meeting a group and walking together or sticking to the campus, communities in every state got on their feet to celebrate the benefits of walking to school for health, community and so many other reasons. And we have every reason to think the event will keep growing; in 2014 first-timers made up 40% of participants.



PHOTO BY DONNIE ROBERTS/THE LEXINGTON DISPATCH

“Walk to School Day has become a tradition here... it is always part of our annual fitness week and has been for 7 years now!
- PALM CITY, FL”

2014
4,783



“Great event to reinforce fitness and school spirit. Our school does not have busing so many of our students already walk, but the kids make it a point to walk on this day and encourage friends. They get so excited over something, really, so simple.
 – ESSEX JUNCTION, VT”

NATIONAL SUPPORT

Across the country, Walk to School Day 2014 made headlines showcasing locally organized events. The Washington Post and CNN featured articles, showing the support nationwide for this annual event.

In Charlotte, NC, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx joined hundreds of students at Cotswold Elementary School for their Walk to School Day celebration. Foxx kicked off the event by expressing his support for safer walking and bicycling environments. “I’m working really hard in my job to make sure that – if there’s a place people want to walk – we’re building the crosswalks and streetlights and sidewalks that’ll help them get there safely,” explained Foxx.

There were many creative events of all shapes and sizes across the country. A school in Florida had a special guest at their event, NASCAR star Scott Lagasse Jr., who helped students kick off their Walk to School Day. In Illinois, Governor Pat Quinn officially proclaimed October 8th as Walk to School Day in his state. Some communities had quieter, but equally meaningful events and all of them underlined the value of walking to school.



“This day is a promotion for pedestrian safety... On days leading up to the event, we teach pedestrian safety, practice skits, and decorate the school. On the day of the event, we hold an assembly in the gym, discuss pedestrian safety tips, perform skits, and practice using the learned skills by crossing the street at a nearby crosswalk.
 – GOLDSBORO, NC”

INSPIRING TRANSFORMATION

Walk to School Day events can help encourage communities to implement policy or engineering changes that make it safer to walk and bike to school. In 2014, 70% percent of event organizers indicated that their event led to planned, or already completed, policy or engineering changes.

TOP POLICY OR ENGINEERING CHANGES

- 25%** OF EVENTS LED TO THE ADDITION OF WALKING/BICYCLING PROMOTION TO EXISTING SCHOOL POLICIES (SUCH AS A SCHOOL WELLNESS POLICY)
- 19%** LED TO THE ADDITION OF REQUIRED SAFETY EDUCATION
- 18%** LED TO THE ADDITION OF SIGNAGE





URBANA, IL

“ We had a great response from our school community. Parents, younger siblings, high school cheerleaders and mascot, principal, staff, and our Assistant Superintendent were all on hand to motivate us and celebrate our participation in this endeavor.
 – EVANSTON, IL ”

STATE STAND-OUTS

This year marks the 13th 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 27 states beating their registration totals from last year and 16 states setting all-time event registration highs.

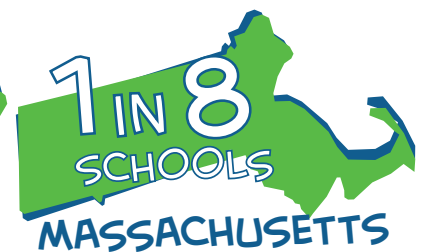
States with more schools would be expected to have more events. In order to level the playing field between smaller states and bigger states, a Walk to School Day participation rate was calculated to compare states. In other words, for each state, the total number of events is divided by the total number 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 2012-2013 school year) and the number of private schools derives from the Private School Universe Survey (current as of the 2012-2013 school year). Go to <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/> for more information.



PHOENIX, AZ

HIGHEST REGISTRATION RATES



GREAT IDEAS

Event organizers are endlessly creative, planning events that reflect their community's priorities and realities. As a jump start to thinking about next year, take a look at a small sample of what happened around the country.

GET TECHNICAL

"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

GET LOW-TECH

"Planning was done in a manner to include many members of our community. By sending letters to community leaders and business people, we had a lot of support within our community."

- GROSE POINT PARK, MI

WHEN IT'S TOO FAR TO WALK

"We are a very rural community... so not everyone can walk or bike to school. We also give kids the option to be dropped off in town in the mornings a few blocks from school or kids have a fair distance to walk to the bus or stop or if none of those work, we walk ~1 mile with students on their lunch time on this day. These options give all the kids the chance to participate if they wish to."

- WEST BRANCH, MI

TEACHERS MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE

"Teacher participation is key! No matter how many phone blasts, FB posts or flyers we sent home to promote it, it was the teachers reminding the students that really made a difference. Teachers also met up with their students at certain places so everyone had a chance to 'walk'."

- SAN DIMAS, CA

THANK YOU FOR WALKING!

Save the date: Walk to School Day 2015 will be held on October 7. Don't want to wait that long? We don't either! This spring, celebrate National Bike to School Day on May 6, 2015.



BRING A BUDDY

"Sierra [Elementary School] teamed up with another local elementary school and met in a park and ride."

- PLACERVILLE, CA

USE LOCALLY-GROWN TALENT

"The student leadership (mostly 6-8th graders) did most of the promotion and that seems to have made more of an effect than having adults do the publicity."

- REDWOOD CITY, CA

YOU CAN COUNT ON IT

"We calculated steps, miles and calories burned individually, by class, by grade level and then the whole school totals. It was great the amount of data that we were then able to use in our Math lessons."

- SUMMERVILLE, SC

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, VISIT 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.