



Walking or Wheeling on Wednesdays to School

presented by
Joy Kingsbury-Aitken



School generated motorised trips contribute significantly to week day traffic congestion, and to parking congestion at the school gate, which has safety implications for school pupils.



Reasons parents give for driving their children to school:

- Time pressures
- Cost of alternative transport
- Concerns about dangers (from strangers and traffic)
- Increased mobility (so children don't need to attend neighbourhood schools)
- Convenience for working parents



Other benefits of walking to school include:

- Improved health and fitness of children, leading to improve academic performance
- Reduced exposure of children to vehicle emissions
- Reduced likelihood of children being involved in a crash
- Children learn how to be safe pedestrians



Initially walking school buses were seen as the solution in Christchurch, but they...

- Require more Council staff support than available to establish and sustain long term
- Have a life expectancy of about one school year
- Depend on a diminishing pool of parent volunteers to supervise
- Do not involve the majority of children, who continue to travel to and from school by car
- Tend to work best in high decile areas



- Since 1999, many Christchurch primary schools had been participating in annual “walk to school days”. Although popular, these one-off events did not lead to a modal shift.





- In the 4th term 2004 Christchurch primary schools were invited to have a “walk to school day” once a week for six to eight weeks, instead of just once a year, commencing on International Walk to School Day.
- Only five schools took up the challenge that year.



- Since this initial 5 schools the programme has grown to include over 30 schools (with a combined roll of over 11,000 children).
- The programme now runs during two terms a year – the spring (4th) term and summer (1st) terms.
- Schools from all decile areas participate.
- An average 79% of children in participating schools walk or cycle to school during the challenge each term.
- Since 2006 wheeling (cycling and scooting) has been included in the programme so not to disadvantage children who use these methods of active travel to school.
- Two Christchurch primary schools now run their own challenge all year long.



The Secret of Our Success is...

(a) The competitive element

- Classes **WITHIN** schools compete against one another for a class prize (e.g. a class set of swimming passes) for the class with the highest percentage of active travellers during the eight weeks of the challenge.
- Because schools don't compete against each other, low decile schools don't feel disadvantaged, and therefore are more willing to take part. Every school is a winner!



(b) Recognition of Extraordinary Effort

- Some classes have achieved 100% participation 100% of the time, and to encourage this level of involvement special prizes have been offered (usually QEII hydroslide passes). In some schools there have been more than one class with this level of participation. Each has received a special award.



(c) Addresses Parents' Issues

- Parents of “out of zone” children, who claim they live too far from school for their children to walk the entire distance can drive them to within ten minutes walk from school and accompany them from there on foot.

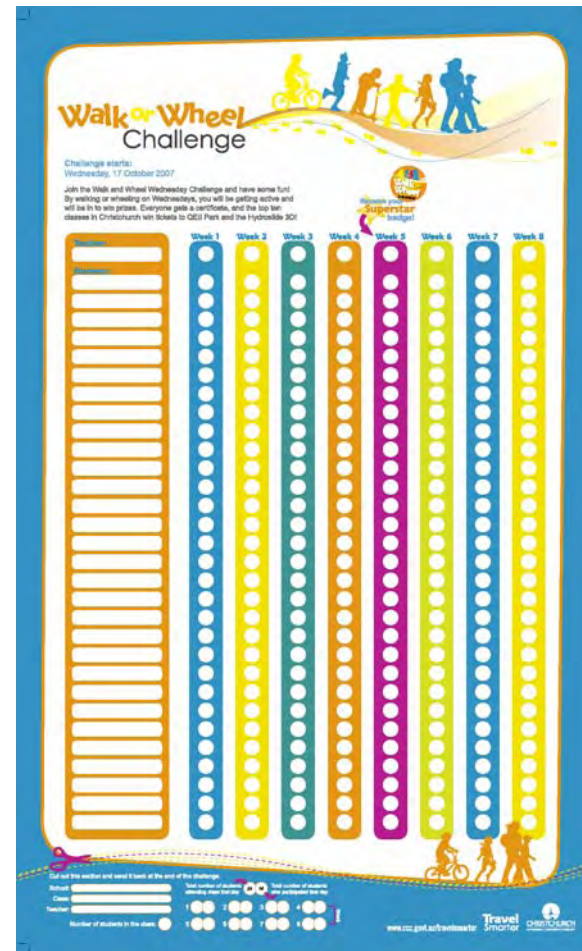
(d) Peer Pressure

- Classmates put pressure on one another to participate so their class can win the prize, and in turn parents report being put under pressure to allow their children to walk to school on Wednesdays throughout the eight weeks of the challenge.



(e) Ease of Administration for Schools

- Every class gets a wall chart on which to record each pupil's involvement.
- Totals are recorded by the teacher on the tear off section at the bottom of the chart.
- The school returns the tear off sections of all its wall charts to the Council. From these the winning class is determined.
- These charts provide a simple means for obtaining accurate participation data.





(f) Good Communications

- A flyer is sent home explaining the challenge to parents.

(g) Incentives

- To keep alive enthusiasm throughout the challenge small incentives are given out periodically, such as the travel card on the first Wednesday and the badge on the 5th Wednesday (as illustrated on flyer).





(h) Having Fun

- “Zebra Crossing” the Council’s Road Safety Pantomime Zebra (intended to promote safety at pedestrian crossings) has become a popular mascot for the Walk or Wheel programme.
- One year his hoof prints “magically” appeared at the gates of participating schools, and he made personal appearances at some of these schools, encouraging the children to...





At the end of the challenge every child who has participated, even if only once, is awarded a certificate





What impact is the Walk or Wheel Class Challenge having on participating school communities?





*At the end of term 4 2007,
teachers in participating school were surveyed
about their impressions of the just completed challenge:*

- 99% reported that they thought the challenge was fun, and 97% said they considered it to have been a success.
- 91% said that had undertaken supporting classroom activities. These activities included integrating the challenge into their keeping safe and healthy programme, linking it with the Road Sense programme, and using it for a statistics project.
- Some teachers reported that the challenge had inspired parents to establish their own walking school buses.



Some of the comments these teachers made were:

- “We do so many extra activities in schools these days we cannot do justice to them all. Pleasing to note that this one almost ran itself with the help of a few classroom monitors.”
- “We had kids making the effort to walk who normally would have travelled by the car. Kids enjoyed it as did the supervising teachers.”
- “My new entrants are always keen to tell me as soon as they get to school that they have walked from home or have walked a couple of blocks with a parent and love to watch me record it on the wall chart.”



Public recognition and approval of the Walk or Wheel Class Challenge is high

In a telephone survey of 400 Christchurch residents undertaken in June 2008:

- 45% of respondents recalled the Walk or Wheel Wednesday Class Challenge
- 25% of respondents had participated in a Walk or Wheel Wednesday Class Challenge
- Of those who had participated in the challenge, 39% said their children would now walk or wheel to school more often
- 22% said their children had been walking or wheeling to school prior to the challenge
- 91% of respondents considered promoting walking or wheeling to school on Wednesdays to be valuable.



The remaining challenges:

- How to grow the programme without blowing out the budget?
- How to move the programme from two terms a year to all year round?
- How to move the programme from being just one day a week to five days a week?

The future?



Participation in a national year long campaign advocating

FEET FIRST EVERY DAY!

