

## Walking School Bus

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*Lincoln Elementary School  
Wausau, Wisconsin*

Most students at Lincoln Elementary School live close enough to walk to and from the school. During the dark winter months, however, children found themselves unable to participate in after-school activities because of potential safety issues on the walk home. Many parents could not pick up their children because they work or take care of younger children at home. To solve this problem, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) developed the Walking School Bus, teams of two adults who walk the children home after school.

For the Walking School Bus, students meet at the designated “Bus Stop” near the main office. Two adults, one at the front and one at the rear, walk along a predetermined route with each group of students. The ATP provides each Bus with a backpack containing emergency phone numbers, flashlights, and umbrellas, hats, and mittens in case of inclement weather. After accounting for each student, the Buses depart. The adults walk each student home and go back to the school afterwards to return the backpack and report any concerns.

Paid staff from the school supervised the Walking School Bus. While the ATP hoped to draw volunteers, especially from the nearby university, the added time to process criminal background checks and interviews, along with extra scheduling, would have meant delaying the start of the program. Since the parents already knew the after-school staff and the staff members were already present for the programs, the ATP enlisted their help to pilot the program.

Lincoln Elementary listened to parents’ suggestions while organizing the Walking School Bus. The ATP publicized the service through fliers, partnership meetings, personal communications with parents, and a spot on the local news. They also notified the police department about the routes and times. Funding from the 21st Century Grant covered the costs of the program.

The Walking School Bus provided supervised fun and significant exercise. The ATP plans to add even more routes in the future to increase student participation in after-school activities. As one third grade student said, “Thanks for helping me to take the after-school classes that I wanted. I am glad I can feel safe walking home.”

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