

Walking Buddies

Help students find others to walk with for school journeys

Theme: **Education, Encouragement** • Audience: **Parents, Students** • School Grade: **1-3, 4-8, 9-12**
• Mode: **Walk** • Issues: **School Culture, Student Supervision**

Purpose:

To help students and families meet others who are walking the same routes to school and to encourage them to walk together instead of walking alone.

Description:

Finding walking companion(s) can help improve actual and perceived safety for children, provide motivation to walk regularly, and make the school journey more interesting and fun. This intervention is particularly effective for older students, as they enjoy socializing and being independent on the walk to school. It can also work well with younger students, who enjoy walking in groups with other families in their neighbourhood.

A Walking Buddies program can take a variety of forms and can be promoted school-wide or to selected grades or classes. It can be as simple as organizing and promoting a single day event where you help students/families who live on the same school route to meet one another, after which they may informally organize to walk together regularly, e.g., challenge students to find at least one walking buddy that they will commute to school with on a regular basis. Another simple approach is for a school to compile and share a list of people who are looking for walking buddies.

It is recommended that a Walking Buddies program be offered in combination with a [Pedestrian Skills Training](#) program to equip students with the knowledge they need to walk safely on their route to school.

What you will need:

Materials and content for program promotion, e.g., supplies to make posters, content for school newsletter and morning announcements. You might also use online maps, forms and/or social media channels to find out who lives where and suggest buddies, and to facilitate communication among participants.

Help:

Principals, teachers, and parents/caregivers can help students find their walking buddies. Older students can help with promotional activities and, at some schools, may also play student leadership role to model walking to their peers e.g., Waterloo's Trailblazers program (see Resources below).

Resources:

[“Walking and Wheeling Buddies Toolkit”](#) by SHAPE (Safe Healthy Active People Everywhere) Alberta

[Trailblazer Student Walking Leaders program](#) by STSWR (Student Transportation Services of Waterloo Region)