

## **Walking School Bus Parent Survey** **Kids Connection's Walking School Bus Intervention**

*Prepared for Brown-Nicollet Community Health Board as part of their SHIP evaluation*

Brown-Nicollet Community Health Board has worked with five school sites throughout their service area to implement policies and practices that promote active schools. This is a part of a broader effort to improve the overall health of residents of Brown and Nicollet Counties, with funding from the Minnesota Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP). Kids Connection is a school-aged child care facility within the New Ulm Public Schools system that provides care for children in grades K-6. A Brown-Nicollet SHIP mini-grantee, Kids Connection implemented a Walking School Bus in 2010 as a part of their summer program. They modified the intervention to fit the needs of the program, calling it Walking Field Trips. Children are given opportunities for physical activity by walking to and from field trip locations as an alternative to bussing. In summer 2010, students walked to various community sites, including the puppet wagon, youth center, and on scavenger hunts.

In May 2011, Brown-Nicollet SHIP and Kids Connection staff collected surveys from Kids Connection parents using instruments developed by Wilder Research. A total of 21 parents completed surveys. Respondents represented 27 children between kindergarten and fifth grade. The majority of the kids (96%) attended Kids Connection's programming during the 2010-2011 school year, approximately half (52%) attended the summer 2010 program, and more than half (56%) will attend Kids Connection in summer 2011.

To save time, parents with more than one child were asked to answer the survey questions about one child who was randomly selected. Of these children, half attended Kids Connection's summer 2010 program, when the Walking Field Trips occurred.

Survey questions focused on the following areas:

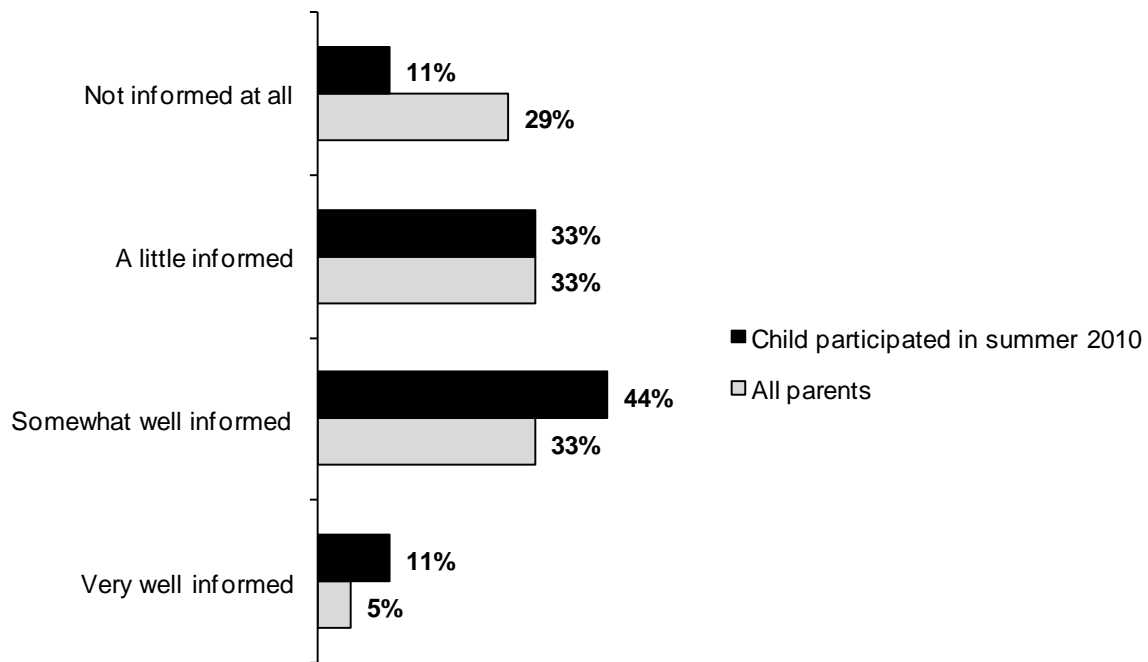
- Parents' knowledge of the Walking Field Trips, including safety guidelines
- Behavioral changes in child, related to physical activity
- Parent support of, concerns about, and feedback on the Walking Field Trips

# Results

## Parent knowledge of the Walking Field Trips

Of parents whose child participated in summer 2010 Kids Connection programming, over half (5/9) felt “somewhat” or “very” well informed about the purpose and goals of the Walking Field Trips. Three parents felt “a little informed” and one parent did not feel informed at all. As expected, parents whose child(ren) participated in summer 2010 were more informed about the Walking Field Trips than parents overall. (See Figure 1).

### 1. How informed parents feel about the Walking Field Trips



When asked about what they know about the Kids Connection Walking Field Trips, parents described how their children walk to a local destination as an alternative to bussing. Three parents mentioned specific field trip locations such as Dairy Queen, Vogel, the park, and walking to Martin Luther College for ice cream. Three respondents also described benefits of Walking Field Trips including providing an opportunity for exercise and cost-savings for the program:

It is to incorporate physical activity into the kids' day as well as to save money for the program.

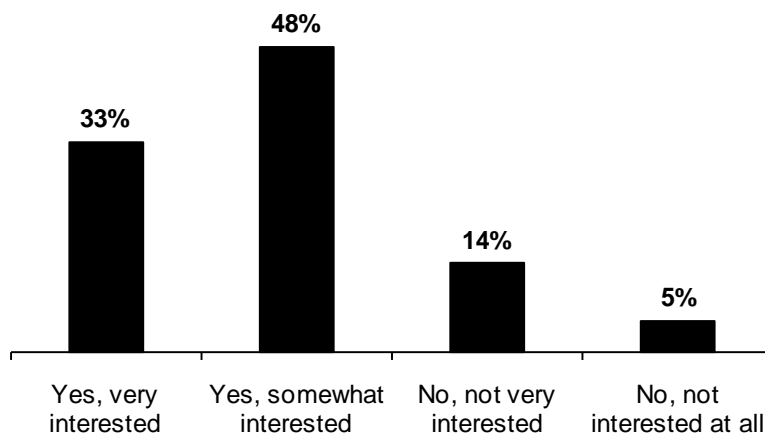
At the beginning of the summer, parents were provided with safety guidelines that students must follow when participating in the Walking Field Trips. Five out of 9 of the

parents of summer 2010 participants were either “a little familiar” (2/9) or “not familiar at all” (3/9) with the walking field trips safety guidelines. The four remaining respondents said they were “somewhat familiar” (3/9) or “very familiar” (1/9).

Of all parent respondents, the majority (81%) indicated interest in receiving more information about the Kids Connection Walking Field Trip activities and/or safety guidelines. A lower proportion of respondents said that they are “not very interested” or “not interested at all.” (See Figure 2).

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## 2. Parent interest in more information on Walking Field Trip activities



### Behavioral change

Parents were asked to report on behavioral changes that they had seen in their child since August 2010, or the end of the 2010 Kids Connection summer program, to measure any changes in the child’s level of physical activity since participating in the Walking Field Trips. For 3 out of 9 kids each, watching television and time spent on the computer decreased. In 2 cases, however, time spent on the computer increased. Engaging in moderate physical activities and/or vigorous physical activities for at least 10 minutes at a time increased for 4 out of 9 kids each. (See Figure 3).

It is, however, not possible to attribute any of these changes to the Walking Field Trip program without a pre and post test or a larger sample size.

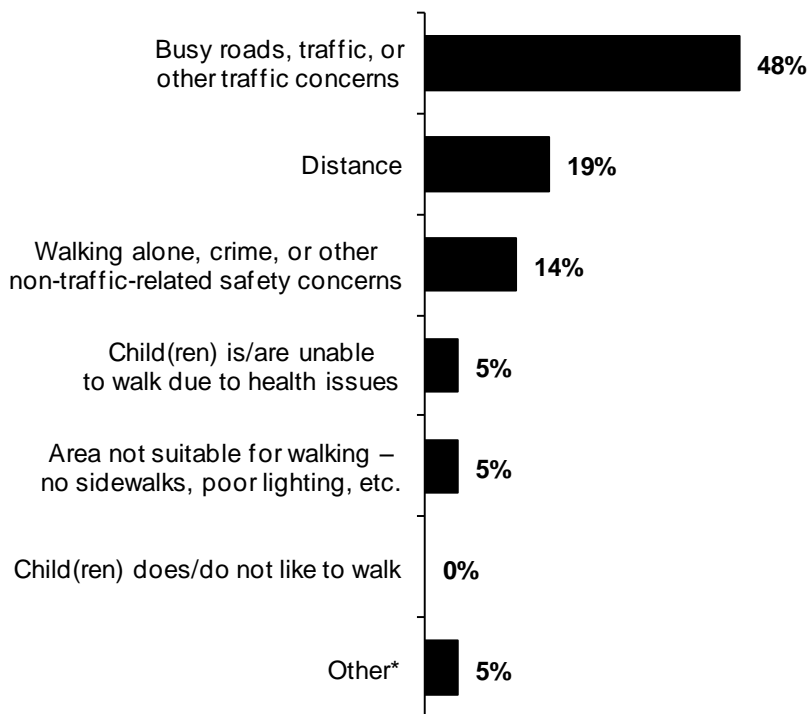
### 3. Time child spends doing various activities outside of the regular school day (N=9)

	Increased	Stayed the same	Decreased
Watching television/movies	0	6	3
On the computer/laptop (non-school related activities)	2	4	3
Doing moderate activities for at least 10 minutes at a time	4	5	0
Doing vigorous activities for at least 10 minutes at a time	4	5	0

### Parental concerns

Respondents were asked to report on what concerns they have about their child(ren) walking to and from field trip locations during the Kids Connection summer program. Fifty-seven percent of parents reported at least one concern. Overall, the most common concerns were busy roads or other traffic-related concerns, shared by nearly half of respondents. The second and third most common concerns were distance (19%) and non-traffic safety concerns (14%). One respondent each mentioned that their child is unable to walk because of a health issue, that they are worried about routes that are not suitable for walking, or concerned about children having enough sunscreen and water. (See Figure 4).

### 4. Parents' concerns about Walking Field Trips



\* Other response: "Do they have on sunscreen and have enough water to drink?"

## Parent attitudes and feedback

All parent respondents are supportive of their child walking to and from summer field trip locations as an alternative to bussing. Three-quarters (74%) of parents are “very supportive” of Walking Field Trips. The remaining 26 percent are “somewhat supportive.”

My child is so much more active while at Kids Connection and I love that. More kids need to be outside and the walking trips are a great way to teach kids about walking safely, standing together, watching for cars, using crosswalks, etc.

When asked about the extent to which walking field trips contribute to their child’s overall health, four out of nine parents of summer 2010 participants said that it contributes a “great deal” and four out of nine parents said it contributes “somewhat”. The remaining parent felt that walking school bus activities contribute a little to their child’s health.

All of these parents felt that their children had enjoyed Kids Connection’s Walking Field Trips, with more than three-quarters (7/9) saying that their child enjoyed walking to field trip locations “very much.”

Ideas that parents had for improving the Kids Connection Walking Field Trips include wearing the same color shirts to keep children together and visible to cars and doing more walking field trip activities. One parent gave ideas on how to keep kids engaged while walking:

Incorporate learning and movement; ask questions and play guessing games when walking [because] kids learn best this way.

Four parents offered a wide variety of suggestions on field trip locations that Kids Connection could walk to during their summer program. More general ideas included hiking to parks, bird watching, picking wildflowers, or doing a nature-based scavenger hunt. Participants also mentioned specific locations such as the library, the museum, downtown New Ulm (walking tour), Schells Park (to feed the animals), the tennis courts at Martin Luther College, Oak Hills, Lincoln Park, or Harmann Park.

## Next steps

Overall, parents indicated satisfaction with the work that Kid’s Connection has been doing to incorporate more opportunities for physical activity and to encourage children to be active in creative ways. All of the parent respondents said that they are “very satisfied” (79%) or “somewhat satisfied” (21%) with the amount of physical activity opportunities that their children have at Kids Connection.

■ We love that you keep the kids active and are exposing them to new activities.

Considerations for next steps to take as the Walking Field Trips program continues include the following:

- Many parents indicated that they are not very familiar with the goals and purpose of the Walking Field Trips program. Ways to ensure that all parents have an understanding of the initiative may include adding information about Walking Field Trips to the website and/or including details about the program with materials provided to parents at registration.
- Parents would also like more information on Kids Connection’s safety guidelines for walking field trips. Update any safety guidelines as needed and post the guidelines on the website. Ensure that parents are provided a paper copy at registration as well.
- The most common safety concerns that parents have include busy streets and other traffic-related concerns. Consult resources that provide information on safety guidelines that address these concerns and inform parents of how they are being addressed. The National Center for Safe Routes to School has a “Walkability Checklist” on their website that allows organizers to evaluate the safety of different routes. It is available here: [www.walktoschool.org/eventideas/checklists.cfm](http://www.walktoschool.org/eventideas/checklists.cfm) . The Safe Routes to School ([guide.saferoutesinfo.org](http://guide.saferoutesinfo.org)) website may be an excellent resource as well.
- One respondent suggested that children wear the same t-shirt while walking to ensure that they are visible to cars. Brightly colored t-shirts are one way to address concerns about busy roads.
- Overall, parents are supportive of the Walking Field trips and many would like see children walking to more destinations such as the museum and the library.



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