

Walk to School Program

A snapshot from Monett, Missouri



Walk to School programs are a fun and community-driven way to increase access to physical activity. In some places, schools also encourage biking! Walk to School programs can **spark important discussions about improvements to town infrastructure, like crosswalks, sidewalks, and signage.** Check out this snapshot to learn how the Monett R-1 school district worked with their community to create safer routes to school and inspire students to get active.



Getting Buy-In

Safe walking routes to school are a win-win for students and community members. Community members can also benefit from walkable streets, especially when there is no public transportation system. In Monett, the first step to safer streets was to engage town leadership, including the mayor, city administrator, and a transportation council. By working together, they were able to identify improvements that would serve the community and students.

Creating a Fun Program

The school district created a Walk to School program to promote new, safe routes and get students excited about getting active. The program was centered around days or weeks that would include organized walks, giveaways, and safety lessons. The goal was to highlight safe routes that students could then use year-round.

Tips to Create the Program

- Consider conducting a walkability audit in your community. By walking all over town, you'll be able to identify where your town has safe crosswalks and what needs to be fixed or added.
- Engage volunteers to walk with students. Monett R-1 tapped school staff, retired teachers, and parents. The fire department also helped at busier crosswalks.
- Increase student participation with low-cost incentives, like reusable water bottles, key chain flashlights, or reflective slap bracelets for safe walking.
- Coordinate your walking routes with bus pick-up spots. You can also use those locations as drop-off spots for students who live farther out of town.

If your school building or community does not have safe walking routes to school, consider a walk "at" school event! Invite students to walk around the grounds or a track before the school day starts.



"The Healthy Schools Healthy Communities initiative was an integral part of the City's Transportation Improvement Plan known as "Moving Monett Forward." Our goals aligned perfectly with what we were hoping to accomplish and their support for our plan was critical to make bike and pedestrian improvements in Monett."

DENNIS PYLE, FORMER CITY ADMINISTRATOR



Top Tips from Alex Severs, Healthy Schools Coordinator, Monett R-1

1. **Build a team.** Engage a committee or group of people who are interested in building a healthier future in your community. Walk to School programs require support from multiple adults.
2. **Communicate early.** As soon as you have the program logistics set, send a letter home to parents. You should also send half-sheet reminders with walking routes and departure times. Promote the program through a press release and on social media!
3. **Adjust as you go.** You will learn from each Walk to School event. Take those lessons and apply them to the next event to make it even better!