

PLEASANT HILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL WALKING SCHOOL BUS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



1. What's a walking school bus?

A walking school bus is a **student-led** group of students, from a one or two block area, who walk or bike back and forth to school together.

2. Why should we participate in a walking school bus?

- The purpose of these groups is to mitigate safety concerns that parents may have when considering whether to allow their young child to get back and forth to school without them.
- Kids learn some self-reliance and independence, rather than expecting their parents to cart them everywhere.
- You save gas and help the environment when not using your car.
- You save time and avoid a hassle when you don't have to wake up babies, pack up pre-schoolers and yourself!
- It's important for kids to be outside every day and to get some regular exercise. If they don't walk as children, they're unlikely to do so as adults.

3. What about safety?

The walking school bus has student leaders who are 5th and 6th graders. These are groups of kids and there's safety in numbers. No one will be walking alone.

4. But this is Chicagoland. What about bad weather?

Obviously no one's going to send their child into a thunder storm or tornado. However, a little rain, snow or cold isn't that big of a deal. We know that they play outside in "not the best" weather already, so they can walk in it for a few minutes a day too. Once the pattern has been established, most of the time the kids will walk. When the weather is really questionable, some communication with group members will be needed.

5. How big are these walking school buses going to be?

Ideally, they'll range from about 4-10 kids who live within a block or two of one another.

6. What if the student leader doesn't show up/is sick/has schedule conflicts?

There should be a student back-up who can lead. Communication, like in anything else, is key. But in general, once these are up and running, they should be easy to maintain. The neighborhood walking school bus may, for example, only operate three days a week in instances where solutions to these conflicts can't be found.

7. Aren't the parents going to have to orchestrate all of this? It sounds like a hassle. Isn't this going to end up deteriorating into a car pool?

Initially, parents will have to be involved to identify and communicate with others in the group, but once these initial contacts have been made (and contact info exchanged), it shouldn't be an issue. After all, walking and biking to school isn't rocket science. We're fortunate that Pleasant Hill is located in a residential area that has ample sidewalks, paths, and is surrounded by relatively low volume/low speed streets. We also have an adult crossing guard to get across Illinois Ave.

8. How are these student leaders going to be identified?

An initial questionnaire will be sent out, requesting volunteer 4th (to train for next year) 5th, and 6th graders. Their home locations will be mapped, as will those of the younger walkers in their neighborhoods. The student leaders will be trained in keeping track of the primary students in their group, crossing streets safely, what to do if students are missing after school, and of course, doing some "dry runs."

9. What about the busers?

Sorry. This program is currently only being evaluated for the designated walking population at Pleasant Hill. However, there may be a few bussed areas that may find ways to participate as well, if safe routes and other group members can be identified.

10. What will I do with all the free time and flexibility resulting from participating in these walking school buses?

You'll have to figure that one out for yourself!