

PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN



Heart of Largo—Eat Smart, Play Hard



Why develop a walking school bus?

Studies show that fewer children are walking and biking to school, and more children are at risk of becoming overweight. Changing behaviors of children and parents require creative solutions that are safe and fun. Implementing a walking school bus can be both.

What is a walking school bus?

A walking school bus is a group of children walking to school with one or more adults. If that sounds simple, it is, and that's part of the beauty of the walking school bus. It can be as informal as two families taking turns walking their children to school to as structured as a route with meeting points, a timetable and a regularly rotated schedule of trained volunteers.

A variation on the walking school bus is the bicycle train, in which adults supervise children riding their bikes to school. The flexibility of the walking school bus makes it appealing to communities of all sizes with varying needs.

Parents often cite safety issues as one of the primary reasons they are reluctant to allow their children to walk to school.

Providing adult supervision may help reduce those worries for families who live within walking or bicycling distance to school.

Start Simple

When beginning a walking school bus, remember that the program can always grow. It often makes sense to start with a small bus and see how it works. Pick a single neighborhood that has a group of parents and children who are interested. It's like a carpool— without the car— with the added benefits of exercise and visits with friends and neighbors. For an informal bus:

- ◆ *Invite families who live nearby to walk.*
- ◆ *Pick a route and take a test walk.*
- ◆ *Decide how often the group will walk together.*



Addressing Safety

Being sure that the walk to school is as safe as possible is vital. There are several steps involved, including selecting the safest route, having an adequate number of adults and equipping participants with safety skills. Selecting a safe route can be simple or complex depending on the distance and school location.

To pick a safe route, consider:

- ◆ **Where the group will walk.**
Choose sidewalks or paths wherever possible, even if that means the trip will take a little longer.
- ◆ **Where the group will cross streets.**
Minimize the number of street crossings.
Avoid busy, high-speed or multi lane roads, wherever possible.
- ◆ **How drivers behave.**
Notice if they yield to walkers and drive at safe speeds. Some roads are more conducive to producing safer driver behavior.
- ◆ **How the neighborhood feels.**
Use a route that avoids potential problems like loose dogs, the presence of criminal activity such as gangs, vacant buildings or streets with poor lighting.

Have fun!

Belcher Elementary



Belcher Elementary is the first school in Pinellas County to support a Walking School Bus. The Heart of Largo project has taken the lead to encourage families to walk from their neighborhood or park and walk from a designated location.



The Walking School Bus has been in effect at Belcher since the first day of school. Currently, there are 60 children walking

every day to and from school with their own parent, grandparent or come together with other parents from the neighborhood. This number is increasing everyday and by the holiday break the goal is to have a minimum of 100 students walking to school.

New neighborhood school zoning has effected every school in Pinellas County and at Belcher Elementary the number of buses was reduced from nine to four. These children are being driven to school or walking and the Walking School Bus encourages more parents to walk with their children and get to know other families in their neighborhoods.

For questions about the Walking School Bus, call Megan Carmichael at 727-538-7277 ext 1109



Kohl's "Cooks for Kids" Firehouse Family Cook-off

Saturday
October 17th
11am to 2pm

Location:
Fire House 41
180 4th Street SW
Largo

To be selected to participate in the cook-off, families will need to submit a healthy recipe to our nutrition and culinary experts.

Recipe categories include:

- * Breakfast Matters
- * School Lunches
- * Healthy Snacks
- * Family Favorites
- * Vegetarian Dishes
- * Birthday/ Party foods

This is a free event sponsored by Kohl's Department Store space is limited. Please submit your recipe entries by October 5th. If selected to participate, families will be notified by October 9th.

For more information regarding the event guidelines and to submit your recipes online please go to www.allkids.org/cookoff

Questions, please call 727-767-6923

All Children's Hospital, the Heart of Largo and Fire House #41 are stirring up some fun and challenging families to come out and show-off their culinary skills at this fun and tasty event.

The event is designed for children who are in grades 1st thru 5th plus one adult to assist with the all kitchen duties. Healthy recipe guidelines and specific cooking guidelines are in place for this event and can be found on the All Children's Hospital website www.allkids.org/cookoff.



You have a pool. You have young kids. It's a perfect combination for sun and fun in Florida - but what about safety?

AS MUCH AS WE WATCH OUR KIDS, THEY STILL MOVE PRETTY FAST, DON'T THEY?

- * Make sure all exits (doors and windows and pet doors) are locked and/or alarmed
- * Make sure your pool is surrounded by a 4-sided fence at least at least 4' to 5' high
- * Install a self-closing and self-latching gate



And when your kids ARE in the water, ALWAYS make sure that at least one adult is doing nothing else but watching them. FloridaSafePools wants YOU to have a summer full of Sun, Fun and Safety!