

Class Discussion – “Be the Change: Bike or Walk to School!”

THE MISSION: To reduce the number of cars on the road by getting students to walk, bike, or carpool with other families to school, instead of getting dropped off (one-by-one) by a parent.

I. **WHO** (in class) already walks or bikes to school?

- ✓ Do you like it, why or why not?

II. **WHY** should more students WALK or BIKE TO SCHOOL instead of driving with a parent?

- ✓ **EXERCISE!** (And create healthy, active **habits** that will last a lifetime.)
 - What parts of your daily routine were you initially reluctant to do at first but proved to be worthwhile and “no-big-deal” over time? (Think flossing, doing homework at the beginning of the school year, making your bed every morning...)
 - Could walking to school seem like a big change at first but possibly get easier over time? What steps would you take to make walking to school easier or more enjoyable? (Think saving time by picking out your outfit and/or packing lunch the night before, arranging to walk with a friend on the way to school, planning enough time to be punctual...)
 - Why is getting exercise so important?
 - Build strong muscles, bones, & joints
 - Decrease risk of obesity
 - Prevent chronic diseases
 - Fun & feels good!
- ✓ **INCREASE SAFETY** for pedestrians and bicyclists
 - Many parents report that the #1 reason for driving their children to school is to keep them from crossing busy intersections, clogged with dangerous traffic. But THINK about it... More Kids Walking = Fewer Cars Driving = Less Traffic = Safer Intersections

- Has anyone ever been in a dangerous situation on bikes or while walking?
- What kinds of things should bikers/walkers do to be safe?
 - Wear helmets
 - Bike on the RIGHT side of the road (go in the same direction as the cars)
 - Stop at red lights & stop signs
 - Walk on sidewalks & cross in crosswalks (walk bikes in crosswalks)
 - Make eye contact with drivers at intersections & driveways
 - Be aware of your surroundings: Don't text & walk. Only wear ONE headphone if biking.
 - Plan a safe route with your parents, and stick to it.
 - Walk with a buddy.
 - What else?

✓ **IMPROVE GRADES!**

- *How?! Walking and biking before school allows students to burn energy and get focused for a long day of learning. "Researchers say that cycling or walking to school can be a great way to increase concentration during the school-hours. The study from universities in Copenhagen and Aarhus found that children who were driven to school or used public transport scored less in tests that measured concentration than children who walked or cycled to school. Most surprisingly to researchers, the exercise helped improve concentration for about four hours after the walkers or cyclists arrived in the classroom."*
[\(<http://www.medicaldaily.com/walking-biking-school-improves-concentration-243639>\)](http://www.medicaldaily.com/walking-biking-school-improves-concentration-243639)

- How do you feel after exercising? Good mood, energized, peaceful...?

- ✓ **SAVE MONEY!** Would your parents consider passing along gas money savings to your allowance?

- ✓ **ENVIRONMENT:** Walking & biking are POLLUTION FREE!
 - Idling cars create massive amounts of exhaust fumes. How many cars do you think idle in front of school every day before school?
 - Students and teachers are a captive audience; they cannot escape the fumes that are left by all of the cars each morning. If more people biked or walked, there would be a lot fewer cars emitting dangerous toxins in the school-zone air.

- ✓ **COMMUNITY:** Build a better one!
 - When people walk their neighborhoods, families get to know each other, children become friends, and neighbors become more interested in the safety and security of their community. Would you be more concerned about the safety in your neighborhood if you saw groups of first-graders walking to school past your house every day?

III. **HOW** could we incorporate biking and walking into OUR lives?

- ✓ Reluctant to commit? Take baby steps – start by walking once a week.
- ✓ Live too far away from school? Try getting dropped off several blocks from school.
- ✓ Physically unable to walk/bike; or parents won't allow you to walk/bike? Start a carpool.
- ✓ Want your peers to join you? Start a bike/walk campaign at school:
 - Write a newsletter article
 - Start "Walking Wednesdays" as a weekly school Spirit Day
 - Get involved with the PTA
 - Make posters, print flyers
 - Get creative – what other steps could you take...?