

Marin Safe Routes to Schools: Park and Walk Guidebook

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1. What is Park and Walk?

A Park and Walk program is a simple way for families to add a little more movement and a lot more fun to the school day. Instead of dropping off right at the front of school, families park a few blocks away and walk the last stretch together. It's a great opportunity to get some fresh air, catch up, and start the day on the right foot.

Sites are typically parks, churches, or quiet streets within two to four blocks of school—places that are easy to access and not too busy during drop-off hours.

Park and Walk works beautifully as part of Marin Safe Routes to Schools programs like Walk and Roll Wednesdays, Walking School Buses, or Bus Stop and Walks.

2. Why Park and Walk?

Because it's doable. Even if families live too far to walk the entire way, most can walk a little. Park and Walk helps reduce the sea of cars at school entrances, cuts down on emissions, and makes school zones safer. Plus, it's a chance for kids to get their wiggles out and arrive ready to learn. It also builds friendships and a sense of community.

3. Who can lead?

Anyone who is eager to help children get to school in a safe and healthy manner. Whether you're a parent, teacher, nurse, or community partner, you can take the lead—with your principal's permission, of course. Some of the best champions are PTO/PTA members or Safe Routes to Schools volunteers. And don't worry—you're not alone. Safe Routes offers all kinds of support to help you succeed.

4. Planning your Park and Walk

Start simple. Talk to your principal and staff to share your idea. Connect with the PTO for support, especially if you'd like to provide snacks or small prizes. Reach out to the Marin Safe Routes team—they can help with flyers, banners, and more. Decide what works for your school. Some schools do Park and Walk once a month, others pair it with Walk and Roll Wednesdays, and some host a few special events each year. There's no wrong way to start!



5. Site selection and Safety

Choose your Park and Walk locations with student safety and comfort in mind. The best routes have continuous sidewalks or shared-use pathways. If there are no sidewalks, look for streets with low speeds and traffic volumes, and wide enough shoulders for students to walk safely—always facing traffic.

Limit the number of street crossings along the route if possible. Where necessary, prioritize intersections with just two lanes of traffic, marked crosswalks, pedestrian bulb out curbs, and traffic signals or stop signs. It's often worth taking a slightly longer route to avoid a complicated or busy crossing. Ideal Park and Walk routes are about 0.25 to 0.5 miles—an 8 to 15-minute walk for most students. If no off-campus route feels safe enough, consider organizing a carpool to help reduce traffic and increase the safety of other students arriving on foot or wheels.

Plan for adult supervision. One adult should be at the drop-off site to greet students. Ideally, another walks with the first group of kids, while a third prepares the next group. Position more volunteers at intersections or crossing points as needed. ***Request parents/caregivers to chaperone their own child particularly if they are younger than 3rd grade, have difficulty following directions, or you have a very large group to oversee. Students can walk on their own by first being chaperoned and then working up to going solo.

The drop-off location needs space for many vehicles at once. It is ideal to have access to and from the drop-off site; it is best to avoid locations where cars would have to back up to exit and would cross the path of students walking. Suggestions include:

- Parks
- Libraries
- Church parking lots
- Stores with minimal traffic in their parking lots
- Any side street with ample parking and sidewalks

Before using any off-site parking lot, check in with the property owner or city to get permission. A quick flyer explaining the idea is helpful. If you're unsure about the best location or how to set up the route, Safe Routes can help assess your options and can coach you on talking with property owners.

6. Building a volunteer team

You don't need a big crew to make this work. A few enthusiastic parents or staff members can make a big difference.

One adult can greet cars and help kids out safely. Another can walk the first group to school. If you've got a large group or busy roads, a couple more volunteers can be posted along the route. Older students, Green Teams, and even local VIPs like firefighters can join the fun!

Keep it simple—use group texts or WhatsApp to stay connected.



7. Promoting Your Program

Start with a few key messages: where to park, how the walk works, and why it matters. Keep it upbeat and easy to join. Posters and flyers in backpacks, newsletters, and school announcements work wonders. Set up a cheerful Welcome Table at the drop-off site on event days—with music, snacks, and

smiling faces. Celebrate participation and make it something students look forward to! Don't forget to loop in students; they can encourage friends to join and can help hand out goodies at the welcome table.

See addendum for sample announcements.



8. Incentives and Celebration

Kids love a little recognition! Stickers, stamps, and high-fives go a long way. You can also hand out small snacks, do classroom shout-outs, or host raffles. Ask local businesses to donate small items or coupons—it's a great way to get the community involved.



Marin Safe Routes to Schools has materials and incentives to share too. Just ask!

A Parent Social with donated coffee and treats makes it fun for parents too. Parents may also make new friends and it provides a chance for you to encourage families to make it a habit.

9. Evaluation and Tracking

Want to know if it's working? Count how many students participate. Snap a few pictures. Ask a couple families for feedback. Even informal observations—like how much calmer traffic is—can tell you a lot. Count cars in the traffic circle before, during and

after the Park and Walk campaign to see if your efforts are working. Reporting out any reductions in traffic helps keep the momentum going.

10. Enhancements and sustaining Park and Walk

Park and Walk is just the beginning. Keep the momentum going by encouraging families to make it a regular habit—daily or weekly—not just on prize days. As routines take hold, friendships form and

meaningful memories are made.

Ideas to Sustain and Grow Participation:

- Collect Parent Contact Info: Invite parents to join a group text or WhatsApp chat to stay connected and receive updates.
- Walking School Buses: Organize small groups of children to walk together with parent chaperones. These often grow naturally from Park and Walk programs with a little encouragement.
- Walk and Roll Wednesdays: A weekly tradition that promotes healthy, active travel throughout the year.
- Parent Socials: Have your PTA or PTO host a casual morning gathering at the Welcome Table. Coffee and conversation go a long way in building community.

Need Help? We're here for you! Marin Safe Routes to Schools offers maps, banners, ideas, and on-the-ground support. Reach out to your coordinator to get started.

Let's make every step count. Park and Walk today!

Addendum:

Sample Announcements for Park and Walk: Use these sample announcements in newsletters, morning announcements, flyers, or social media to promote your Park and Walk events. They are written to be friendly, motivating, and easy to adapt.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT!

Once your children get into the habit, biking or walking to school (even part way) is a memory that they will never forget. Join other families for a fun-filled, energizing morning walk and roll to school.

FUEL BRAIN POWER, NOT CAR POWER

Did you know? Studies show that students who walk and roll to school perform better academically. Park and walk partway if the journey from home is too long—it still counts!

GET YOUR WIGGLES OUT!

A short walk before school helps kids release energy and arrive focused. It's good for your body, your brain, and the planet.

SET ALARM CLOCKS 10 MINUTES EARLY. Parking and Walking a short distance to school helps us relieve traffic congestion. Every bit helps keep kids safe.

SAY HELLO TO OUR CROSSING GUARD! Every morning, [Mr. / Ms. Fan-Favorite] gets up early to help us cross the street. Park and Walk from [Happy street] for a chance to meet our friend, the Crossing Guard.

PUT YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD to walk – bike – carpool or bus to school for Walk and Roll Wednesdays on [date]. If you live too far, you can drive, park and walk partway to school.

Apéndice:

Muestras de los anuncios para Estacionar y Caminar: Use estos anuncios de muestra en su boletín informativo, anuncios matutina, volantes o medios sociales para promover sus eventos de Estacionar y Caminar. Estos son escritos de manera amistosa, motivadora y fáciles de adaptar.

¡UNASE AL MOVIMIENTO!

Una vez sus hijos se acostumbren, caminar o ir en bicicleta a la escuela (aún parte del camino) es un recuerdo que ellos nunca olvidarán. Unase a otras familias para caminar o rodar a la escuela mientras se divierten y llenan de energía.

PONGALE COMBUSTIBLE A SU CEREBRO Y NO A SU CARRO

Los estudios muestran que a los estudiantes que caminan y ruedan a la escuela les va mejor académicamente. Estacione y Camine parte del camino si el viaje desde su casa es muy largo, camine parte del camino. Todavía cuenta.

¡AYUDE A SACAR EL EXCESO DE ENERGIA DE SUS NIÑOS!

Una corta caminata antes de la escuela ayuda a sus niños a liberar la energía y llegar listos para concentrarse. Es bueno para su cuerpo, su mente y el planeta.

PONGA LA ALARMA DIEZ MINUTOS ANTES

Estacione y Camine una corta distancia a la escuela ayuda a disminuir el tráfico. Todo ayuda a mantener a los niños seguros.

¡SALUDE A SU GUARDIA DE CRUCE!

Todas las mañanas, [el señor / la señora Fan-Favorite] se levanta temprano para ayudarnos a cruzar la calle. Estacionarse y Caminar desde [nombre de la calle] por la oportunidad de conocer un nuestro amigo, el guardia de cruce.

HAGA SU MEJOR ESFUERZO para caminar, montar bicicleta, el bus o compartir el carro a la escuela durante el Miércoles de Caminar y Rodar el [fecha]. Si vive lejos, puede estacionar su carro y caminar parte del camino.

Sample Principal Letter for Park and Walk Contest

Dear Families,

We're excited to invite you to join our Park and Walk pilot—a fun and simple way to start the school day with smiles, movement, and fresh air!

Even if your family lives too far to walk or roll the whole way, you can still be part of the fun. Just park a few blocks away and walk to school the rest with your student. It's a great way to wake up brains and bodies, ease traffic around campus, and enjoy a few calm moments together before the bell rings.

Why Park and Walk?

Because it is doable. Even if families live too far to walk the entire way, most can walk a little. Park and Walk helps reduce the sea of cars at school entrances, cuts down on emissions, and makes school zones safer. Plus, it's a chance for kids to get their wiggles out and arrive ready to learn. It also builds friendships and a sense of community.

Park and Walk Contest!

To help kick things off, we're hosting a Park and Walk Contest from September 2 – September 9.

Here's how to participate:

- Look in your student's Friday Folder for a Park and Walk (PAW) Contest Card.
- Each day your child walks, bikes, scooters, or "parks and walks" partway to school, please initial their card.
- On Walk and Roll Wednesday, September 10, students can bring their completed card to the Welcome Table and earn a prize!
- Students who Park and Walk six times during the contest weeks will be entered into a raffle for a chance to win [name of prize].

Park and Walk Locations

Recommended Park and Walk locations are: _____ (K-2) and _____. Third graders can be dropped off to walk with friends with parent permission.

Safety First

Please remember to:

- Drive slowly and watch for children.
- Park legally—don't double park or block driveways or intersections.
- Use crosswalks, walk on sidewalks, and hold hands with younger students.
- Say hello to our wonderful crossing guard on the way!

Park and Walk is a small step that brings big benefits. Thank you for helping make our school a safer, healthier, and happier place for all. We can't wait to see those PAW Cards filled up with walking days!

Warmly,
[Principal's Name]

Carta del (la) Director(a) para el Concurso de Estacionar y Caminar

Queridas Familias,

Queremos invitarlos a unirse a la prueba del programa de Estacionar y Caminar—¡una manera simple y divertida de comenzar el día escolar con sonrisas, movimiento y aire fresco!

Aún si vive muy lejos para caminar o rodar a clase, todavía puede unirse al concurso. Sólo estacione a unas cuadras de la escuela y ande el resto del camino. Esto es muy efectivo para despertar los niños en la mañana, aliviar el tráfico alrededor de la escuela y disfrutar de unos calmados momentos juntos antes de la campana.

¿Por qué Estacionar y Caminar?

Porque es fácil. Aún si vive retirado, todavía pueden andar un poquito. Estacionar y Caminar reduce el número de carros en el campus, disminuye la polución y ayuda con la seguridad. Además, es una oportunidad de que los niños saquen el exceso de energía y lleguen listos para aprender.

Concurso de Estacionar y Caminar

Para ayudar a que la idea despegue, tendremos un Concurso de Estacionar y Caminar entre septiembre 2 y septiembre 9.

Cómo Participar:

- Busque en el fólder del viernes la tarjeta del concurso PAW.
- Todos los días que su hijo camine, monte en bici, patine o “estacione y camine” a la escuela,
- póngale sus iniciales a la tarjeta.
- El 10 de septiembre, durante el Miércoles de Caminar y Rodar, los estudiantes pueden entregar sus tarjetas ya diligenciadas en la mesa de bienvenida para ganar un premio.
- Los estudiantes que Estacionen y Caminen seis veces durante la duración del concurso participarán en la rifa de [nombre del premio].

Ubicaciones:

Las ubicaciones recomendadas son: _____ (K-2) y _____. Los estudiantes de tercero pueden bajarse del carro y caminar con sus amigos, con el permiso de los padres.

Seguridad Primero

Por favor recuerde:

- Manejar despacio y tener cuidado con los niños.
- Estacione legalmente—no estacione doble o bloquee parqueaderos o intersecciones.
- Use cruce de peatones, aceras y sostenga la mano de sus estudiantes menores.

Estacionar y Caminar es un paso pequeño que trae grandes beneficios. Gracias por ayudar a que la escuela sea un lugar más seguro, saludable y feliz. No podemos esperar para ver sus tarjetas diligenciadas!

Cordial Saludo,

[Nombre del director]

Director, [Nombre de la escuela]

Volunteer Sign Up Sheet

[illegible]