

Lesson 2.7: Go for a Walk

Background (Read before you teach): Walking to school can be a great way to increase overall physical activity. There are many health benefits of physical activity including: weight and blood pressure control; bone, muscle, and joint health; lower risk of type 2 diabetes; improved social well-being; and better academic performance in school-aged children (Janseen & Leblanc, 2010; Mullender-Wijnsma et al., 2015; Bunketorp, Malmgren, Olsson, Linden, & Nilsson, 2015; USDA and DHHS, 2016). [Physical activity guidelines](#) for children and youth, ages 6-17 years, recommend 60 minutes a day of moderate to vigorous-intensity physical activity.⁴ Activities that strengthen bones and muscles should be included as part of the 60 minutes. Physical activity guidelines for adults include at least 150 minutes per week of moderate-to-vigorous level physical activity. Brisk walking and dancing are examples of moderate level physical activity, whereas running and swimming are more vigorous. Bicycling can be either moderate or vigorous, depending on how fast you ride.

Teaching Tip: This lesson involves a short outdoor walk. As you walk, remind people of safety rules: look for traffic at driveways and intersections; wait until no traffic is coming and then walk in a cross walk; be alert—avoid texting and walking; and obey all traffic signs and signals. If the weather does not permit a walk, clear space in the perimeter of the room for a walk. Alternatively, try walking in place (5 min)—walk with high knees, straight arms, marching, legs wide, while circling arms, and reaching up with arms. Music can be a nice addition. If a participant is unable to walk, arrange a chair to view the activity. Consider having a sign-up sheet for parents who are interested in walking their kids to school with other parents.

Target Audience: Mexican-origin families with young children, ages 3 to 8 years

Key Message: Walking to and from school is a great physical activity for children and parents.

Objectives: By the end of the lesson, participants will be able to:

- List the benefits of walking to and from school for both children and parents;
- Identify places where families can walk in their community; and
- Take a short walk with a group of children and adults.

Materials:

- Walking rope with bells (such as jingle bells)
- Poster paper and markers

- Supplies for food demonstration (suggested Popcorn Snack)

Handouts: recipes (suggested: a healthy “walking” snack for a trip home from school)

Set-up: Make a walking rope, about 15 feet long, that children can hold while walking in a group Tie a few bells with colored ribbons along the rope. Note: When making reminder calls, tell participants to come ready for a short walk (comfortable shoes).



Figure: Walking to school.

Opening (Anchor): (10 min) Welcome! Review what was covered last time and ask if participants have made changes, based on their goals. Congratulate and encourage them to keep on making changes.

Today, we will be talking about the benefits of walking to school for both children and parents.

To begin the class, choose one of the following:

- **Ask:** Who remembers walking to school as a child? What was it like for you? Do your children walk to school? Why or why not?
- **Ask:** Who takes a walk most days of the week? How does it make you feel?

Lesson (Add): (15 min) Discuss the following points:

- **Pair-up and discuss:** What are benefits of walking to and from school with your children? List the benefits for both children and parents. Invite participants to share their responses. (Optional: write down key points on poster paper).
- **Summarize:** Walking is an easy way to be physically active—helps children meet the daily 60 minutes or more of moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA) goal for better health Remember: adults need at least 150 minutes (MVPA) per week Children arrive at school more alert and ready to learn. Walking provides an opportunity to talk or play games along the way—builds social skills. Parents may choose to continue walking with friends or family for more exercise and social time, after dropping children off at school. Other points include:

Children:

Learn pedestrian safety with adult guidance and supervision.

Develop healthy habits that can last a lifetime.

Learn more about their neighborhoods.

Gain a sense of independence.

Parents:

Save gas required for driving to and from school. Save money! Better for air quality.

Address safety concerns (traffic, strangers)

- **Ask:** Where are areas in your community that are good for walking? (Optional: Bring a community map or on poster paper, draw a map of the community or even the area near the school. Mark or draw safe routes for short walks, looking for areas with sidewalks, paths, and away from heavy traffic.)
- **Ask:** What barriers keep you from walking more often? What are some ways to overcome these barriers? Some possible answers:

- Lack of time: Try planning ahead for a walk once a week. Arrange a date and time to go with a friend or family member. The night before, set an alarm and have walking shoes, appropriate clothing, and water bottles ready near the door.
- Community safety: Talk to school officials or local leaders about your concerns. Communities can apply for funds to improve lighting, sidewalks, and similar barriers. Walk together by organizing walking groups. Get the facts! Sometimes, parents perceive safety to be less than it really is.
- Pedestrian safety: Wear bright-colored clothing; carry flashlight after dark; look for traffic at driveways and intersections; wait until no traffic is coming and then walk in a crosswalk; be alert—avoid texting and walking; obey all traffic signs and signals.
- Lack of family interest: Walking with friends can make the activity more fun. Tell children that you are going “exploring” and ask about what they discover along the way. Play games like follow the leader, make up a story, or ask children to look for colors (How many pink things can you find? Let’s count them!). Go on an alphabet walk—look for things that start with “A”, “B”, “C”, etc.
- Clothing: No special clothing is needed. If the weather is cold, wear layers (like sweaters) that can be removed after the body gets warmer through exercise. Let children carry their own backpacks.

Activity (Apply): (25 min) While the assistant starts the food demonstration, the educator leads the activity.

- Let’s walk! Begin a 5 minute walk outside. Have children hold onto the rope with bells. Consider having an activity game for the children, such as make up a story or look for colors. After the walk, invite participants to share thoughts. **Ask:**

How many of you feel more awake or energized after the walk than before the walk?

How many of you talked while you were walking?

Did anyone learn something about the person with whom you were walking?

- Food demonstration, tasting and sharing. Pass around the containers, showing the participants any foods that might be new or unfamiliar (for example, low-fat products, whole grain alternatives). Explain step-by-step how the food is prepared. Serve samples for tasting. **Ask:** What are some ways that your children can help prepare this recipe? How can you use it at home? What do you like about the recipe? What would you change?

Closing (Away): (10 min) Pair-up and set specific goals

What did you learn? Why is this information important to you?

Choose a goal to work on this month (week). Try to choose a simple goal that is doable within a week or month. Some examples include:

I will walk with my child for 30 minutes, 3 times per week for a month;

I will walk my child to school 1 time a week during the next month; or

I will walk to the store with my child instead of driving 1 time a week for a month.

Write your goal on the recipe handout. Ask a friend or family member to help support you in reaching your goal. Invite families to share their goals.

References and Resources:

Bunketorp Käll, L., Malmgren, H., Olsson, E., Lindén, T., & Nilsson, M. (2015). Effects of a Curricular Physical Activity Intervention on Children's School Performance, Wellness, and Brain Development. *Journal of School Health, 85*(10), 704-713. doi:10.1111/josh.12303

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Safe Routes to School. National Center for Safe Routes to School. Updated 2017.
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http://archive.saferoutesinfo.org//sites/default/files/tips_for_parents.esp_.pdf

(English)

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US Department of Agriculture and US Department of Human Health and Services.
(2015). *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2015-2020. Appendix 1: Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, 2015*

<http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/appendix-1/#table-a1-1>

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